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BEFORE THE FACT:

How Paul's Rhetoric Made History

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TABLE OF CONTENTS Page

summary

Given the sheer volume of scholarship which has been devoted to examining Paul and his congregations, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to what the texts portray as the apostle's main concern: not what his congregations were in any 'objective', historical sense, but what they were 'in Christ'.

Building on this observation, my thesis may be stated as follows. Traditional Pauline studies, with their emphases either on the apostle's thought or on his congregations' historical situation, obscure the importance of the 'church in the work', a reality established in the text, structured to engender change, and made real rhetorically for readers.

These, then, are some of the questions posed: What influence should an awareness of Paul's hortatory, theological image of his congregations have on our efforts to reconstruct them historically? May the well-known Pauline 'indicative-imperative' be taken as a rhetorical strategy? And: In what way does the text try to make its portrayal the definitive reality lived out by its readers?

The focus of this thesis is on Paul's congregations as the letters indicated 'they should be', and on the linkage this vision in the letters provides between theology and history, author and reader.

Précis

Il est étonnant, étant donné le volume d'études qui ont été consacrées à Paul et à ses

congrégations, qu'on ait accordé si peu d'attention à ce que les textes présentent comme

l'objet central des aspirations de l'apôtre. L'œuvre de Paul était motivée non pas par ce

qu'étaient ses congrégations, dans un sens objectif et historique, mais par ce qu'elles

allaient être et devenir, comme dit l'apôtre, « en Christ ».

Cette thèse établit que les études traditionnelles sur Paul, qui insistent soit sur la
pensée de l'apôtre soit sur la situation historique de ses congrégations, oblitèrent
l'importance de « l'église dans l'œuvre ». Cette église est une réalité qui apparaît
principalement dans les textes. Elle est structurée pour engendrer le changement, et, par sa
rhétorique, Paul la rend réelle dans la vie de ses lecteurs.

Quelle influence devrait avoir l'image exhortative, théologique que donne Paul de
ses congrégations sur nos efforts de reconstitution historique ? « L'indicatif-impératif »
bien connu de Paul devrait-il être considéré comme une stratégie rhétorique ? Et dans quelle
mesure les textes essaient-ils de faire de sa représentation la réalité déterminante pour ses
lecteurs ?

Acknowledgements:

PREFACE: The Possibilities

Under the form of academic inquiry a lot of personal soul-searching goes on. Thus the one-time schoolteacher writes about the history of religious education in the Roman Catholic Church, and the now-tenured daughter of a bricklayer discusses in her dissertation the social mobility of the first Christians, with a special emphasis on women.

In my other life, I speak. Although it should have been clear to me from the start, only sometime after the proposal for this thesis was accepted did I realize that in my halting way with this study I was seeking an understanding of my own art. I am a preacher; I craft my words. Martin Luther King said "I have a dream", and although his vision was uniquely powerful in a manner similar to Paul's, their art is shared in lesser ways by all of us who take a public podium with an eye, not to the way things are, but to the way things might be. Every Sunday I speak a vision of my audience and myself, and our possibilities, our ability to love and forgive and to be honest with each other. And in more reflective moments I wondered how much of that visionary world comes from me, and how much was there from the time that Paul and others penned the texts I study as I prepare.

The only way even to approach the question was to study Paul's writings. There are very real dangers for all who undertake this task. "I am human and nothing human is foreign to me" wrote the Roman poet Terence. Yet Paul stands at a remove of two millennia from our appropriation of him, a vast gulf in time, space and culture.

So for honesty's sake, this is my side of the conversation (which all human beings bring to a text) with Paul's writings. "No reader confronts a text innocently, but always understands it from some perspective which shapes and organizes the perception of its meaning" (Plank 1987, 62-63). Elizabeth Castelli and Hal Taussig (1996, 14) go even further: "[pure] objectivity in the study of Christian origins," they maintain, "is impossible. Since this is the case, all researchers need to acknowledge in as explicit a fashion as possible their own points of departure and abandon the fanciful pretense of an all-encompassing objectivity". However that may be, surely we must grant that reading these texts in particular means engaging also in some self-study, analyzing what Vernon Robbins (1996a, 96) calls our "individual locations".

Academics are not - and are not supposed to be - obedient readers (Miles 1992, preface). When I read 1 Corinthians as an academic there is always a third voice in the room, uninvited by the author - "here Paul is securing the goodwill of his audience in the *exordium*, there he is allying himself with the tradition by means of a technical formula".

Such observations allow me to see Paul's strategies, and these in turn can illuminate much about both the author and his intentions. Despite its usefulness, however, this method lacks the perspective needed to seek Paul's over-all goals and how he sets out to achieve them. I feel by experience that it is only when I allow myself to be engaged by Paul's efforts that the larger purpose of his writing becomes clear. On some level, commitment to his enterprise is needed before the text opens up the horizons where it intends to leave you.

On the other hand, to read Paul completely uncritically is not to be an obedient reader either. It is rather simply to ape the church, and this less than successfully, since at the level of popular piety the church has had centuries of experience at importing texts without always bothering with such things as critical distance. Besides, even here, as the best theologians have known from the beginning, Paul himself doesn't demand such a capitulation of our minds. At times, his rhetoric only works when you think: when, for instance, you can see the humour in his both denouncing something like eloquence and at the same time demonstrating it.

So it seems that the most helpful reading of Paul's letter must BOTH participate in what he is working hard to express, and keep an eye out for the more hidden machinery of how he says it, the attitudes it betrays, and the circumstances which it may reveal. We must be both critical and sympathetic readers, 'playing along' with Paul long enough to see where he is headed, but always taking notes on the way. These are some of my notes from just such a journey with Paul.

INTRODUCTION

> Faced with a rhetorical situation where Paul may well have been less
> concerned with the Corinthians' historical circumstances than we
> are, our (largely inferred) picture of that church may have more to
> do with the apostle's visionary reality than with the Corinthians'
> actual experiences.

Early one spring day in 1995, residents of Montreal woke to find that many of the
billboards in their city suddenly bore the smiling faces of children. In fact, the huge
pictures seemed to have blossomed overnight everywhere: not just on highway and road
shoulders, but also in bus shelters, on subway cars, and on the sides of busses. Whether
commuting to work or going out for the groceries, Quebecers came face to face, quite
literally, with hundreds of images of children.

But not just any children. Unlike the average next-door-neighbor variety, these
well-dressed children were all scrubbed and had perfectly straight, white teeth. More
importantly, almost all of the children were from the so-called visible minorities of Quebec:
Haitian, Indian, Southeast Asian, and others. The giant photos seemed designed to
emphasize their 'colour', i.e., their uniqueness and background. In any case, the slogans
left no doubt that this was the purpose of the advertising. 'Almond eyes', said one
billboard, 'Quebec heart'. 'Ebony skin,' announced another. 'Quebec heart'.

While the text accompanying the pictures was minimal, the message seemed clear.
Quebec is made up of people from many and diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

But was that the only message? It seems a reasonable axiom that advertising has
never been content simply to announce a fact, and indeed the message behind the message
seemed to be a word urging respect and tolerance for others. There was a conclusion, or
perhaps more precisely, an action of tolerance, indicated. In other words, the billboards
and posters were saying: 'Since we are all Quebecers under the skin, let's be more
understanding of others who are different from ourselves in customs or appearance'.

Such, at least, was the official interpretation. However, more cynical observers -
and there were many - took the opposite message from the ad campaign. Noting the
importance of the second half of the slogan, 'a Quebec heart', many condemned the ads,
stating that they recognized only a token diversity, while at the same time pushing for
assimilation of the cultural communities. Furthermore, according to the critics, the

billboards contained a not-very-subtle nationalist message, telling immigrant groups to either fall in or get out, in a year where a referendum on political sovereignty was to take place.

Radio talk shows, television news spots, and letters to the editor all debated the 'true' meaning of the ad campaign. Politicians and ad agencies defended their intentions and compared them to the public response. The question arose as to whether the ads reflected reality or intended to change it, and if the latter, what then was the new society envisioned? Again and again it was pointed out that Quebec, especially outside of Montreal, was not a culturally or racially heterogeneous society, and that the sometimes bloody encounters between police and visible minority groups showed a lack of precisely the kind of understanding implied by the ads.

By the time the campaign closed some months later, the casual observer, relying only on the media, was hard pressed to decide exactly what the beautiful photos of smiling children were meant to represent or say. In some ways, the campaign had raised more questions than answers.

New Testament scholars should find such a situation familiar. In their attempts to discern the history behind, the authorial intention for, and the audience's reception of texts, scholars face some of the same bewildering questions of provenance and purpose, intention and historical accuracy, as media watchers did with the Quebec government's publicity campaign. To what extent did the messages on the billboards reflect reality, and to what extent were they attempting to create a new reality? Did the persuasiveness of the ad campaign rest on elements of its style (the head shots of beautiful children, the rhythmic, repetitive slogan) or on an appeal to a kinder, gentler human nature? To put it in other words: was the ad campaign 'selling' the desirability of being a heterogeneous society, or was it rather 'selling' something more basic: a self-image of the average Quebec citizen as open and accepting of others?

It is my contention that Paul was confronted with a not entirely dissimilar type of community-building task in the first century, and that our research into Pauline texts needs better to take this creative purpose of his writing into account. For some time I have been interested in the way in which texts of the Christian faith, especially the Pauline letters, are constructed so as to change the perceptions and in fact the worldview, of their readers. A renewed appreciation of this capability of texts has been growing among literary critics in general, and in New Testament studies in particular since the Second World War. (Northrop Frye 1990b; chapter 3; Raymond Brown and Sandra Schneiders 1989, 1158-1160). Amos Wilder, one of the founders of modern literary criticism, had stated already in 1956 that the New Testament forces on readers a "sense of existence, which transcends our

usual categories...faith of this kind projects its own vision upon the world, it makes its own world, and employs a language proper to such experience" (1956, 48).

Awareness of this kind of creative power of texts in general, and in our case, of the New Testament texts in particular, leads quite naturally to an examination of the role of rhetoric in the NT. Thus this work is preoccupied with rhetoric; its definition, its proper use, how and why it caused and causes people to be moved to action, and to what extent its trail can be used to track the place and circumstances of its original use. And while rhetoric is itself a huge subject area, we would be amiss not to include, in such an examination, ground richly mined before this by others: the interpretive strategies of rhetorical criticism, various literary critical schools, and those attempts to explore the text which have together been called 'new hermeneutics' and similar terms.

All of these areas touch in their various ways on the creativity of the written and spoken word. It is for that reason that I am suggesting that there is something akin to the concept of a 'visionary reality' in the rhetorical use and reception of texts, and that the model of a "textual world" (Ricoeur 1977a, 23) or sermonic reality clarifies some of the social-historical, literary, and hermeneutical conclusions drawn by New Testament scholars. Should this be so, our conclusions will help us to understand and evaluate the way rhetoric is used - and argued over - as an interpretive category in New Testament studies (Stamps 1992, 268).

In A Nutshell

Paul's letters contain a kind of visionary or sermonic reality, which by means of the apostle's rhetoric became a guide for living and an inchoate new reality for those who imbibed it. By examining this vision internal to the text and its own movement and logic, one can avoid not the historical task, but the pitfalls of moving too quickly or incautiously to it. On the linguistic side, locating the historical referent of a text in the reality it first envisions, then creates, helps join hermeneutics with exegesis and shows how Paul's literary rhetoric accomplished in history its persuasive task. Paul's letters, quite literally, made history.

Building the Argument

From the beginning, rhetoric has been primarily understood as the art of persuasion. That some ancient writers such as Quintilian presented alternative definitions does not change the fact that persuasion has always been the reason for rhetoric, and in fact

explains its genesis and earliest development. In the next chapter we discuss this point more fully, keeping track of the fortunes of the art whenever persuasion was abandoned as rhetoric's primary reason for being.

Clearly Paul sought to persuade his readers of many things: his letters are full of advice, known technically as *paraenesis*. More specifically, Paul often takes advantage of more or less recognizable rhetorical devices such as the encomium, apologia, enthymeme and exordium, to advance his arguments. All of this is a matter of general scholarly consensus (Mack 1990). But the idea that Paul's writings also work rhetorically on a more basic level, that is, that they might seek to effect a kind of shift in the self-understanding and worldview of the reader/listener is a view which requires more substantiation.

The argument proceeds as follows. First, a reason for the thesis is advanced; in brief it is that we need new criteria and a wider appreciation of argumentation theory in which to understand and to evaluate the results of the increasing number (Watson 1995, 226-42) of rhetorical critical studies of the NT. Wilhelm Wuellner, in 1987, predicted "tidal-wave proportions" of publications with the word rhetoric in their titles. And yet, despite providing many - especially methodological - contributions to the field, historical studies using rhetorical criticism have not provided the clear window to the past for which many had hoped (Kennedy 1984, 5). Part of the reason lies in the nature of historical evidence in the Bible. The historical 'facts' behind these books of faith were simply rarely germane to the arguments of their authors - a problem which has bedeviled all the modern criticisms, each of which has proven in turn unequal to the extravagant claims of historical efficacy first laid on it.

Perhaps with this in mind, some rhetorical scholars (i.e. Robbins 1996a and b) have embraced a sort of heterodoxy of historical methods, while others have given up as unattainable altogether the search for history, and have chosen rather to focus solely or primarily on the linguistic or stylistic ramifications of NT texts. Yet it seems clear that the most helpful criteria for evaluating the results rhetorical-critical scholars reach should sidestep the polarization of their studies into linguistic and historical camps, with each side suspicious of the methodological legitimacy of the other. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza (1989,20) overstates to make the point: "Biblical-historical studies have developed two basic interpretive strategies in order to address the problem of 'text and reality': antiquarian positivism which reduces text to a quarry for historical facts, and literary constructivism which reduces history to text". Sometimes, the gap between these two general types of interpretation has been so wide that Dennis Stamps (1992,268) describes the two sides as being at war: "harmonius presentations mask the real landscape, a war. Behind this

pluralism exists competing and uncomplementary ways of understanding texts, meaning, and truth."

In other words, a helpful understanding of rhetorical-critical interpretation resorts neither to the view that it should be strictly an historical undertaking (as for example, it is for Margaret Mitchell (1991, 6)) nor that it must be an interpretation "freed from a purely historical sense...which affects social identification and transformation in every act of reading" (Stamps 1992, 271, 273). Given this polarization, my goal is a study of method and a proposal for an interpretive context, not another critically arrived-at picture of the early church.

For this reason, chapter two contains a very brief summary of some of the history of rhetoric, leading to its appropriation by and emergence on the stage of New Testament studies. Much has happened since James Muilenburg called for scholars to take up rhetorical criticism of the Bible in his presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1968, titled "After Form Criticism What?" See Duane F. Watson (1994) for a comprehensive bibliography of rhetorical criticism. Still one of the best early surveys of the last decades of rhetorical criticism is C. Clifton Black (1989, 252-258). Wilhelm Wuellner (1987,448-463) also added a helpful but somewhat more partisan survey. Specifically, in chapter four we will examine the ongoing debate (if, indeed, there is sufficient dialogue to call it a debate) between those heirs of Muilenburg's speech who use their work to search for historical-critical conclusions (that is, those concerned with the point of origin of the rhetorical text in the ancient world), and those for whom questions of power and performance are paramount (that is, those concerned with point of consumption of the rhetorical text, whenever that may be). Our purpose here is to determine how our concept of visionary or creative rhetoric falls between these two extremes.

Much of the debate is centred on the definition, and usefulness, of the term "rhetorical situation", a concept introduced to the contemporary discussion by Lloyd Bitzer in 1968 (1-14) and subsequently picked up by many rhetorical critics of the New Testament. In its essence, my proposal is to turn this term - rhetorical situation - on its head and realign it not with the background but with the *issue* of Paul's letters. Especially a definition of a uniquely biblical rhetorical criticism, attempted in chapter five, must grapple with the differences between stylistics and argumentation theory, between formal and hermeneutical analyses, and between classical rhetoric and the so-called 'new' rhetoric.

In brief, classical rhetoric is generally defined as the rhetoric practiced in the ancient world (although a view of ancient rhetoric as homogeneous is problematic), set forth in the handbooks (*technai*) and elementary rhetorical exercises (*progymnasmata*) and studied or used by those contemporary scholars who base their research on discoveries of specific

rhetorical patterns in the text. 'New' rhetoric on the other hand is primarily, but not always, identified with a broader definition of argumentation not restricted to the classical examples, and first put forward in the modern debate by Chaim Perelman and Luci Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969). I believe that Paul's visionary rhetoric, like this 'new' rhetoric, will show how persuasion worked on a scale larger than the use of the individual classical and technical forms. What is more, to adopt this larger view of argumentation is not to hide rhetoric behind hermeneutics, since it is first and foremost still the persuasive process that is the focus of study.

Chapter six brings the discussion to bear on a specific text: the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians. The integrity of the text of the letter is generally agreed upon (Fee 1987, 15-16), and therefore is assumed throughout this work. It is also seen here as at least the third communication the apostle had with his congregation. Namely:

1. His first visit (c.f. Acts 18)
2. The 'previous letter' remarked on in 1 Cor 5:9
3. Our 1 Corinthians.

My reason for choosing 1 Corinthians is simple. It is the letter which, on the surface at least, is most amenable to being used as proof for the thesis' opposite. Who needs a 'world in the work' when 1 Corinthians seems to be so descriptive of its own historical context? If the 'world of the work' can be shown to exist here, it should be correspondingly easier to find in Paul's other letters. Moreover, 1 Corinthians already has been the subject of a number of previous rhetorical analyses[1], and these provide a number of interesting points of departure and debating partners for the interpretive strategy here proposed.

Clearly a strong argument for a purely historical-critical use of rhetorical criticism can - and has (Mitchell 1991) - been made for 1 Corinthians. In the letter we read of

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[1]   . E. Schussler-Fiorenza "Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians", *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987):386-403; Elizabeth Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Westminster: John Knox, 1991); Dennis L. Stamps, *The Rhetoric of Power: The Rhetorical Use of the Episolary Form in 1 Corinthians*, JSNT Supplement Series (Sheffield: JSOT Press); Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991); Stephen M. Pogoloff *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* SBL Dissertation Series 134 (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1992); Duane Litfin *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge: University Press, 1994); sections in Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christsian Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1996b); and others (see the bibliography).

specific names, places, and problems. Therefore, if it can be shown that rhetorical criticism as historical tool fails to deliver significant new information in the case of Corinth, it follows that such a technique will yield even fewer results with other, less descriptive New Testament texts. In effect then, I am proposing to test the historical-critical value of contemporary rhetorical criticism on textual territory that it has claimed for itself - the first chapters of 1 Corinthians.

The next section of the thesis moves to more purely literary questions, seeking support from fields paralleling rhetoric. Arguments drawn from metaphor, poetics, and narrative theory will develop the viewpoint that rhetoric's proper concern is historical expectation, and that it is at best neutral and at times even antagonistic when conscripted for the task of accurate historical recollection. Alternative - even conflictual - ways of understanding meaning in texts will be discussed, exploring the New Testament bases for rhetoric in authority rather than rationality (Jasper 1990, 136; also Kennedy 1984, 104-107). This, of course, will bring us again to the concept of a uniquely biblical rhetoric first discussed in chapter four.

The conclusion will examine whether sufficient evidence has been presented to justify greater caution when using rhetorical literature - that is, Paul's letters - as historical evidence for his situation or that of his churches. If, in fact, our picture of the Corinthian church reveals more about the apostle's 'virtual reality' (to steal a phrase which is taking on meaning in our present culture) than the Corinthians' actual experiences, does this leave us with only literary conclusions? Or, as I argue, does an appreciation for what happened after the letter was written identify the 'world in the text' approach as just as historical as it is literary?

The Rationale for Another Paul Study

Perhaps, before beginning, another preliminary question should be addressed, and that question is: why Paul? Since the discoveries unearthed at Nag Hammadi and in light of the growing appreciation and use of all non-canonical writings by New Testament scholars, more and more one must see early Christianity for the diverse and almost unruly phenomenon that it surely was. Of course, Walter Bauer's influential work, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* had already set the stage by stating that in many areas, what would later be condemned as heresy was in fact the earliest expression of the Christian movement. For comparison one might look to Puritanism, which despite being an overwhelmingly successful export to the New World, was not the only nor, arguably, the most important religious movement in England during the 17th century. Likewise, despite

his overwhelming importance to the canon of the New Testament, Paul himself noted that he did not speak for all of earliest Christianity. John Kloppenborg (1996) states: "Pauline theology and Paul's conception of Christian communities have...received a privileged position in the history of scholarship, with the result that it has been, and remains, extremely difficult to appreciate other equally primitive theologies and ecclesial conceptions, simply because of the compelling effect that centuries of replication of his theology have had on the history of New Testament scholarship". James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester in their 1971 work *Trajectories through Early Christianity* called such currents "trajectories", dynamic traditions about Jesus which may be traced forward and backward in time, and many of which are contemporary with the canonical New Testament.

Without in any way denying the importance of these other currents of Christianity, what for Kloppenborg in his article is "the problem of Paul", is for me the opportunity for study. It is precisely the way that Paul's vision for the church, marginal at first (as he himself almost admits in Galatians), came to prominence that interests me. Apart from the fortunes of geography and history, what was it about Paul's vision that led to such a powerful replication of his theology? Paul's congregations were not the only, nor at first the most powerful, representatives of the Jesus movement. Yet within a century or so, Paul's writings were in common use in Asia Minor and west to Rome (Hultgren 1994, 65-66; Kummel ET 1975, 480-481). In other ways also - including organizationally - the churches of the west bore his unmistakable imprint. If, as I maintain, rhetoric in general and Paul's rhetoric in particular has an historical issue as well as an historical background, and if, as I propose, this future orientation of his rhetoric is its most important feature, then the growth of 'Pauline' Christianity may well be traced back first to Paul's own visionary rhetoric.

CHAPTER ONE:

A Troubled History

"The situation in Corinth was not pretty": so began an article by Peter Lampe in the April 1990 issue of Interpretation (117-131). Over the centuries, most readers of the New Testament letter have agreed with him. But even such a simple observation begs a number of rather complex questions. How does Lampe - or any scholar - determine with certainty what actually was the specific situation in one of the earliest Christian churches? And why is such information judged to be important?

Historians can perhaps claim interest in history for its own sake, although the more honest rarely do (Carr 1961,108). Even Heroditus claimed that he wrote history in order not to repeat it. In our own field, biblical scholars are supposed to be more explicitly interested in history as a means to an end, that end traditionally being the rendering of the all-important 'meaning' of biblical texts, or increasingly now, the *multiple* meanings of such texts. Since the Enlightenment, the generally accepted way for Biblical scholars to approach texts has been an attempt at interpretative clarity through 'disinterested' exegesis. Already in 1788 Karl G. Keil, a Leipzig theologian, advocated what he called the 'grammatico-historical' method for studying scripture. Notably, its aims were "to think the author's thoughts after him", and whatever else, to leave "out of consideration" the divine inspiration of New Testament books (Kummel 1972, 108). Interpretation risked escaping from dogma, and it was during this period that the historian finally began to peek out from under the cloaks of the church.

From Keil in 18th century Leipzig there extends to the present a long, honourable, and clear tradition of 'objective exegesis'. However, this history was never untroubled. Once the critic sets the question of application aside (as objective exegesis must), he or she is open to the criticism that whatever history they find is without meaning. Thus Schleiermacher, for example, was forced to replace the search for a contemporary, spiritual and personal meaning with a search for the psychological and linguistic background to the New Testament. In short, history and theology had become uneasy partners in New Testament interpretation. Whenever theology has had the upper hand, it has always been with the suspicion that it was rewriting history or claiming an ideal state 'above' history (such as may be true of the picture of the New Testament church shown in Acts, for example). But whenever history had the upper hand in interpretation, it has seemed directionless or occupied with minutiae that in the end didn't really seem to matter. Why let the magisterium of the church (or later, churches) tell us what the New Testament says?

But on the other hand, why explore the history of this particular book if it says nothing to our lives?

Hans Dieter Betz, a pioneer in rhetorical studies of the NT, wrote in his introduction to the influential *Hermeneia: Galatians* commentary: "The historian's work is to prepare the reader sufficiently for his own understanding, to provide a scientific basis of judgement, and to safeguard against arbitrariness, lack of perspective, or ideological prejudices" (1979, xv). Yet the difficulty of the task becomes clear even in this example. It is worth noting that Betz, in almost the same breath in his introduction, remarks on the contemporary relevance of Paul's views, revealing what many would call an 'ideological prejudice' before even beginning his work. According to the rational model, the search for solid historical data is meant to provide context, elucidation, and background for the task of deriving 'meaning'. As one New Testament introduction put it: "By examining the New Testament in the complex social environment in which it originated and by attempting to discover the historical concerns and purposes of its authors, we can free ourselves to hear the voices of early Christianity speaking as meaningfully to us today as they did to their first audience" (Harris 1988,2).

These are indeed hopeful words. In practice, the historical-critical path to understanding New Testament texts seems to lead only part-way to the clarity which introductions to the field tend to promise. For starters, Biblical scholars face the daunting task of looking for history in the pages of what seems often to be more like literature. Secondly, the legitimacy of the idea that one can be an impartial observer of the biblical texts (or any other) is under attack and has been for some time. "Like the physicists who no longer claim to be able to measure simultaneously and objectively the speed and location of light, scholars of Christian origin must acknowledge that their own positions as observers eliminate the possibility of making completely objective judgements about early Christianity", say Castelli and Taussig (1996, 14). Thirdly, in light of the this, some are calling Biblical scholars, once the servants of the church, then 'freed' by a scientific method which proved to have its own biases, back into a conscious commitment, this time to pluralism:

> The canon was the result of a deliberate attempt to exclude certain voices from the early period of Christianity: heretics, Marcionites, Gnosticism, Jewish Christians, perhaps also women. It is the responsibility of the New Testament scholar to help these voices to be heard again (Koester 1991, 472).

Fourthly, even if one were able to isolate the original voices of early Christianity, would they be speaking 'meaningfully' to us, or more often arguing with each other? The diversity and in fact the fractious nature of early Christianity is being acknowledged more readily in our day than ever before (Dunn 1990). And, finally, there is the question, raised by the postmodernists, of the meaning of meaning itself. At a time when there is no real consensus on what kind of meaning historical research is supposed to illuminate, i.e. formal, epistemological, sociological, phenomenological or other, it is not surprising that there is a correspondingly sharp disagreement in the guild of New Testament scholarship not only on methodology, but also on overall objectives. We do not even know what kind of 'meaning' we are looking for. Not unlike the picture Paul paints of Corinth there have been many competing voices in contemporary scholarship. And if the situation in Corinth was not pretty, perhaps neither has the situation in New Testament studies always been.

The situation, fortunately, is improving. Vernon Robbins (1996b, 240) shows how a more interdisciplinary approach, one which 'invites' conversation among interpretive strategies, is particularly suited to (and suitable for) rhetorical criticism. For if rhetorical criticism is an historical undertaking (Mitchell 1991) solely, it faces basic problems in undertaking the historical task which all the criticisms have shown to be extremely difficult. Perhaps there is another way.

The Other Side of History

"Until now the animals had been about equally divided in their sympathies, but in a moment Snowball's eloquence had carried them away. In glowing sentences he painted a picture of Animal Farm as it might be when sordid labour was lifted from the animals' backs...By the time he had finished speaking, there was no doubt as to which way the vote would go" (George Orwell, Animal Farm 57).

Given the sheer volume of scholarship (Furnish 1989, chap 12) which has been devoted to examining Paul and his congregations, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to what the texts portray as the apostle's main concern: not what his congregations were in any objective, historical sense, but what they were in relationship to him and to God. While his writings are not naive or ignorant of the human condition and its attendant human failings, nor of the social circumstances of his readers (a more recent scholarly emphasis), Paul far more often concerns himself with the way that his readers are, to use his recurring and programmatic phrase, 'in Christ'. It is vitally important to

realize that this is his point of departure and forms the basis for his social description and his hortatory message.

Thus the positive focus of this present work is on Paul's congregations, not as they were, but as the letters indicated they should be, and on the linkage this vision in the letters provides between literary and historical concerns, author and reader.

Behind my argument stand two commonly agreed-upon observations: firstly, that the New Testament and other early Christian writings are our primary - and quite often our only - significant evidence for earliest Christianity; and secondly, that almost all of Paul's writings were influenced in a profound way by rhetoric, as it was practiced and lived out culturally in the ancient world.

The extent to which our pictures of the New Testament church derive from the New Testament itself - with little outside corroboration - is hard to overstate. It is perhaps only our familiarity with this methodological straitjacket that allows us to forget at times that it is there. "Our dependence on these texts is absolute. It is the only 'hard' evidence available to the historian and interpreter...Our knowledge of the Hellenistic world and of first-century Judaism is far too limited to offer another vantage point to control the analysis of these writings" (Wisse 1990, 167). It is possible that in the case of literary parallels, at least to the Pauline letters, there may be a limited exception to this principle (Stowers 1986, 25). As well, much sociological work has been done in recent years on the Hellenistic context, but only so many general inferences may be taken from these findings, interesting as they are.

One may make the case that, in the case of Corinth, we have more external (non-textual) corroboration than with most of Paul's letters. Yet even the famous pavement stones given by "Erastus the Aedile" (Meeks 1983, 48, 58-59; Theissen ET 1982, 80-83) indicate only that it is likely that one prominent member of the Corinthian church was an important city official. Moving from that probability to a definitive division of the congregation along precise sociological lines or, worse, using one or two probabilities to 'rebuild' an entire community that once existed is stepping too far into the realm of conjecture (Oster 1992, 52-73).

Add to this limited corroboration the reason for which Paul's letters were written - to convince, cajole, and instruct - and you have the best of reasons for historical skepticism. Furthermore, Paul's letters were written within a culture where persuasion was an art. Rhetoric was not simply, in the ancient world, a learned discipline, but an imbibed way of life: "We have mistakenly understood [rhetoric] as narrowly concerned with style, or as no more than a dry collection of rules, or as the reserve of an educated elite. Rather, it affected virtually all Greco-Roman culture" (Pogoloff 1992,1). "Rhetoric...is more than a

tool-box from which to borrow at will...It is also a necessary, though not a sufficient or unambiguous, presupposition for modern exegesis" (Henderson 1996,70). Thus both the lack of corroborative evidence, and the purpose of Paul's writings must be kept in mind when attempting an historical perspective.

While contemporary New Testament scholars now regard these considerations almost as truisms, it is instructive that the difficulties of relying so heavily for data on a self-avowedly 'slanted' work like an epistle are rarely admitted. Even the most irenic passages in Paul are crafted for the purpose of persuasion. 'Mirror-reading' (Barclay 1987, 73-93) them as primary historical evidence is thus an enterprise fraught with methodological pitfalls, requiring constant attention to the nature of rhetoric, to what I would call the *momentum* of rhetorical discourse, that is, the desire of a rhetorical speech or piece of writing to persuade its audience, and the steps it takes to move its audience in that direction. "I have spoken, you have heard, you have the facts, judge" (Aristot. *Rhetoric*, 261).

Specifically, it is the status of rhetorical material as historical evidence in the New Testament, and the type of meaning that these texts generally convey, that should be subject to scrutiny. As such it is part of the larger interpretive problem, to use Schussler-Fiorenza's words, of "social-historical reconstruction on the basis of texts" - in this case, rhetorical texts (1989, 19-34). As stated, the goal of the study is twofold: firstly, a reasonable caution in the face of various interpretive results produced by those who practice rhetorical analyses for the sake of historical or socio-historical reconstruction. Secondly, a positive attempt to link Paul's rhetoric with the historical outcome of his writing by means of recourse to hermeneutical, theological and ethical concepts. Thus although the present work falls also under the rubric of 'Rhetorical Criticism', rhetorical criticism must itself become part of the study, insofar as not all rhetorical critics share the same critical stances and objectives (Mitchell 1991, 6).

What was rhetoric capable of, and what uses can the study of it bear now? Can one use a rhetorical text, driven as it is by a vision of the future, as a blueprint by which to piece together the past? Perhaps the question itself is rhetorical, for in fact that is precisely what New Testament scholars do all the time. But my point is that, because so much is being written in the field, new ways of assessing scholarly conclusions are constantly needed (Robbins 1996b, 42). Integral to evaluating the success of any historical reconstruction of New Testament communities should be recognizing the limitations imposed on us and the possibilities opened to us by the very nature and purpose of rhetoric.

Part of what I hope to show is that the whole *raison-d'etre* of rhetoric acts against those who struggle hopefully to organize historical data from it. Since its birth, rhetoric has been understood to be the art of persuasion. Although Aristotle himself took pains to say that rhetoric does not itself persuade, but seeks the persuasiveness of which any matter 'admits', the distinction is lost even in his own treatment and certainly by most later writers, who did not subscribe to such a fine distinction, nor had they Aristotle's philosophical reasons to do so. Aristotle in fact distinguished rhetoric as that art which has no "special province", but which concerns itself with the persuasiveness of any subject matter (*Rhetoric*, 74).

At its most basic then, rhetoric (most especially of the type in Paul) is profoundly about the future. Here I follow the lead of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca: "argumentation [exists] above all in its practical effects: oriented toward the future, it sets out to bring about some action or to prepare for it" (1969, 47). Against Mitchell (1991,6-8), I do not believe that a general sense of the future-orientation of rhetoric means a 'redefinition' of the three categories of rhetoric known since antiquity. Of the three types of rhetoric identified since classical times as judicial, epideictic and deliberative, even judicial rhetoric, with its emphasis on accusation or defense based on a presentation of past events, is ultimately concerned with the fate - that is, the future - of the accused. In any case, I will propose that despite similarities especially to deliberative rhetoric, biblical rhetoric constitutes what was, in effect, a unique genre.

Whatever its classification, the interest rhetoric takes in the past is primarily for the purpose of appropriating it in order to influence action in the near or distant future. Historical study, by contrast, is at least in theory *about* the past. Historical investigation seeks what was most 'real' in an empirical sense; rhetoric seeks what will be most persuasive in an ideological sense. Rhetoric desires to build a world that not yet is; historical reconstruction wants to rebuild a world that was. While it would be wrong to say that there is no connection between people's historical context and what they wish to persuade themselves or others about, I argue that once the importance of rhetoric is acknowledged, the connection in a rhetorical document such as one of Paul's letters between context and desire, which must account for perception as well as persuasion, is so complex as to make actual historical circumstance unrecoverable to later interpreters in many cases.

Arguing For the Contrary

"The thesis is the first among the preparatory exercises to include a counter-thesis and a rebuttal to that which is questioned" (The Progymnasmata of Aphthonius. trans. Ray Nadeau. Section XIII).

A reasonable assumption holds that we should be concerned to recover as much historical information as possible from ancient Christian texts like Paul's letters; that if pressed such letters can and will give up a coherent - even detailed - picture of their original context. While it is recognized that most New Testament writings reflect little direct historical information (for instance: names, dates, places, and events), the great discovery of enlightenment biblical scholars was that, like an Etruscan vase, even the form of a text can be used as evidence for the historical circumstances surrounding its writing: "The historical relevance of a literary text is not limited to the historical details it reports directly, but extends to the historical circumstances of its composition which it reflects indirectly" (Wisse1992, 38).

Stated baldly and directed at the object of its scrutiny, the expectation of most New Testament scholarship might run thus: "You Galatians and Romans cannot hide the full circumstances of your writing and reception forever - we'll find the interpretive key at some point". Betz (1979 xiv), as much as says this: "Galatians is still a mystery to be unlocked". The argument recognizes that no matter what usage Paul's letters have now, they were once written by a real person to other real persons for some 'real' reason - in other words, they had a concrete context and rationale. As Kloppenborg (1996, 253) notes: "since Reimarus", New Testament criticism has "committed itself to rigorous historical contextualization of the texts of primitive Christianity". Remembering that texts come from other places and times is a recognition of the importance of context, and as such is an important counterbalance to the remarkably popular ahistoricism that uses Paul's 'love chapter' in 1 Corinthians 13, for instance, as if it was written specifically for modern day marriage rites or Christian wall plaques.

Historical scrutiny is practiced because it works. We have learned much about Hellenistic culture in the first century, and may in some cases even know a great deal more than people considerably closer in time to the actual events of that period. Studies in comparative literature and archaeology help set the context within which the New Testament makes more sense. For example, discovery (or rediscovery) of the bias of the Roman legal system illuminates somewhat Paul's advice on civil litigation (Winter1991, 559-572), just as the greater knowledge we have of room sizes and meal manners in a

wealthy Greco-Roman home (Meeks 1983, 75-77) may help us understand some of the problems an early Christian church may have had in celebrating the Eucharist.

In fact, Paul's letters are particularly attractive in the search for historical or socio-historical data. They are, after all, the earliest extant Christian literature. They are primary sources; letters written by a church-planter to congregations in the dawn of Christianity, letters which address a wide range of social concerns.

Within this corpus of letters, the first chapters of First Corinthians are a good example of how much may be learned using a social-historical yardstick. It is no coincidence that the chapters have attracted so many social-historical studies. Apparent hints are given in the text as to the Corinthians' genesis as a church ("I belong to..."), their social status ("not many of you were wise...powerful..."), and their social cohesiveness ("divisions among you"). Paul alludes in some intriguing ways to his appearance, his initial message and his personal style of preaching (2:3-4). The situation of a man "living with his father's wife" (5:1) and the implication of lawsuits between congregational members (6:7) are fertile ground for those seeking to understand social intercourse in this early Christian group. If any section of the New Testament can yield substantial social history, surely this is it.

Hard Results and Soft History: the Myriad Results of 'Historical' Studies

Yet even here, in one of the most 'historical' of New Testament books, history is teasingly difficult to hang on to. Exactly what was going on in that congregation? Of course, rhetorical critics are not the first to sound a cautionary note about historical speculation. C.K. Barrett surely had the plethora of historical 'reconstructions' in mind when he stated: "full as the Corinthian letters are of valuable raw material, it is no easy task to win from them a clear account of what was going on in the Corinthian church of the 50s of the first century" (1982, 1).

A summary of work done on the letter shows that historical-critical opinion has tended to follow any of three main options in 'setting the scene' for First Corinthians: 1/ Paul is up against outsiders who are interfering with his original good work in Corinth; 2/ Paul as the founder, is intervening in a congregation whose members are now split among themselves; or finally, 3/ Paul is dealing with a congregation 'run amok' and turning on him, its founder. I will examine briefly each of these in turn.

1/ Outside Interference. This older and now somewhat discarded view of 1 Corinthians depends on first seeing an overall picture of earliest Christianity as a war between two

powerful factions of Christian faith, one based in Jerusalem and Antioch, the other in the Gentile world among Paul's congregations. It holds that the purpose of the letter is to refute the personal attacks and congregational trouble stirred up by the same 'Judaizing opponents' we encounter in Paul's other letters, most notably Galatians, but certainly also in 2 Corinthians.

Here one must see 1 Corinthians within the context of the entire corpus of Paul's writings, and within the picture of earliest Christianity presented there. A battle fought on several fronts between Palestinian Christianity and the younger, more dynamic Gentile Christianity of Paul is presumed: "Suffice it to say that...[there were] Judaizing Christians engaged in a deliberate anti-Pauline mission, on behalf of the Judaizing wing of Palestinian Christianity", writes Forbes (1986, 15). This approach to 1 Corinthians sometimes emphasizes the differences between Paul and the older apostles, especially Peter, and the letter is seen against the background of a much larger struggle between Jewish Christianity and the growing and increasingly self-conscious Gentile wing of the new Church.

Links to the specific situation of the letter are found in 1 Corinthians 1:12, where Peter is mentioned and 1 Cor 8:7-13, where those who are 'weak' with regard to diet are mentioned. F.C. Baur's reconstruction of earliest Christianity presented first in his 1831 work in the Corinthian correspondence, provided the impetus and the theoretical structure for this view:

> The opponents whom the apostle attacks in the Letter to the Galatians belong wholly in the same class with those with whom he had to do in the Letters to the Corinthians...The attack on these Judaizing false teachers makes up a large part of the Letter to the Galatians and here there can be no doubt about the matter. However, it is usually less frequently observed that these very false teachers combined with their Judaism attacks on the apostolic authority of the apostle Paul that can have had no other tendency than those against which the apostle had to defend himself vis-a-vis the Corinthian congregation... (Quoted in Kummel (1972, 129))

Once divorced from a grander understanding of a conflict in early Christianity, however, the passages in 1 Corinthians sometimes used to support a Jewish-Gentile view cannot bear the weight of evidence needed. Watson (1986) 81, points out that the 'weak' mentioned in 1 Cor 8 hardly take a typically Jewish attitude toward food offered to idols, and thus are much more likely to be of Greco-Roman origin. The argument concerning the mention of Peter in 1:12 and linking that to a specific Petrine party is subject to the same

restrictions as all the other 'parties'. As Munck (1959, 150) has noted, "at bottom it is only the word 'I', in the sentences 'I belong to Paul' etc. against which he [Paul] argues".

2/ Internal Strife. This view maintains that in fact the conflict in the letter has to do with Paul only in a secondary sense, and the letter's main purpose is the attempt of Paul as the founder to heal - or at least regulate - a fractured and squabbling church at Corinth.

This option takes the plain reading of Paul's first chapter at face value. In verse 1:10 (a verse that in rhetorical terms serves as a thesis statement for much of what follows) Paul writes of his desire for community unity: "Now I appeal (παρακαλῶ) to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose" (NRSV). The apostle then goes on to say that Chloe's people' have reported "quarrels" in the congregation. In fact, this is a Pauline word found often in vice lists (1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; Rom 1:29; 13:13; Phil 1:15; 1 Tim 6:4; Titus 3:9). Thus Pogoloff (1992, 237) writes: "Paul is responding to an exigence of division in the community", or Mitchell (1991,1), somewhat more tempered "1 Corinthians is throughout an argument for ecclesial unity".

The question of what might have troubled the unity of the Corinthian congregation has led more and more, recently, to a sociological explanation. Gerd Theissen maintains that there was a tension between Greco-Roman social classes which created fault lines in the congregation, where the "majority of the members, who come from the lower classes, stand in contrast to a few influential members who come from the upper classes"(1982, 69). But where Theissen ultimately seems to point to the positive possibilities of such a synthesis - Christianity as "the creative answer to radical social changes", others are less sanguine. I concur with Henderson (1996,19), who points out that holding an egalitarian ideal of Christian community while living with the very real status differences inherent in Greco-Roman culture, necessarily led to tensions.

However, where this approach to 1 Corinthians shows its own fault lines is in the tendency to assume that the fractiousness written about at Corinth means that it was a community split into a number of actual 'parties'. These parties are seen to be indicated primarily in 1:10-12, but also in 3:4-5 and 11:18-19. Scholars adopting this approach focus on the internal divisions indicated in the letter and often attempt "to apportion the polemic of this letter so as to correlate with the parties" (Kummel 1975, 273. For Kummel's opinion of this enterprise see also p. 274). Although the tendency to create full-blown partisan groups (Hurd surveys some possibilities (1965, 96-107)) where Paul mentions "divisions"

(σχίσματα, 1:10) or "strife" (ἔριδες 1:11) was criticized strongly by Conzelmann (1975,14) and Munck (ET 1959, chap 5), and has been somewhat less noticeable in recent years, it still plays a strong, and perhaps even sometimes unconscious, role in our view of the early congregation. Thus, for example, Witherington's 1994 'socio-rhetorical commentary' on the letter uses the word 'factions' without particularly identifying them: "In 1 Corinthians, Paul's primary task was to reconcile members of a faction-ridden congregation to each other"(46). It is surprising that after such a rigorous historical analysis, Mitchell's 1991 treatment can do little better than likewise to conclude that the over-riding problem named by the letter is the existence of σχίσματα or factions (302).

3/ A Questioning of Paul's Authority. The third usual way of interpreting the historical situation behind the letter is the view that that the so-called 'parties' in Corinth are secondary to the real concern of the letter, which is to bridge the rift which had developed between the Corinthian congregation *as a whole* and Paul, its founder. These scholars see the real issue as the external strife between apostle and congregation, with the disputed authority of the former very much at the heart of the letter. Paul's opponents, according to this view, come from the congregation itself (perhaps even representing the majority of its members) and do not represent the same 'troublemakers' who so preoccupy the apostle in Galatians and 2 Corinthians. Within this view of the historical context, scholars suggest a number of different views of the congregation. Almost all such portraits have overlapping features - after all, one has to infer from so few textual clues. But even so, scholars have claimed about the Corinthians that:

a/ they had become the 'hyper-Paulinists' referred to above, their antinomian tendencies nicely encapsulated in the refrain "all things are lawful" (6:12). In their emphases on total freedom for the believer, these opponents had become more Pauline than Paul, and the apostle was forced to battle those who had taken his own libertine tendencies too far.

b/ they were "proto-gnostics" (Conzelmann 1975, 15), who were more or less naturally syncretizing their own recent religious pasts and contexts with Paul's message.

c/ they were enthusiasts, 'puffed up' with knowledge but weak in love (8:1). Bornkamm posits that the "really dangerous thing" for Paul was the "sudden

appearance" of a group of "enthusiasts" (ET 1971, 71). He uses the term "movement", which may or may not mean that he believes the enthusiasts formed another group in addition to the ones mentioned in 1:12.

d/ within the congregation there had formed a group of women ecstatics, who sought release from gender roles in androgyny and cross-dressing, dangerous to the community's harmony and its reputation. (Macdonald 1990, 166).

e/ they were quite simply Greco-Roman citizens from all classes, who had developed both because of their cultural context and also because of comparison with other, better Christian rhetors, a disdain for Paul's preaching which threatened his authority with them. "Central to all these problems, however, was the difficulty addressed in 1 Cor.1-4, namely, criticisms, on the part of some of the Corinthians, of Paul's preaching" (Litfin 1994, 151).

f/ They were social creatures above all, familiar with the usual 'patron-client' way of relating in the Roman world, and offended that Paul refused to be their client and therefore beholden to them. "In a city where social climbing was a major preoccupation, Paul's deliberate stepping-down in apparent status would have been seen by many as disturbing, disgusting, and even provocative" (Witherington 1995, 21).

g/ they suffered from the whole gamut of these problems - and more: "The rhetorical situation which prompts this long and serious letter," writes Witherington (1995, 78), "is that Paul believes it necessary to combat some serious social, ethical, ecclesiological, and theological errors in Corinth". (Witherington's use of the term 'rhetorical situation' where one might expect 'historical situation' or just 'situation' points to the confusion surrounding use of this term, a confusion addressed in the next chapters).

In looking at this quick summary, it is hard not to concur with J.C. Hurd. Already in the mid 1960's, summing up what was then the latest in scholarly opinion, Hurd concluded after a survey of bewildering options that "Perhaps more often than not the answer which scholars have given to this question has been determined more by what each

scholar has brought to 1 Corinthians than by what he has learned from this letter" (Hurd 1965, 107; survey 96-107).

Yet wherever else they travel in the text, the desire to find the history behind 1 Corinthians almost inevitably brings commentators to the seemingly paradigmatic verses of 1:10-12. Fee remarks about verse 12 - the "I belong to..." verse: "This verse is a crux in terms of how one is going to understand 1 Corinthians as a whole and especially the historical situation of the church to which Paul is writing. (Fee 1987, 55)". Fee believes that the conflict and driving tension of the letter may be summarized as Paul versus the whole Corinthian congregation, and thus he eventually comes down in favour of that option among the others just presented. I think it more probable and not too subtle a difference, given the very nature of rhetoric, that what is at issue is Paul's vision of the church versus what Paul presents as the Corinthian vision of the church. As Robbins (1996b, 188-189) suggests, Paul is presenting a certain rhetorical picture of the congregation as divided precisely in order to avoid that eventuality by putting an alternative vision of a congregation (unified around the apostle) in place first.

The fact that so many readers, scholarly and not, of Paul's first letter to Corinth have accepted the view of the church there as fractious and squabbling is testimony to the power of the apostle's rhetoric. We have accepted the letter's depiction of the Christians at Corinth as historical reality, without first reminding ourselves of the first fact of these texts: that there is another purpose (besides description) to Paul's writing.

To say there was conflict between people is to make an historical assertion. Conflict between *visions*, however, is rhetorical and literary, and, after all, the evidence we have is rhetorical and literary. It is true, as Marshall stated in 1987, that at that time much of the history of Corinthian study had been preoccupied with literary and theological questions, and that sociological and historical studies represented a 'fresh wind'. But perhaps there is room yet for a few musings about how rhetoric may illuminate the dark corners of our literary and theological questions. Thus where Fee, and most other commentators, have jumped immediately from Paul's letter to hypotheses about personalities and historical circumstance, I would like to wade about the shallower waters of literary representation for a while yet.

How to Mirror-Read A Rhetorical Letter
(The title, and some of the insights in this section, derive from Barclay 1987, 73-93)

There has never been any doubt that Paul's letters are set in a particular time and place, and once were addressed (more or less!) to specific people. But we have seen how it

is precisely this clearly historical backdrop to Paul's letters, and their amenability to social-historical analysis that at times may be misleading. A fairly straightforward, one-to-one relationship between text and history too often is assumed. This correlation need not be positive (i.e. expecting that Paul will describe all the social groupings in a congregation); given Paul's characteristic acid and bombast, the more common route is to seek historical data by building on his vituperations.

As a photograph relates to its negative, information about Paul's congregations is inferred by taking the mirror image of what he says. Thus, when during an argument for propriety Paul uses the phrase "all things are lawful for me" it is easy to assume (as we just witnessed) that some more or less organized libertine party existed in Corinth for whom this in fact was a kind of positive slogan. The problem with this approach is that it takes little account of the posturing necessary to argumentation. Think of the analogy of a screen-saver program on a computer monitor. There are, for example, clouds floating across the computer monitor. No one disagrees that there are such things as clouds. The disagreement may be in why they are there; whether the software-generated bits of fluff function first to represent historical reality (as they do), or to serve some internal need in the system (in this case, screen preservation). Likewise, one need not deny the existence of opponents to Paul in order to claim that they act and appear the way they do in the letters because it serves the internal need of his 'program'.

An Answer That Goes Beyond the Question

"Life consists of what a man is thinking of all day" (Ralph Waldo Emerson)
"Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind" (Paul)
"The study of history is a study of causes" (E.H. Carr)

'Situation in life' is one way of translating the German expression *Sitz-im-Leben*. Another might be 'historical context', since the phrase is a necessary reminder that every text has a context, an origin and a genesis. This is patently clear of a signed letter. There were Corinthian Christians, there were problems of some sort, and there was a Paul.

We know there was a setting; reconstructing it is the task of social-historical criticism. How we go about that task depends on how transparent or muddled, direct or attenuated, we see the link between these texts and their life setting to be.

In general, the criticism I bring to existing rhetorical studies is that they have been too quick to see a direct link between text and historical occasion. To illustrate the

inadequacy of this one-to-one approach, consider the very way we talk. Those who consciously or unconsciously assume that every reference in a Pauline letter has a *Sitz-im-Leben* must also assume an economy in human communication that is simply rarely attested in modern discourse. Anyone who has asked a quick question and received a lecture knows that responses, especially from the knowledgeable, tend to take on a dynamic all out of proportion to the occasions that gave rise to them. Little has changed. Note Socrates' complaint of his contemporaries, the public speakers of Athens: "If you question even a small point in what has been said, just as brazen vessels ring a long time after they have been struck and prolong a note unless you put your hand on them, the orators too, on being asked a little question, extend their speech over a full-length course" (in *Protagoras*).

Clearly this was true of Paul. We know, for instance, that a group had just come from Corinth, visited Paul, and communicated to him something of the situation in that city. Paul makes reference to this group, calling them "Chloe's people", in 1 Cor 1:11. Whether or not 'Chloe's people' were based in Corinth or Ephesus - see Fee (1987, 54) - is not our concern here, and need not be addressed. In addition to this personal visit, we have reference to a letter from Corinth to Paul, containing questions for the apostle, in 1 Cor 7:1.

But these are historical hooks on which only so much reconstruction may be hung. One may say that Chloe's report in addition to the letter from the community at Corinth formed a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the existence of the letter we know as 1 Corinthians. Paul's answer went beyond the question. It is precisely that kind of creative, global, evocative response that becomes a sermonic reality.

The point is that visionary rhetoric makes poor mortar for historical reconstruction. One cannot look at Galatians, for instance, without recognizing both the very specific historical situation Paul is addressing and the visionary, almost poetic heights he reaches in responding. From the same author in the same letter come "after three years I did go up to Jerusalem" and "for there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female". Neither the historical context of the letter nor what may be called its poetic nature may be denied.

Churches, of course, have always recognized a certain non-historical and programmatic aspect to Paul's letters. For a Christian congregation to make the jump from 'letters to them' to 'letters to us' requires a suspension of historical distance, and a willingness to find oneself and one's contemporary situation somehow reflected in sacred pages. The issue of "meat offered to idols" (1 Cor 8) has almost no apparent connection to a western, suburban Christian congregation, but its speakers and hearers alike will try with varying degrees of success to take a lesson from it. This can be taken to extremes (i.e.

Steve Martin's fictional revival preacher in the movie *Leap of Faith*) but the very notion of canonicity implies that texts can take new contexts, and so can continue to communicate across time and space. Clearly I take issue with Bornkamm's comment (ET 1971,109) that "It would seem quite impossible to make oneself at home in Paul's alien world of thought or feel oneself addressed personally". Large numbers of people do so all the time and have for millennia - whether or not we agree with their interpretation Paul in fact commands in 1 Thess 5:27 that his letters be read publicly, which seems to indicate that the move to a non-specific and programmatic application of those letters was no accident.

Description is historically bound; what may be called redescription is less so. In fact, redescription is historically open: that is, open to the future and the kinds of changes brought about when people believe that they participate in something more important than what the evidence of their senses and their daily lives tells them. Paul seems to give evidence of this kind of technique. When Paul calls the Corinthian Christians his "children", or boasts of their knowledge (1 Cor 1:5) he is not describing, but rather redescribing his readers. To what end?

Changing Opinion and Changing Your Mind: Rhetoric on More Than One Level

For as long as there have been speeches or books, literature and oratory have sought not so much to present a choice to readers or hearers, but to influence the decision-making process itself. They have done this by means of a certain turn of phrase or the unconscious adoption on the part of a reader of a narrator's perspective. This latter is greatly aided in situations where the narrator is either hidden, as in the Gospel of Mark, or where the author claims the authority of God, Jesus Christ, or both, as in Paul's letters.

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983), W. Booth distinguishes between the actual author/reader of a text and the implied author/reader. At the point of its reception, the implied author/reader of a letter is the image that readers construct of themselves and of the author of the document as they read and reflect (Schussler-Fiorenza 1987,389). The picture of the Corinthian Christians, for instance, as arrogant, squabbling, childish individuals wasting their potential and ignorant of their true nature is absolutely necessary to the letter's purpose. The letter does not simply set out choices for the Corinthians to decide on merit - "sue each other in public courts or do not" - but it seeks to determine choice by first determining self-perceptions: "do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" As Robbins (1996b, 188) notes: "One of the purposes of argumentative discourse is to 'create a particular kind of culture', and defining a situation in a particular way is an important technique in moving the discursive practices in a situation toward one's goals".

The first and most effective step in persuasion is to convince someone that the choice you wish for him or her to make is the choice they would make in any case, because of who they are. Cicero makes reference to this strategy (*De Partitione Oratoria* 46). One of the goals of argumentation, according to modern rhetorical theory as presented by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969 45), is to create "in the hearers a willingness to act which will appear at the right moment", in other words, a propensity to act in a certain way. But the strategy is hardly new, nor is it foreign to Christianity. The letter to Philemon is also a striking canonical example of this technique, and it has not lost its appeal in the intervening centuries. It is no mistake that on the eve of a national Canadian referendum where citizens were asked to vote yes or no to a compromise constitutional proposal, government-sponsored TV ads played on the theme that Canadians are a tolerant people given to compromise and accommodation. Viewers were not given the message "here's what you should do" until they had imbibed the message 'here's who you are'. The trick is literally 'as old as the book', in this case, Paul's book.

What I am proposing is that an examination of Paul's rhetoric will reveal it, even in the so-called 'historical' chapters of 1 Corinthians, to be evocative, visionary rhetoric of this kind. Paul's goal was not a social description of his readers, but a social redescription of his readers, a rhetorical strategy which modern interpreters ignore at their peril. To begin the task of proving this hypothesis, we must first examine whether the history of rhetoric itself allows for two suppositions: firstly, that Paul did indeed write rhetorically, and secondly, that the visionary, change-of-self-perception kind of rhetoric we have just discussed may properly be identified as rhetoric for the purposes of rhetorical criticism. It is to that task that we now turn.

CHAPTER TWO: WORDS WITH POWER

"As for words, whoever contends that they are not to be the guides of our actions is either dull of wit or has some private interest at stake" (Diodetus to Cleon, Thucydides 3:42:2, LCL).

A Modern Renaissance

Rhetorical study has regained its status as a recognized and valuable tool in the hands of biblical scholars. Regained, because from ancient times and throughout much of western history, rhetoric was at the root of academic endeavor. Its importance is hard to overestimate. It was basic to both classical and scholastic schooling: among the educated, training in some form of rhetoric was expected up until the early modern era. But if rhetoric was once neglected, in the words of Clifton Black, by "this forgetful century" (1989, 253), it is now being attended to increasingly by New Testament interpreters. Since the late 1960's, rhetorical analyses of all of the Pauline epistles have been written (Watson 1995, 226-42).[2]

For those interested in benchmarks, there are two occasions that vie for pride of place in the reintroduction of rhetorical study to the Bible. The first was the presidential address of James Muilenburg to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1968, titled "After Form Criticism What?" (1969, 1-18), in which he challenged scholars to pursue a new form of criticism of the biblical texts using rhetorical analysis. The second was the publication in 1979 of Hans Dieter Betz's *Hermeneia commentary* on *Galatians*, based on insights from his 1975 article in *New Testament Studies* on the same subject.

Muilenburg spoke primarily to Old Testament Studies, his own field, but his challenge was very quickly picked up by all those who were feeling frustrated with the limitations of form criticism. Form criticism, by emphasizing so strongly the development of genre and tradition and their influence on textual units, seemed almost to forget the human side of the equation. By contrast rhetoric includes the *ethos* or the character of the speaker/author as an integral part of the argument, necessarily drawing attention to the person or persons behind a letter or part of a document.

This personal focus of rhetoric promised a release from the sterility of some of form criticism. And on the other side, Muilenburg also saw the rhetorical criticism he envisaged

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[2] For summaries of the importance of rhetorical study, its demise and recovery, see, among others: Mack 1990, introduction; Kennedy 1984, chap 1; Ricoeur 1977 (a), study one; Stamps 1992, 268-272; Watson 1988, 1-8; and Pogoloff 1992, chapter one.

as a corrective to those literary critics who were tempted to forget history altogether in their focus on the text. Because rhetoric by nature aims to make a difference, the historical questions it raises may be the subject of disagreement, but can never be ignored. Thus Muilenburg, right from the beginning, pointed to the effect of biblical rhetoric as one of its interpretive clues. Although this future historical context of rhetoric suggested by Muilenburg was not picked up by others at the time, it should not be forgotten, especially as a much-needed balance in terms of method to the many rhetorical-critical studies now out.

But if Muilenburg identified the first steps on the path, it was Betz who trailblazed a new and ultimately different, direction in modern rhetorical studies. Betz saw Paul's letter to the Galatians as a mystery to be unlocked (1979, xiv) and proceeded to do so in the (at that time) novel way of applying Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions to it. His stated aim was to describe the formal and compositional structure of Galatians using these ancient conventions. And while there are many who disagree with his conclusions (for a thoughtful critique see Classen 1992, 319-344; reprinted in 1993), his success was evidenced by the fact that you cannot discuss modern rhetorical criticism without making reference to this monumental work. If imitation is the most sincere form of assigning importance to someone's work, Betz's contribution is also shown by the number of scholars who soon followed his volume with similar treatments of Paul's other letters.

Yet there were modern precursors to the work of both Betz and Muilenburg. Amos Wilder published his *Early Christian Rhetoric* in 1964, while Wilhelm Wuellner showed how Romans fit the rhetorical pattern of an ancient speech in an article which appeared in 1976, at the same time as Betz's.

Perhaps even more significantly, as scholars took these first steps into the long-neglected territory of rhetorical criticism, there was yet another way opened for them. In 1958, some ten years before Muilenburg's speech, Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca published *La Nouvelle Rhetorique: Traite de l'Argumentation*. When John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver translated it into English in 1969, it quickly became a major voice in the debate over the shape the recovery of rhetoric in Biblical studies would take.

What made Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's work so important was that it concentrated on rhetoric above all as argumentation. The persuasive task of rhetoric, they wrote, is what must be emphasized. In so doing, they were very consciously opposing the tendency of centuries to restrict rhetoric to stylistics, that is, the study and mastery of figures of speech or rhetorical patterns. In a sense, the whole of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's work counters this tendency, and while their objection is implicit in their work, a rare aside makes more specific mention of their purpose:

...Presentation has even developed to the point that its study came to form the whole material of rhetoric, considered as the art of good speaking and good writing, as an art of expressing thought, a purely formal art. We rebel against this conception, which is at the source of the degeneration, sterility and verbalism of rhetoric as well as the contempt one generally feels for it. We refuse to separate the form of a discourse from its substance, to study stylistic structures and figures independently of the purpose they must achieve in the argumentation (1969,142).

The Ancient Art

What is this 'degeneration' of which Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca speak? And how did the study of rhetoric evolve over the centuries before it was rediscovered in our own day and applied again to the study of Christian texts?

To observe that our cultural forbears, the ancient Greeks, were preoccupied with rhetoric would be something of an understatement. "If there were two definitive features of ancient Greek civilization," says H.C. Lawson-Tancred in his introduction to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, "they are loquacity and competition" (1991, 2). Within the ancient πόλις or Greek city-state, that combination became the fertile mix from which rhetorical training sprang. However, even before the rise of the early democracies and the resulting utility of the knowledge of how to speak well, eloquence was praised.

We need not here retrace in detail the steps of ancient rhetors, or the fortunes of rhetoric itself in the ancient world. Under the influence of the sophists, Isocrates, Plato and Aristotle among others, rhetoric had grown over the years from its fifth century birth into a mature art. By the time of Paul, the social value of trained eloquence made it indispensable wherever cultured people gathered, and although the forum of the city-state was no longer the same, by means of public displays and of its use in the courts, rhetoric's reach extended also to the more common classes. During the centuries of the Hellenistic period and into the time of the Roman Republic and the Empire, rhetoric would go through several declines and revivals, but remain the dominant feature of public education and discourse. In fact, the terms 'decline' and 'revival' may be applied in various ways to the fortunes of rhetoric, either quantitatively or qualitatively. For some modern commentators, a decrease in the public use of rhetoric for any reason was a decline, while for others such as George Kennedy, the decreased use of rhetoric in the political or legal arenas (its so-called 'primary' use) marked a decline, even if declamation or public oratory for other reasons increased in the same period.

In any case, wherever there was debate, teaching, entertainment, decision-making - in short, persuasion of any sort, rhetoric was the medium of communication. Already for centuries by the time of Paul, the practice of eloquence had defined Greek and then Roman culture. By the first century rhetoric was everywhere. Practicing some form of rhetoric was no longer a matter of choice for the urban dweller of a Greco-Roman city. It had become as natural as breathing the ancient world's air.

Ancient Uses of Rhetoric

From the beginning, the most important question posed of rhetoric by friends and foes alike was what its purpose should be. By examining this issue as the ancients treated it, we also shed light on some of the claims made at present for what constitutes a proper definition of rhetoric and therefore what is a proper rhetorical critical method for the modern interpreter. We will see that although many of the present issues are different, the current disagreements over the proper definition of rhetoric were paralleled by ancient debates. The only sure agreement was on the fact that rhetoric required mastery, skill, and spirit: "No one who has ever laid down rules for oratory has ever doubted that it is an art" (Quintilian *Inst. Or.* 2.17.2). Rhetoric was one of those things that was easily recognized but difficult to define.

Quintilian shared this concern over definition, which was centuries old already by his time. He seems to recognize the novelty of his own emphasis on the person of the orator as he describes the consensus:

> The first question which confronts us is 'What is rhetoric?'...Of those who divorce eloquence from that yet fairer and more desirable title to renown, a virtuous life, some call rhetoric merely a power, some a science, but not a virtue, some a practise, some an art, although they will not allow the art to have anything in common with science or virtue, while some again call it a perversion of art or *kakotechnia*. These persons have as a rule held that the task of oratory lies in persuasion or in speaking in a persuasive manner: for this is within the power of a bad man no less than a good (*Inst. Or.* II,15,1-3)

His summary of ancient opinion indicates just how commonly-held this definition of rhetoric as persuasion was, and how, even in his day, any discussion of rhetoric had to start with an agreement on the meaning of the term:

> Hence we get the common definition of rhetoric as the power of persuading...This view is derived from Isocrates, if indeed the treatise on rhetoric which circulates under his name is really from his hand. He...somewhat rashly defined rhetoric as *peithous daimiourgov*, the 'worker of persuasion'...Again Gorgias, in the dialogue of Plato that takes its title from his name, says practically the same thing...Cicero in more than one passage defined the duty of an orator as 'speaking in a persuasive manner' (*Inst. Or.* II,15, 3-5).

Most ancients practiced rhetoric as the art of persuasion or of persuasive speaking and defined it in that way (Cicero *De Or.* III.5, 23; Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* 25,55; Quintilian (survey of others) *Inst. Or.* II, 15). For the first rhetoricians, rhetoric was the means by which a speaker for his benefit might sway an audience. The sophist's goal was persuasion, and the tools employed to this end were three: *Ethos* = proofs from the character of the speaker (although this could also encompass the "character" of the audience - c.f. Mack 1990,36); *Pathos* = proofs by appeal to the emotion or motivations of the audience; *Logos* = proofs from the content of the speech itself.

Although disagreeing with the sophists on the legitimacy of the enterprise, Plato by his objections agreed that it was the purpose of rhetoric above all to persuade; he simply felt that the only proper rhetoric was guided first by an understanding of truth as revealed through philosophy. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato indicates that rhetoric "itself is incapable of discovering knowledge, of finding the truth of a subject, but if one scientifically studies the behaviors of various types of souls, one might become more able to influence those souls toward the Good, True and Just previously discovered through dialectic" (Brooke 1994, 157). Rhetoric, whether toward the end of flattery or truth, remained for Plato the craft of leading persons toward a desired action or opinion.

Aristotle, en route to rehabilitating rhetoric for his philosophy, also maintained that the ultimate goal of such directed speech was to influence action. Although he restricted rhetoric itself to the discovery of persuasive topics ("Let rhetoric be the power to observe the persuasiveness of which any subject matter admits" *Rhetoric* 74), it is clear that such redefinition did not change the overall purpose of conscious argumentation. At the same time, Aristotle reveals his bias in the latitude he allows to the rhetorical strategies as traditionally employed:

> Possibly, Aristotle's tendency to reduce persuasion to unemotive, impersonal argumentation is most typical of an early stage in the dialectician's exploration of rhetoric. Composition later of Book III on style (lexis) may have forced him to pay

due attention to emotional (<u>pathos</u>) and personal (<u>ethos</u>) aspects of persuasion...Whatever the process, Aristotle's reluctant and equivocal mixture of a philosophical theory of argumentation with a properly rhetorical theory of influence, embracing style, emotion and personality as elements of meaning, is symptomatic of the inescapability of hermeneutical issues in ancient rhetoric (Henderson 1996, 66-67).

We will return to some of these hermeneutical issues in the chapter dealing with modern rhetorical critical theory.

Isocrates, holding a higher opinion of the nobility of the art than did Aristotle or Plato, also believed the goal of rhetoric was persuasion: "Eloquence was not for him a matter of speaking prettily but of speaking persuasively" (Litfin 1994, 64). Aristotle, as we have seen, attempted to narrow the definition of rhetoric to the discovery of the means to persuade, that is, finding the persuasive elements of a subject or the process known technically as 'discovery'. His redefining of rhetoric did not change its larger aims, however, since the rationale for the over-all project is still persuasion, and even for Aristotle one seeks proofs in order to use them to convince someone (*Rhetoric* 2.1).

Cicero saw no other objective for rhetoric than persuasion and no other reason for developing the art than cultivating this ability. "The function of eloquence," he stated in *De Inventione*, "seems to be to speak in a manner suited to persuade an audience, the end is to persuade by speech"(I.6).

Quintilian is the only major ancient rhetorician - as opposed to philosopher - who proposed for the definition of rhetoric an alternative to persuasion. From the benefit of our contemporary vantagepoint, we may infer that his definition had much to do both with his life's work as a teacher of rhetoric and with the political restrictions forced on rhetoric after the Empire solidified its hold on Roman public life. Quintilian's life and work, in fact, bracket the second major revival of rhetoric in the ancient world, and in so doing his contributions, including his definition of rhetoric, indicate the beginnings of the second major decline in the power of rhetoric. With the rise of the Roman Empire, as had happened with the success of Alexander the Great centuries earlier, rhetoric was forced by tyranny into less political venues with form taking precedence over content. This difference between persuasion (especially political) and declamation is why Kennedy (1980) and later, Duane Litfin (1994, 33) distinguish "primary" and "secondary" rhetoric. Litfin: "Primary rhetoric was a virile, powerful thing; secondary rhetoric was more delicate, even effete. Primary rhetoric was about moving an audience to believe or act, secondary rhetoric often settled for titillation, astonishment, or entertainment through decoration". I believe that too much may be made of this distinction, for surely rhetoric for entertainment and the so-

called 'hard-working' rhetoric for persuasive purposes in a courtroom or political arena are simply opposite ends of the same spectrum. For first century examples of how even in a culture where declamation was widespread and widely appreciated, persuasion was still viewed as the goal of rhetoric, see Litfin 1994, 111.

Quintilian, who knew and admired so well the oratory of Cicero, simply could not emulate the latter's civic and republican emphasis, since that arena had been lost to him with the emergence of the political conditions - and restrictions on the Senate - brought by the Empire. Quintilian defined rhetoric as the art of speaking well, emphasizing form once more by equating oratory with eloquence. It is no fault of Quintilian, but it is worth noting, that this definition comes after he retired from a chair of rhetoric established and paid for by Vespasian, which represented the first time the Roman State had funded rhetoric (Litfin 1994, 11 n.90). If, during the Hellenistic period, in Mack's words "Rhetoric was now in the service of culture" (1990, 29), after the brief renaissance represented by Cicero, during Quintilian's career the process reached its zenith, and rhetoric, instead of either sharing or challenging authority, came to be fully its mouthpiece.

Yet despite this, the point is that Quintilian self-consciously represented a change from the prevailing ancient definitions of rhetoric, which all centred on the notion of persuasion. It is worth noting that, like Cicero, Isocrates and Aristotle before him, Augustine later also defined rhetoric as persuasion: "it is the universal office of eloquence...to speak in a manner leading to persuasion; and the end of eloquence is to persuade of that which you are speaking" (*On Christian Doctrine* 4.25,55).

A Definition of Rhetoric Sanctioned by the Ancients

With the majority of the ancient writers then, this work accepts and employs an understanding of rhetoric as the art of persuasion, a definition which encompasses but is not limited to, finding the means or topics necessary to persuade (Aristotle) and speaking well (Quintilian). Most importantly, underlying this brief and incomplete survey of ancient opinion is the fact that this definition also legitimates our examination of Paul's writings as rhetorical even in those instances where they do not strictly follow classical examples.

The truth is, of course, that none of the ancient rhetoricians followed the rules precisely either. There are a number of reasons for this. Perhaps the most obvious is that, at the beginning, the *technai* and *progymnasmata* were based on the speeches of the ancient orators, and not the other way around (although, as mentioned earlier, there is evidence that as early as Gorgias, there were handbooks produced which no longer survive). Plainly put, rhetoric was employed before it was analyzed, systematized, and taught. Quintilian, for

example, noted: "the discovery of arguments was not the result of the publication of text-books, but every kind of argument was put forward before any rules were laid down, and it was only later that writers of rhetoric noted them and collected them for publication" (Quintilian *Inst.Or.* 2.5,10,120). Such documents were a successful attempt to systematize what was already a living art, for the purposes of teaching it to others. Also, what in fact we have are not the *technai* or handbooks, of ancient rhetors, but what in fact are the *progymnasmata*, or exercises for the beginning student, in some cases dating from much later. For us to restrict our search for rhetoric to the examples therein would be akin to analyzing Browning or Wordsworth using only an elementary school Victorian grammar.

Thus even those orators who received their earliest training using these exercises and then passed on to more difficult texts of teaching no longer available to us, must have been encouraged to go beyond the models contained in their studies, for it is in the very nature of a book of teaching to serve as a springboard and not a prison to living practitioners of the art. Thus Quintilian (*Inst.Or.*1.2, 13) notes: "Consequently the all-important gift for an orator is a wise adaptability". According to Mack (1990, 32) "rhetors were expected to hide the standard outline when crafting a speech, and to produce a composition that would appear to unfold naturally on a given occasion." Cicero stated: "And in every case while the ability to do what is appropriate is a matter of trained skill and of natural talent, the knowledge of what is appropriate to a particular occasion is a matter of practical sagacity" (*De Or.* 2.2,12). Those who proved themselves masters were those, as Cicero notes, who went beyond the "mere study of rules", while Augustine stated that the rules were not just to be hidden, but sometimes abandoned altogether (*On Christian Doctrine*, xvii). Quintilian urged his students to expand their horizons for study: "Anyone who is content to read not merely speeches, but history as well, in preference to growing grey over the notebooks of the rhetoricians, will realize the truth of what I say..." (*Inst.Or.*1.3.8, 67).

The modern interpreter, seeking a definition of rhetoric in order better to practice a responsible rhetorical criticism, is hard-pressed to define what was, even then, 'proper' rhetoric (see figure one below). So it is correspondingly difficult to judge Paul's rhetorical craftsmanship by such standards.

Figure one:

Contrasting contemporary views about the ancient world and what rhetoric was then:

seen as a discipline	seen as a "culture of communication"
focus on the orator	focus on the audience
arena: politics or display	a wider arena
oral art generally	oral and written (letters, speeches)
limited to paradigms	constantly being adapted to situations
practiced by a trained elite	used and "consumed" by large numbers of the urban public

What in fact was practiced in the ancient world was a complex art, encompassing verbal display and show as well as being the instrument of oral persuasion and power, while all the while gradually becoming rooted in all forms of writing also, moving back and forth between flashy oratory and gritty political maneuvering, based on certain recognizable patterns and styles but almost never restricted to them, constant in the goal of persuasion while always changing to suit the constraints of the times. Small wonder that Quintilian could write about rhetoric: "If therefore we have received no fairer gift from heaven than speech, what shall we regard as being so worthy of laborious cultivation?.. Since there is no art which yields a more grateful recompense for the labour bestowed upon it." That he believed rhetoric to be an evolving discipline is clear in his next words: "This will be abundantly clear if we consider the origins of oratory and the progress it has made; and it is capable of advancing still further" (*Inst. Or.* II, 16,17-18).

Thus rhetoric was based on rules, but the best ancient orators went far beyond such basic structures. "But the crown of all our study and the highest reward of our long labours is the power of improvisation" (Quintilian *Inst. Or.* 10,7,1). Likewise, rhetoric was rooted in persuasion, but significant orators saw other purposes for it. And while rhetoric was born in oratory, already by Hellenistic times it was an art applied equally readily to writing (Doty 1973, Hester 1991, 282), and especially to the 'performative' writing characteristic of ancient epistolography (Robbins 1991, 147), where the oral delivery of the letter by a messenger (Aune 1987, 158) sometimes represented an important - and unrecoverable - part of its composition.

Already in these ancient differences lie the seeds of many modern debates over the nature, purpose, and extent of what may properly be termed 'rhetorical communication'.

As we have seen, some defined rhetoric as an elevated art, others as a manipulative craft. Some ancients felt it to be an amoral and powerful instrument in the hands of both enlightened and vile, while others felt it to be the reserve of the noble-minded and its aim the defense against tyranny. Some tended to restrict their definitions of rhetoric to the speeches of an orator, and to concentrate on the mechanisms by which such speeches move forward, while others moved consciously or unconsciously beyond such limits, first applying it to written work (Doty 1973, 8-11), and then often following the Aristotelian categories of *ethos, pathos* and *logos* to the conclusion that rhetoric touched on the whole process of human communication.

In summary, then, while in practice most seemed to recognize rhetoric at work, there was no ancient theoretical consensus on either its nature or purpose. We should not restrict our definitions of classical rhetoric, nor our search for a contemporary understanding of rhetorical argumentation to classical forms for which we have lists (Mack 1990, 49). While most practitioners of the art could agree that rhetoric's aim was persuasion, the means by which it was seen to accomplish this goal were many. Already in the ancient world, there were some who tended to restrict the definition of rhetoric to elements of oral or written style, while others began to view rhetoric as a characteristic of what in contemporary language would be termed discourse. The former group tended to see rhetoric more in terms of 'speaking well' while the latter followed the definition of persuasion through to a more general view of rhetoric as communication with an end in view (see figure one).

But despite such differences, almost without exception ancient rhetoricians lauded both the efficacy and the value of rhetoric. Quintilian writes that "there is no other source from which men have reaped such a harvest of wealth, honour, friendship and glory, both present and to come" (*Inst.Or.* 12.11,29). Note how many noble benefits Cicero attributes to his speech in reporting its success in a letter to his friend Atticus:

> ...It was I yet again who revived the drooping courage of honest men, fortifying and raising them one by one. Then by denouncing and harassing the venal jurors I effectively stopped the mouths of all sympathizers and backers of the winning side. I drove Consul Piso from pillar to post, and deprived him of Syria, which had already been pledged to him. I recalled the Senate to its earlier strict temper and roused it from despondency. Clodius I quashed face to face in the Senate in a set speech of impressive solemnity and also in an exchange of amenities.... *(Letters,* 45).

And all this by means of the spoken word!

Reception of Rhetoric in Ancient Culture

In the writings of its greatest masters we see clearly what they believed to be the power and the potential of rhetoric. But is there any way to recapture and understand the place that rhetoric held in the minds of more common people in ancient society, even by the time of Paul, and how it was appreciated and received?

That the 'common' people had a role to play in ancient rhetoric had been true since the earliest Greek democracies with their debates among free male citizens. Implicit in the very nature of rhetorical argument is recognition of the importance of the audience or reader and the public arena of debate. Plato, in the very act of condemning rhetoric, correctly places it squarely within a social context when he has Callicles criticize philosophy for its lack of public action: "shunning the busy life of the heart of the city and the meetings in which, as the poet says 'men win renown', he [the philosopher] will spend the rest of his life in obscurity, whispering with three or four lads in a corner and never uttering any sentiment which is large or liberal or adequate to the occasion" (*Gorgias* 485). Quintilian states: "our judges are the people, or drawn from the people, "and then complains that "since those...are frequently ill-educated and sometimes mere rustics, it becomes necessary to employ every method..." (*Inst.Or.* 7.10,53).

Quintilian's complaint highlights a fallacy of some modern arguments about Greco-Roman rhetoric. While it may have been true that only a small percentage of the population of the Mediterranean world was literate, production and reception of rhetoric are not the same thing. Increasingly, lack of education did not mean a lack of sophistication when it came to hearing rhetoric. Here again, Cicero gives us a clear picture of audiences who may have been less than expert in producing rhetoric, but are clearly consummate consumers. "For what proportion of people," he asks, "understands the science of rhythm and metre? Yet all the same if only a slight slip is made in these, making the line too short by a contraction or too long by dwelling on a vowel, the audience protests to a man" (*De Or.* 3,1,196). Whether in the court or the agora, rhetoric and the rhetorician always played to an audience of some sort, and it was the audience who made sure that "every speaker is aware when he is speaking well" (Quintilian *Inst.Or.* 2.17.26) by shouts of acclaim or derision (c.f.Tacitus *Dialogus* 19.5, quoted in Litfin 1994, 130).

Yet even the production of rhetoric was not beyond the 'common people'. Quintilian quotes with approval the words of Lysias, who maintained that "uneducated persons, barbarians and slaves, when speaking on their own behalf, say something that resembles an *exordium*...just as an orator does in his peroration" (*Inst. Or.* 2.17,6). He goes even further in stating that the rhetorician must know his subject matter, for "even an

illiterate peasant who is a party to a suit will speak better on behalf of his case than an orator who does not know what the subject in dispute may be" (2.21,16).

By the time of Paul, widespread Greco-Roman education in rhetoric, and the much-admired work of sophists and other public declaimers had made almost every public gathering into a receptive and - within limits - discriminating audience for rhetoric. Public oratory had become the currency of success and one of the few available - and thus much sought-after - avenues to social mobility for intelligent and enterprising young men of somewhat less than patrician birth. Successful rhetoricians could make their career with a triumph in the courts, or their reputation with a particularly impressive declamation in the public arena. Or, having lost their fortunes once because of political upheaval, when opportunity arose again they could, like Dio Chrysostom in the Roman wilds near the Danube, strip off their rags, jump on an altar, and remake their public position with a timely speech (Kennedy 1994, 234) to the right audience. The translator of Cicero's letters, Shackleton Bailey, describes how it was Cicero's rhetorical ability and public successes which broke open the long-standing Roman reluctance to allow "new men" from other families into the inner corridors of Republican power in Rome (Letters, 10).

Not every public ear could perhaps distinguish between what Kennedy has called primary and secondary rhetoric - that is, between rhetoric for persuasion and declamation for public display, but it is unclear that such distinctions were always considered important. Then, as now, audiences found value in a great show, and many left the questions of meaning and worth to the critics.

The Fall and Rise and Fall and Rise of Rhetoric

Rhetoric was born to serve the fledgling democracies. After the victories of Alexander (ca. 323 BCE) when other forms of government replaced those democracies, rhetoric did not disappear. But it was forced to change.

When real political power lay beyond the reach of the art of rhetoric, its energy turned to the other goal which had been there from the beginning and for which it had been criticized by the ancient philosophers: style. Form began to take precedence over content. It is perhaps not an overstatement to say that when speech for power was frustrated, practitioners of the art were left with two avenues for their craft: speech for show, and speech for education. I find Kennedy's distinction between "primary" and "secondary" rhetoric (Kennedy 1980, 4-5) useful for analysis, but somewhat artificial if given too much weight. From the beginning rhetoric has existed on a spectrum between the two poles of persuasion and show, content and form, power and display. It seems to me that since

Gorgias and Isocrates rhetoric has taken the avenues open to it, and more important than a classification of the rhetoric is a description of the conditions and the personalities which brought that type to the fore.

During this time rhetorical training also increased its hold on the educational system of Greek and then Roman culture. From the time of the Academy philosophy had competed with rhetoric for the minds of the best and brightest, but by this period rhetoric decisively dominated the field:

> On the level of history Plato had been defeated: posterity had not accepted his educational ideals. The victor, generally speaking, was Isocrates, and Isocrates became the educator first of Greece and then of the whole ancient world. His success had already been evident when the two were alive, and it became more and more marked as the generations wore on (Marrou 1956,194).

The Romans embraced the ideals of rhetorical education with enthusiasm: by the first century BCE "Rhetoric had come to be considered the crown of a liberal education and the telltale mark of a formally educated man" (Litfin 1994, 89). Yet lest we retroject modern notions of what these educational systems were, Mack notes that the gymnasia, or schools, were not sheltered or secluded, but "decidedly open-air arrangements, producing activities for all to see and hear" (Mack 1990, 30). Even hundreds of years later Augustine, according to his biographer, "would have taught rhetoric in the centre of the public life of the town. His schoolroom would have been sheltered from the bustle of the forum by only a curtain" (Brown 1967, 65). It is important to remember this very public nature of rhetorical life, its teaching and practice, when we come to Paul's experiences with the congregation at Corinth.

Quintilian and Cicero and their tremendous influence on ancient rhetoric bracket the period of Paul's dealings with the congregation at Corinth. While there is no direct evidence of the latter's influence on Paul, both are important for the insight they give into the issues facing orators at every level of first century society. Other writers from this period whose works touch on rhetoric include Tacitus, Pliny, and Dio Chrysostom (see Litfin 1994, chap. 5). Their works underline the observation that rhetoric was a ubiquitous and powerful phenomenon of Paul's world, and perhaps the single most distinguishing mark of first-century culture.

Although some maintain that it was strictly a second to fourth century phenomenon, mention should be made also of what became known as the 'Second Sophistic', since it also had its roots in the period where we encounter Paul (Winter, 1997, maintains that Paul

is one of this movement's first, unidentified examples). The 'Second Sophistic' was a renaissance of interest in public oratory, with a correspondingly increased fame for the masters of the art. As in ancient Greece, crowds swelled the public places of the Roman world to hear the stars of oratory declaim and debate, and there was success and financial windfall for those who became famous. And as in ancient Greece, in a now-familiar pattern, as practitioners of the craft sought more and more to amaze and titillate, flashy tricks replaced substance until sophistry again developed a reputation as little more than empty wind. But that the public continued to recognize something of the importance of the art explains why Augustine, in the fourth century, could still set up shop as a teacher of rhetoric.

Augustine: Visionary Rhetorician, and Rhetorical Critic of the Bible

In the field of rhetoric, as in theology and ecclesiology, Augustine bridges the gap between the ancient world and the periods which follow. At the suggestion of the Roman orator Symmachus, Augustine occupied the chair of rhetoric at Milan for two years, from 384-386. Although he then resigned from teaching, ostensibly because of ill health but more likely to pursue his growing interest in Christianity at his country retreat (Brown 1967, 111), this did not mean that he abandoned rhetoric. Rather, as he was first baptized, then eventually pressed into service as the Bishop of Hippo, he brought his rhetorical craft to the service of his beliefs.

In comparison with the great orators of the earlier ancient world, Augustine's was a more specific interest: the interpretation and explication of the Biblical texts. Thus his prescriptions for speaking effectively applied the art of rhetoric to preaching and, in the Latin world, at least, he gave form to what would become known as homiletics. Augustine assumed that an ecclesiastic must be a trained speaker (*On Christian Doctrine* 4.15,32).

It is tempting to see preaching as a new and novel discipline. Yet it seems truer that, just as the declamation had developed from the school exercises of rhetoric when political power was denied to it, homiletics represented rhetoric's move into the newest avenue of personal advancement in the fourth and fifth centuries, and the increasingly common public arena for the appreciation of speech: the church. Once again, rhetoric was adapting. In the Greek-speaking world of Augustine's day, this was ground that had been prepared by Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil, and especially in the homilies of John Chrysostom (397-407) (Kennedy 1994, 264). But in the Latin world, it was Augustine who was the first so self-consciously to sketch the role for rhetoric in Christendom. From hearing (Brown 1967, 83-84) Ambrose's learned sermons in Milan, Augustine had experienced first-hand the power

and value of powerful Christian oratory. In fact, Augustine saw in the church a unique opportunity for rhetoric to recover its original nature as persuasion: "And that moderate style of eloquence when used by our eloquent churchman should neither be left unornamented nor be ornamented indecently. Nor should it seek only to please, as it does exclusively among other orators. Rather in maintaining that those things which it praises are to be desired or firmly adhered to, and that those things which it blames are to be avoided...it wishes also to be obediently heard" (*On Christian Doctrine* 4. 26.57).

A complete discussion of Augustine's rhetoric is not essayed here (for bibliography see Kennedy 1994, 267 and Brown 1967). However, the very structure of his *On Christian Doctrine* shows how fruitful was the synthesis between Augustine's pagan learning of rhetoric and his Christian beliefs. In Book One, Augustine states the following: "There are two things necessary to the treatment of the Scriptures: a way of discovering those things which are to be understood, and a way of teaching what we have learned. We shall speak first of discovery and second of teaching". Augustine's category of discovery relates to the rhetorical task of invention, while his teaching, or expounding (Kennedy 1994, 267) is analogous to rhetorical style or speaking, as Augustine himself treats it in Book Four.

That Augustine means rhetoric when he uses the term 'eloquence' is beyond question, as a reading of *On Christian Doctrine* 4.2.3 will show. Here Augustine builds the case for the defenders of the Christian faith to use 'eloquence' and not leave the "art of rhetoric" (4.2.3) to those who would attack Christianity. For Augustine, *eloquentia* equals *ars rhetorica* or *ars elocutionis* (see Kennedy's comments on this in 1994, 270). Augustine is, it is true, referring at first to the spoken word, or rhetorical oratory. But he soon goes on to apply the same terms to the written texts of the Christian Bible.

In 427 Augustine finished Book Four of his *On Christian Doctrine*. It thus represents his mature thinking, not only as a Christian, but also as an ecclesiastic familiar with the exigencies of church life. He disagreed with Cicero and Quintilian by stating that the person of the speaker influenced, but did not determine the message they spoke - the rhetorician must not always be a good man (*On Christian Doctrine* 4.27,28). Against the embellishments of sophistry he wrote, "The speaker should not consider the eloquence of his teaching but the clarity of it" (*On Christian Doctrine* 4.9,23). He also prefigured modern rhetorical criticism by undertaking the analysis of Biblical texts - and Paul in particular - using rhetorical categories. For example, he states in Book Four: "These and the like things are taught in the art of eloquence. But just as we do not say that the Apostle followed the precepts of eloquence, so also we do not deny that his wisdom was accompanied by eloquence" (*On Christian Doctrine* 4.7,11).

Before moving on a word of preparation is needed. From the earliest attempts to study rhetoric using the *Iliad*, some rhetoricians had used their art to examine literature, or conversely, literature to illustrate their art. But from the appearance of Augustine especially, we must begin to treat 'biblical rhetorical criticism', that is, the application of rhetorical principles to the study of scripture, as a related but separate discipline. The relationship over the following centuries between rhetoric and hermeneutics (c.f. Eden 1997, esp. Chapter Three 'Patristic Hermeneutics') became well established in fact, if not always in theory or understanding. By the time we reach the 20th century. it is this application of rhetorical theory to Paul that interests us, rather than the fate of rhetorical theory in and of itself. In any case, for some centuries yet its fortunes remained joined with those of rhetoric.

Augustine, in some ways, is the proto-typical figure of the Christian rhetorician, and arguably the best example of someone who adopts and again uses the kind of 'redescriptive' rhetoric found in Paul's writings. Augustine, more than any single figure since Paul, shows how visionary rhetoric characterizes Christian proclamation. His *City of God* is, among many other things, surely also an alternative view of history, community, self-understanding and the future. He characterizes the Christian community as a separate entity, already belonging to the future, on "pilgrimage in the world" (19,27).

Augustine was trained in rhetoric in a way we cannot prove for Paul, and showed how a concept of rhetorical preaching based on authority might be used to elucidate texts within the church, and to attempt to explain the nature of the church to the outside world. Although he was among the first to apply rhetorical criticism to the Bible, and also (Eden 1997, 58) prefigures the 'spiritual' exegesis which finds unity in the textual diversity of Scripture, it is primarily as an example of someone who, like Paul, used visionary, transformative rhetoric, that we appeal to Augustine in this present work.

Rhetorical Criticism at Present

From the time of the Reformation (Classen, 1992, on Melanchthon) almost to the 1900's, rhetorical studies of scripture were rare. However, near the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, perhaps as a result of the reaction against the ahistoricity of idealism, scholars (almost all German) began exploring the subject again (Watson 1988, 4-6). Eduard Norden included a discussion of New Testament rhetoric in his 1898 survey of rhetoric from the ancients to the Renaissance, titled Die *Antike Kunstprosa vom VI Jahrhunderts vor Christus in die Zeit der Renaissance* (Leipzig and Berlin: B.G.Teubner, 1898) 4th ed., 1923. In 1913 he wrote *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig and

Berlin: B.G. Teubner), which also examined New Testament rhetoric. Eduard Konig issued a compendium of parallels between the rhetoric of classical literature and the Bible in 1900, in his *Stilistik, Rhetorik, und Poetik in Bezug auf die biblische Literatur* (Leipzig: Theodor Weicher, 1900). Johannes Weiss examined Pauline rhetoric, specifically his sentence structure and rhetorical forms, in "Beitrage zur Paulinischen Rhetoric" in 1897 and *Die Aufgaben der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft in dem Gegenwart* in 1908 (Watson 1988, 5 n.29). It was as his student and under his influence that Rudolf Bultmann wrote his 1910 doctoral dissertation which is often mentioned in accounts of the recovery of rhetoric in this century. As the title of his *Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt und die kynisch-stoische Diatribe* indicates, Bultmann sought to prove that Paul uses the Cynic-Stoic diatribe form in his preaching, and undertook a study of Pauline rhetorical forms to that end. Since that time, while Bultmann's work has been questioned, the issues he raised continue to have been important. Karl Donfried, for instance, takes specific issue with Bultmann's conclusions (Donfried 1977,120-48,). For a critique based on new notions of social standing and how this related to the diatribe form which Bultmann saw as vulgar and uneducated, see: Pogoloff 1992, 21.

In 1912 Paul Wendland published his *Die urchristlichen Literaturformen* (3rd Ed. Tubingen: Mohr, 1912), which used ancient rhetoric in its aim of identifying literary forms in the New Testament. In the English-speaking world, the only major work of this period and for some time after is E.W. Bullinger's. In 1989 he wrote *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898; repr. Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), which listed a large number of rhetorical figures with illustrations.

According to Betz, it was Norden's 1898 *Die Antike Kunstprosa* that effectively silenced for the next half-century academic investigation of the effects of rhetoric on New Testament writers. According to Betz "Norden acted as if he had been appointed to protect the territory of classicists from the intrusions of New Testament scholars (Betz 1986,16-17)". While he later retracted some of his attack on other scholars, his views and the general neglect of rhetoric also by classicists and historians during this period ensured that little work would be done in the area.

Rhetorical techniques were not applied to the Bible again in a major work for about fifty years. Adolf Deissmann's classification of most New Testament writings as "non-literary" (1927, 290-302; 409; and 1957, 12) and the rise of form criticism which so strongly distinguished anonymous transmission from any authorship which could include conscious styling, both helped keep investigation of rhetorical form in the background. Strictly speaking this was the only really absolute 'interregnum' of biblical rhetorical research, although it had been in decline far longer.

In the 1960's, while most New Testament scholars were still engaged in forms of source criticism, it was the influence of work in other fields that brought rhetoric back to the study of the New Testament. Given the fact that a decline of interest among classicists in ancient rhetoric (Corbett 1990, 572) had sparked a similar disinterest among New Testament scholars, it is not surprising that it was a classicist who is partly responsible for reviving rhetorical interest in the Bible as well.

George A. Kennedy was the most influential exponent and the most frequently cited example of the application of classical studies to the New Testament. Duane F. Watson's preface to a 1991 volume in his honour praises and summarizes the classicist's contribution:

> In the current explosion of knowledge it is often daring to venture into an area even closely related to our own specialty. How much more daring to venture into another field entirely! Dr. Kennedy...has provided many careful studies of ancient and Western rhetoric, and has shown the place of that rhetoric in the formulation of the Bible and its earliest interpretations. As a part of his prolific literary output, to his *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton, 1963), *Quintilian* (Twayne, 1969), and *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World: 300 BC - AD 300* (Princeton, 1972), he added three more significant works which touch more specifically upon biblical studies: *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill, 1980), *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* (Princeton, 1983), and *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, 1984). (Watson ed. 1991, 7)

Meanwhile, overlapping but in some ways distinct from, this reappropriation of Greco-Roman rhetoric, there developed as well what has been termed the 'new rhetoric'. In addition to the interest in classical forms and techniques, proponents of the new rhetoric sought a redefined theory of rhetoric that could encompass argumentation as a whole, including insights from the new fields of the behavioral sciences. In 1936 I.A. Richards published his *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, where he argued that rhetoric should include more than simple persuasion. Kenneth Burke, who exercised great influence on later literary criticism, saw rhetoric as anything that influences the entire motivation of action: "If I had to sum up in one word the difference between the 'old' rhetoric and a 'new'... I would reduce it to this: The key term for the old rhetoric was 'persuasion' and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key term for the new rhetoric would be 'identification', which can include a partially unconscious factor in appeal" (Quoted in: Corbett 1990, 573).

Chaim Perelman was the other major proponent of this kind of 'new' rhetoric. As mentioned, his jointly authored (with Luci Olbrechts-Tyteca) work *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* serves as a standard source. In it Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca argue that not only the rational or logical should be admissible in argument, since most of what concerns human beings cannot meet this criterion. Rather, most subjects on which we disagree are under the realm of the contingent, possible, and probable and so arguments using these serve as legitimate grounds for allegiance and action (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969,45-46). The effect of their argument is to "attack the Cartesian emphasis on the sole importance of logical proof and attempt to reinstate probabilistic knowledge as basic, and not just a vaguer form of logical argument" (Beardslee 1989, 184; on the ancient debate between the philosophers and rhetoricians on the merits of probability versus truth, see Litfin 1994, 30-1).

It was Amos N. Wilder who first brought the insights of the new rhetoric to bear on biblical studies. His *Early Christian Rhetoric*, published in 1964 and reissued in 1971, emphasized the creative power of speech, calling its product a 'language event'. Following Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca and Burke, 'new' rhetorical criticism has since been applied or related to the New Testament from an incredible variety of perspectives: hermeneutics (Gadamer), the study of metaphor (Paul Ricoeur), and narrative (Hans Frei), not to mention reader-response criticism, structuralism, deconstructionism and semiotics. Characteristic of most of these treatments is an overlap of the definition of 'new' rhetorical criticism with that of literary criticism.

These, then, are the factors which accompanied rhetoric's modern rebirth: An upsurge of interest in a rhetoric newly-defined as argumentation, a resurgence of interest in the classical rhetorical forms, a correction of the centuries-old "subversion of holistic rhetoric" (Henderson 1996, 242) which had reduced it to the study of figures, and a New Testament field of studies frustrated by the diminishing returns of the traditional criticisms and baffled by the number and complexity of the new approaches.

Against the broad history of rhetoric and this more recent backdrop, then, we may again set the events with which we began this chapter: the 1968 Presidential address of Muilenburg to the Society of Biblical Literature, and the 1975 article by Betz in New Testament Studies on the "Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians", followed four years later by his commentary on that book. We now see that Betz and Muilenburg, despite the very different nature of their contributions, agreed that what was to be studied were the formal features of a biblical text. Muilenburg was interested in style, Betz in both style and structure. Together with Kennedy's work, they represent one of the two poles in the modern use of rhetorical criticism. The other pole,

depending on the new rhetoric and bringing in modern theories of meaning and discourse, seeks to understand New Testament writings in a larger sense, for how they accomplish their argumentative goals.

At the beginning of this chapter both Betz and Muilenburg were given the nod for the reintroduction of rhetoric to Biblical studies. It is not perhaps so simple. In fact, while both Muilenburg's speech and Betz's commentary were pivotal events, our previous discussion shows that some scholarly disciplines never 'lost' rhetoric at all. Moreover, the rhetoric which was 'recovered' by some modern scholars was not in every case that which was lost but sometimes represented a stage a good deal further back in history or dependent on post-Enlightenment conceptions of meaning. The waters are muddied further by the fact that, just as Isocrates, Quintilian and Aristotle did not practice the same rhetoric, modern scholars may be comparing differing definitions of the ancient and noble art. In fact, where - or if - you mark the renaissance of the application of rhetorical study to the bible depends in large part on how you define rhetorical criticism. So even here, at the beginning of the modern phase of this discipline, the importance of definition and practice is clear. I intend to take up a discussion of these and other issues facing rhetorical criticism and the letters of Paul next.

CHAPTER THREE: Proving Paul a Rhetorician

Having established the heterogeneity of ancient rhetoric and a corresponding complexity of the situation in modern rhetorical criticism, it remains for us to situate Paul and his writing. Some of the questions we will touch upon are the following: was Paul trained in rhetoric? Are letters and other written communication (such as Paul's) liable to rhetorical analysis? And finally: Can we say with certainty that a 'culture of rhetoric' had permeated the ancient urban world to a point where we may safely assume Paul's familiarity with its rudiments?

While Paul's first contacts with his congregations were generally personal encounters which involved speaking (1 Cor 2:4, Gal 1:11), what we have surviving to us are later communications in the form of Paul's letters. With the exception of Romans, all of Paul's letters in the New Testament corpus represent at least his second contact with that particular congregation - and even in Romans he stresses in good Roman fashion the contacts which he does possess. Paul's preaching and not his writing was the first way that most of his letters' recipients had come to know the apostle. As Paul himself did (2 Cor. 10:10), we must remember, for our rhetorical-critical purposes, to distinguish his preaching from his writing. Yet because Paul's preaching is unavailable to us, we are left with the letters he sent. All those who would wrest meaning from Paul are faced with this dilemma.

Epistolary Rhetoric

We should note that there is no reason to hold to the objection that rhetoric was primarily an oral art and therefore Paul's letters, being written, lie outside the proper realm of rhetorical scrutiny, that is, the question of the applicability of rhetorical categories to epistolary texts (Watson 1995, 222-224). Were there ever any question, contemporary New Testament scholarship has pronounced itself simply by producing so many rhetorical analyses of Pauline texts. In any case, as outlined in the last section we are following in the footsteps of the ancients themselves, who from the beginning studied Homer and other classics of their day with an eye to their rhetorical strategies.

Two other points should be kept in mind: first, that the application of rhetorical techniques to both reading and producing literature in general, including letters, was a natural result of greater rhetorical education in the ancient world (Robbins 1991, 146); and second, that letters in particular were a form of writing amenable to 'performance' (Robbins 1991,147 on "recitational composition") and highly welcoming of rhetorical

crafting. In any case, the usual means of long-distance communication among the educated classes by the Roman period was the letter. It was not unusual that Paul traveled, nor that while doing so he communicated with his scattered communities by means of private letters bearing the imprint of rhetorical training. Despite the apostle's lower social standing, much of what Shackleton Bailey says of patrician Romans would later be true of Paul:

> The Roman, at any rate the upper-class Roman, was a letter-writer. In ancient Greece a man's circle was apt to be mainly confined to a single small town and the countryside adjoining. He travelled comparatively seldom. But the well-to-do Roman was likely to have connections... Business, public or private, might take him abroad for long periods. Although there was no postal system, bearers could usually be found (introduction to Cicero *Letters*, 20).

Meeks (1983,17) states that "the people of the Roman Empire traveled more extensively and more easily than had anyone before them - or would again until the nineteenth century". In the years since Shackleton Bailey's comments about upper-class Roman society, greater attention has been paid to both the physical and social mobility of the lower Roman classes, including artisans and craftspeople like, presumably, Paul.

In a 1992 article in *Rhetorica* entitled "St. Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric"[3], C.J. Classen examines a number of rhetorical treatments of Paul's letters, especially Betz's pioneering treatment of Galatians. He critiques Betz for not paying sufficient attention to the distinction between rhetoric and epistolography, noting that the ancient manuals on rhetoric mention letter-writing little or only in a general sense, while ancient handbooks on letter-writing differ markedly from their rhetorical counterparts. His conclusion is that rhetoric and epistolography were regarded as two different fields in antiquity and he suggests that Hellenistic literature of all genres and Rabbinical tradition may be more fruitful places to look for comparisons with Paul's letters.

Despite these conclusions, however, Classen is not ready to dismiss rhetoric as an advantageous discipline from which to view Paul's letters. Although his main interest in the article is the relationship between epistolography and rhetoric, he makes a number of other valuable points. Chief among these is his study of the work of Philipp Melanchthon in the 16th century, who though "thoroughly familiar with the rhetorical tradition [felt] free to modify it and to introduce a new element..." (Classen 1992, 327), in fact adding another *genus* (didactic) to the three traditional types of rhetoric identified since Aristotle as judicial, deliberative and epideictic. Bolstered by this example Classen makes the point that one need

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[3] reprinted in 1993 in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference.*

not be restricted by the ancient models in order to analyze rhetorically the Pauline letters. In addition, he argues from another, completely different vantage point: that being the logic of the questions being asked. If one is asking whether Paul was familiar with and consciously used Greco-Roman rhetorical models, it is appropriate to restrict one's search to those same models. If however, one is concerned with "a more thorough understanding of the letter" or of Paul himself, there is no reason why the modern exegete need be restricted to categories known only in ancient times, and the argument over whether Paul knew such categories is unnecessary (Classen 1992, 322). We will return to this observation shortly.

Rhetoric in Oral and Written Communication

Up to this point, I have used the terms 'letter', 'text', 'discourse', 'audience', 'reader' and the like almost as if they were interchangeable, assuming that their common meanings are understood and there was no need to distinguish them more carefully in most cases. I will attempt to justify that action now.

If we were to go back to the beginning of rhetorical practice, we would be obliged to talk about 'speeches' and 'audiences'. Ancient rhetoric was first concerned with oral communication - the speech. And every speech implies that there is someone to hear it, an audience. Audiences came to hear, to be moved, to be delighted, to be convinced, to feel approval or disapproval, moved by speech, "Nature's greatest gift to man" (Quintilian *Inst. Or.* XII, 1,2).

But seemingly from the beginning it was understood that the rules governing communication between a speaker and an audience largely applied also to written communication, communication 'at a distance'. Aristotle, in his discussion of style, moves from speech to "what is written" without comment (*Rhetoric*, 226). Our distinctions between oral and written work do little justice to a culture where orality was the norm, and the written word was not so much an alternative, but rather, the servant, of orality. If any distinction should be drawn between oral and written work, it is in the way that writing allowed a contrasting style in speech, between "the slow, reflective, critical styles made possible by written pre-composition and the brilliant, grandiloquent, repetitive styles required in *extempore* debate" (Henderson 1996, 67-8).

As mentioned, part of Classen's critique of Betz is that he did not pay sufficient attention to the distinction between rhetoric and epistolography. Classen, along with S. Porter (1993), point out that the ancient manuals on rhetoric mention letter writing little if at all. But as Watson notes (1995, 223), the rules were laid down primarily for speeches, and written texts of any sort have smaller place in them. Also, Mitchell correctly points out that

Paul's letters present a sort of literary hybrid where an argument is cradled within a letter structure, calling this "epistolary framing" (Mitchell 1991, 186).

In any case, since rhetoric's first arena was the spoken word, this was where the 'beginning exercises' properly started. The lack of focus on letters in the handbooks cannot be used to argue that ancient letters - including Paul's - were not conscious rhetorical texts, if the evidence of such letters themselves speak against that assumption. Separating letter from speech in this way implies a specialization perhaps more of our time than the time of Paul - and certainly more than in a mixed oral-written culture where letters were as much performed as read. We should not confuse our modern culture of what Frye called 'silent, quick, individual reading' with the more oral forms of public reading characteristic of the ancient world.

Likewise, keeping the oral origins of rhetoric in mind helps us avoid treating written documents - be they letters or treatises or even just fragments of text - as if somehow they existed in time and space aloof from an audience. This tendency is particularly troublesome when dealing with Paul's letters, since canonicity has given them a two millennia tradition of 'transhistorical' if not ahistorical interpretation. As mentioned previously, the corrective tendency of rhetorical criticism always to seek an audience was one of the reasons Muilenburg held such hope for it. "Every speech is addressed to an audience and it is frequently forgotten that this applies to everything written as well. Whereas a speech is conceived in terms of the audience, the physical absence of his readers can lead a writer to believe that he is alone in the world, though his text is always conditioned, whether consciously or unconsciously, by those persons he wishes to address" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 6-7).

Paul had no such illusions. While writing, Paul himself makes clear that his letters are not only to be read, but in one sense, to be 'performed'. So, for instance (about the 'brothers and sisters' in Thessalonika): "I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them" (1 Thess 5:27). In fact, the presentation of his letters was so important to Paul that it seems likely that he followed the ancient practice of using a messenger who could elaborate in suitable rhetorical style the contents of his message (Aune 1987, 158; c.f. Also Doty 1973, 46).

As far as these observations affect my own usage, I propose to use the terms 'readers' and 'audience' to denote the same thing unless otherwise specified, and to use the terms 'speaker' and 'writer' in a similar way. Paul's letters are our 'texts', and so for convenience I may refer at times to 1 Corinthians or other epistles as letters or texts or both.

The Many Faces of Paul

> The life of Paul partakes of the uncertainty that envelops all ancient history. As regards every detail we shall find ourselves in the position of balancing evidence; as to almost every detail we shall find ourselves amid a bewildering variety of opposite opinion and assertion among modern scholars of every school and shade; and, strangest of all, in regard to two or three points where there exists the nearest approach to a general agreement between all the various schools, we shall find ourselves unable to agree... (W.M. Ramsay in 1898, 30)

It is extremely difficult to situate the Apostle Paul properly within the intellectual, social, and literary milieus of his own day, so difficult that it may be conjectured that the futility of 'the search for the historical Paul' was what led to the increased interest in his congregations in the first place. Victor Paul Furnish in 1989 (329) noted this swing of scholarly interest from Paul to "Pauline congregations and his interaction with them as their apostle", and pronounced it an "overdue refocusing of questions". Of course, given our lack of primary sources save the epistles, one cannot study Paul without his congregations, nor the reverse. In fact, any discussion of Paul's letters and the pictures of his congregations therein must work back and forth with questions about the letters' author.

What kind of education did Paul really receive? There are of course the comments in Acts about Paul learning "at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts 22:3), however, even if accurate, what might such comments actually tell us about the content of Paul's learning? In fact, passages such as 1 Peter 3:15b may give more evidence that indicate that Christians of all levels were exhorted to be 'rhetorically' ready to explain their faith.

Was Paul more Jew than Greek, more Pharisee than Roman citizen and in any case what can such distinctions tell us? Were Paul's letters rough, uncultured harangues, dismissed by near-contemporaries like Celsus, explained by later Christian Fathers (Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* 20,41) and designated by later scholarship as 'perversion' of the essential message of Jesus, or did they in fact show some modest literary and rhetorical sophistication in addition to their theological concerns?

What Paul's own social standing was remains ambiguous. Did he fit Celsus' mocking description of early Christians and their missionaries as "wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers, and the most illiterate and bucolic yokels [who] get hold of children in private and some stupid women with them...[and] let out some astounding statements"(Wilken 1984)? Or does his mobility and his literacy mark him as at least someone of the artisan or middle classes? Gerd Theissen notes: "If Paul says that there

were not many in the Corinthian congregation who were wise, powerful, and wellborn, then this much is certain: there were some" (1982, 72). New Testament scholarship has swung solidly away from the picture of the early church as made up only of the dregs of Greco-Roman society to present a more nuanced, but not always, clearer picture of a church in transition. Likewise Meeks, after distinguishing class, *ordo*, and status as three different types of ranking in ancient Roman society, notes the presence of individuals in Paul's churches whose 'high status inconsistency' meant that they had achieved a rise in status despite their fortunes of birth. and concludes that while the extremes of Roman society were probably missing from the Pauline congregations, in most other ways those groups represented a wide range of the strata of the cities of their day.

Yet determining the status of an 'average' Pauline Christian does not necessarily allow us to infer the apostle's own social standing. Questions such as Paul's citizenship (see the NJBC 79:16-17, 1332-33), his education, and his belonging to an ancient sectarian group - the Jews - all must figure into our evaluation. However, it is most of all (considering the primary evidence available to us) Paul's writings which aid in determining what if anything we can know of his status. Here again, Meeks, basing his observations on Adolf Deissmann and, more recently, Abraham Malherbe's work, concludes that Paul's writing shows his social level to be higher than had been previously thought (1983, 52). Likewise Christopher Forbes, who bases his conclusions on Paul's social status on the skill evident in his writing and inferences drawn from his letters (1986, 24). Yet even these must be at best tentative conclusions, since writing skill is only one determinant of class, and a highly personal one at that. Indeed, in our society, the quality of a person's writing does not always indicate their education, much less their overall social status.

Classifying Paul's Writing

Although Paul was not patrician, we must avoid the pitfall that restricts rhetorical writing to the privileged classes and consigns much of the New Testament to some 'sub-literary' genre. Here again perhaps we are dealing with the dialectic of New Testament scholarship more than with the sources themselves, for the attempts of nineteenth-century scholars to give Paul's letters the same literary value as the classical texts (Doty 1973, 24; also Betz' discussion of 19th century German opinion in Betz 1979,14) was followed by the influential way in which Adolf Deissmann relegated them to the status of *kleinliteratur* (as an important aside, the classification of Paul's writings as rhetorical or 'sub-rhetorical' is essentially the same argument in a new arena). Yet even while making his conclusions Deissmann took note of the fact that Paul's writing was "not vulgar to the degree that one

finds expression in many contemporary papyri. On the ground of his language rather Paul should be assigned to a higher class (Meeks 1983,52)". Thus Deissmann's once-influential distinction between *epistles* (*Episteln*) and *letters* (*Briefe*) is now considered overly restrictive. "Paul, insofar as he was not writing as a private person but as an apostle, and not primarily to individual persons but to churches, did indeed write letters which had a public intent, bringing them closer to the official pronouncement than to the private letter" (Doty 1973, 26; see also David Aune's chapter five on "Letters in the Ancient World" in Aune 1989).   Recent scholarship thus tends to avoid the swings of past judgements, although in practice (Forbes 1986, Plank 1987) there still seems a general tendency to emphasize almost to an extreme Paul's mastery of rhetoric (for one thing, it leaves the modern interpreter more material with which to work!). Perhaps it should be emphasized again that rhetorical textbooks such as the *progymnasmata* themselves are rather unsophisticated, as befits 'beginning exercises'. Paul's education in Greek suggests familiarity with similar exercises, and it is not too large a supposition to believe that he practiced something similar as at least part of his educational training. In the end, we are left with the rather more balanced position of most recent scholarship: that the New Testament, and Paul's letters in particular, represent a level of writing midway between the papyri and the classical texts (Doty 1973, 45).

Another factor should not be overlooked at this point: with the exception of some references to the tradition which he has passed on (1 Cor 11:23, 15:3), Paul's sources appear to be unavailable to us. This absence speaks loudly. Paul's scant use of material that can be traced to a 'Jesus tradition' or to some other collection of dominical sayings has been a source of interest and debate for some time. Paul appears to have been a church-planter who worked in a milieu rarely if ever repeated: this 'framer of Christianity' was himself outside the theological structure he did so much to set. He worked in a 'pre-Christian' context, and it was there that his vision for the church took shape.

In 1978. Hans Dieter Betz presented his massive rhetorical analysis of Galatians with the complaint that for too long, too many scholars had embraced "the myth of Paul the non-thinker":

> Since Jesus was idealized, Paul was made almost a Satanic figure...Even at the end of this century this image of Paul is so widely believed that a Paul who was able to think clearly and write intelligently remains a stranger. The belief that Paul was a psychopath is often unconsciously behind the endless variety of notions that he...was notoriously incompatible with Greco-Roman culture, of which we are of course the heirs. Thus he cannot have received a decent education... (Betz 1979:xiv).

Certainly Betz could no longer make such a complaint. If anything, the pendulum has swung the other way in New Testament studies. Watson, for instance, notes that the power of Paul's letters "derives from their rhetorical finesse"(1995, 242) and Forbes comments that Paul's mastery is shown in that "any decent amateur rhetor could follow text-book rules, but it [takes]... more than mere competence to weave them into an eloquent and compelling whole" (1986, 23). Plank (1987, 1) is positively eloquent himself: "Through a keen use of language the apostle reveals his literary artistry, especially in the Corinthian correspondence. There, every concession of inept speech pales before his control of pattern and image. Every protest of ineloquence bows to the force of his masterful irony and paradox".

Now, far from being regarded as a backwater bumpkin, Paul is seen as a master craftsperson of rhetoric, and the sheer number and detail of rhetorical and other literary studies of his letters together impute to Paul a sophistication hard for any writer, ancient or modern, to bear. So who *was* this man?

Apart from some teasing autobiographical statements (2 Cor. 11, Philippians 3, Galatians 1-2 etc.), what little biographical material we have about Paul is often taken from the book of Acts, specifically chapter 22. Whatever we might think about the validity of Acts as an historical record, we will see that merely situating Paul in the ancient urban and Hellenistic world allows us to infer that he had some familiarity with rhetoric. Moreover, as before, it is the apostle's own work which provides the best proof of our case that he wrote rhetorically.

How Far did Rhetoric Go? Judaism and the Ancient Culture of Rhetoric

If for a moment we accept the portrait of him in Acts 22:25-29, Paul was a "citizen of the Empire", and rhetoric was the academic discipline taught throughout its territory. As Kennedy remarks (1984, 9): "Rhetoric was a systematic academic discipline universally taught throughout the Roman Empire. It represented approximately the level of high-school education today and was, indeed, the exclusive subject of secondary education."

Likewise, Luke's picture of Paul has him more specifically as a citizen of Tarsus, benefiting culturally from the centuries-long process that had made urbanization the surest path to the Hellenization of local cultures. By the time of Paul, rhetoric was so much a part of popular culture that it is hardly an overstatement to claim that Hellenistic - that is, urban and educated - culture was in fact a culture steeped in rhetoric (Mack 1990, 29). Whatever we might make of the accuracy of the Acts descriptions, Paul clearly *was* a city dweller as

his own letters attest, and his churches were planted in the cities, where among the literate (Litfin 1990, 125): "The truth is that rhetoric was not merely ubiquitous in the Greco-Roman culture; more than that, it was endemic, an inherent part of life".

Yet Paul was also a member of one 'sectarian' culture - Judaism - who became a member of another, much more marginal group: Hellenistic Christianity. In light of this, are we still justified in applying categories of Greco-Roman rhetoric to his work?

It may be argued that the fact that Paul was a Jew as well as a citizen of the Hellenistic world would make little difference on this point. Again turning with caution to Acts, Paul seems to emphasize his Jewish education and that he was "brought up strictly according to our ancestral law" (Acts 22:3), which Kennedy notes may have precluded the study of pagan texts required for formal rhetorical training (1984, 9). But, even were the Acts account accurate, would this training mean a practical ignorance of the dominant culture of the day? Forbes reminds us that "the occasional prohibitions of all study and/or teaching of Greek by Rabbis originate in periods of great crisis, such as the wars of the Hasmonaeans and the Bar Kochba revolt, and hence ought not to be used as evidence for more normal practice" (1986, 23). Despite the ubiquity of rhetorical training among the urban literate in the first century, insufficient research has yet been done on the ways in which minority groups such as Pharisaic Judaism participated in such training.

In any case, we are brought face to face once more with the letters themselves. Most references to Paul's Greek education are straightforward inductions from the primary evidence of his letters. The question might be reduced to: did training in Greek mean Greek training? This brings up the relationship between language and culture. Was it possible - even in a sectarian context - to learn to write fluent Greek without learning the conscious use of rhetorical forms and taking in the culture that enjoyed them? Ian Henderson (1995, 163) in another context, refers to "a progymnasmatic smattering" as the baseline of Greek literacy.

The use of language to enculturate - and the assumption that familiarity with language will mean sympathy with that language's culture - is as old as Alexander the Great and as recent as Bill 101 in Quebec. Yet trying to determine an ancient author's conscious or unconscious use of the rules of language traps the critic in an unprovable and fruitless search. One is forced back to Paul's letters. Whether on purpose or by instinct, whether as a sectarian or Hellenist, and most likely as some combination, Paul wrote rhetorically.

Jew and citizen of the Hellenistic world: one cultural identity did not preclude the other - this has been one of the realizations coming from the explosion of research into the social world of first century Judaism and Christianity. I recall one of my professors in the mid 1970's wearing a lapel button that stated 'Think Hebrew'. It was not modern Hebrew

the button was promoting, but the theological idea (by then already fading from fashion) that we understand best the New Testament if we understand just how isolated was the Jewish milieu which birthed it. This common supposition was also apparent in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* article on "Rhetoric and Oratory", which held that New Testament writers were not affected by first-century rhetoric because of their "Semitic, Biblical, Greco-Jewish" reaction against the corruption of that "conjurer's bag of tricks" (F.C. Grant "Rhetoric and Oratory" in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 4, 76-77; also quoted in Pogoloff 1992, 14).

Since then, scholars have come to appreciate that there was no demographic centre of Judaism that was somehow free of the taint of the reigning culture of the day, and may have played a moderating role in Paul's training. While it is true that rural areas, in every age, stay more isolated than do urban (Meeks 1986, 14-15[4]), and that segments of a population can remain isolated from each other while living in close proximity, Palestine itself had been influenced by Hellenistic culture for almost 300 years by the time of Christ. One has only to think of the modern ghetto, yet even this example shows how the prevailing culture, far from being ignored, is adopted in a unique or piece-meal way by subcultures within it. Mack lists the very physical manifestations of Hellenistic culture even in the Jewish heartland: "In Palestine alone there were over thirty Hellenistic cities during the time of Jesus, twelve within a twenty-five mile radius of Nazareth. Greek cities had gymnasia (schools) and theatres. The remains of twenty Greek theatres have been unearthed by archaeologists in Palestine, one at Sepphoris, three miles north of Nazareth" (1990, 29). Kennedy notes that

> Palestine and Syria were not rhetorical backwaters: one of the most famous rhetoricians of the first century before Christ, Theodorus, was a native of Gadara who moved to Rome, where he became the teacher of the emperor Tiberius, and then settled in Rhodes. Jews sometimes studied rhetoric. The most famous rhetorician of the reign of Augustus was a Sicilian Jew named Caecilius of Calacte. The greatest rhetorician of the second century of the Christian era was Hermogenes, who was born in Tarsus, the home of Saint Paul, and who taught in the cities of the Ionian coast, where Christian churches had an early development (Kennedy 1984, 9).

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[4] As Meeks pointed out, in terms of enculturation, almost as important as the switch from Jewish to Gentile background was the fact that Pauline Christianity was an entirely urban movement.

Even were there not such specific evidence of a highly developed rhetorical culture in Paul's own backyard, evidence of a more basic and more widespread use of rhetoric also exists, not least in the 'beginning exercises' required at the very entry-level of ancient learning. Moreover, it has always been acknowledged that rhetoric by its very basis in speech has a universal component - in his introduction to *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*, Kennedy notes that the "concept of rhetoric, under different names, can be found in many ancient societies. In Egypt and China, for example, practical handbooks were written to advise the reader how to become an effective speaker" (Kennedy 1994, 3). It was in this more general form of rehearsed speech for persuasion, which had always existed but with the rules given general form by Greco-Roman tradition, that rhetoric was diffused throughout all parts of the Roman world: "Especially in its lowest registers, Hellenistic rhetoric straddles the divide between oral and written expression. The New Testament itself is evidence that this lowest common denominator of Hellenism exercised particular influence toward the social, cultural and geographical margins of the Greco-Roman world" (Henderson 1996, 6).

John and Kathleen Court argue that

> We should beware splitting up the Mediterranean world into separate cultural enclaves and insisting that Paul belongs in only one place...Just as Tarsus does not cut Paul off from Jerusalem, so Jerusalem does not cut him off from Tarsus. The traditional polarization of 'Tarsus' versus 'Jerusalem' is an artificial distinction. To have been brought up in Tarsus need not have committed Paul to a full rhetorical education...while being brought up in Jerusalem need not have excluded him from at least a general acquaintance with the Greek cultural tradition (John and Kathleen Court 1990, 90).

All this, of course, only illustrates that one cannot argue for a strict division between 'Jewish' and 'Greek', nor between 'Palestinian' and 'Hellenistic' ways of thought. In the dialectic of fashion which seems to afflict New Testament studies (and other fields, presumably), the previous trend of seeing Judaistic and Hellenistic cultures as largely separate became a tendency to over-emphasize the conflation of the two. E.P. Sanders also not surprisingly argues for a median position:

> In the course of Professor [James M.] Robinson's critique of scholarly categories, he objects to the categories 'Palestinian' and 'Hellenistic', which, he says, presuppose a 'nonexistent correspondence between geographical and cultural boundaries'. It is doubtful if he really means 'nonexistent'. Surely there was some correspondence.

Was living in Athens culturally indistinguishable from living in Jerusalem?
Presumably he means 'oversimplified', but his term 'nonexistent' oversimplifies the
matter as much as does a hard-and-fast distinction between 'Palestinian' and
'Hellenistic' (E.P Sanders 1977,23).

One cannot say much with certainty about what it meant to be a Hellenistic Jew in
the first century, but it is easy, and perhaps misleading, to overemphasize either the
distinctiveness or the similarity of different cultures that are forced to live side-by-side. In
fact, the person of Paul is one of the strongest arguments against any view of the first-
century world, and especially the Jewish milieu, which seeks too readily to separate such
categories of thought or background as Jewish, Hellenistic, Greco-Roman, and so on.
Robbins (1996, 187) characterizes Paul's social and cultural context as "intricate and
complex". It is likewise evident to readers of his letters that Paul's relationship to the
popular culture of his day was that of a critical observer (his letters are full of "culture
critique", i.e. his advice on cultic meal participation).

In fact, Paul's writing shows how complicated the relationship between the reality
he envisioned and the realities of the Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds could be:

> Pauline discourse [in First Corinthians] is not simply embedded in Jewish culture and
> countercultural to Greco-Roman culture. Pauline discourse is embedded both in
> Greco-Roman culture and in Jewish culture. It is deeply embedded in the
> Mediterranean system of social patronage and locates itself in that system in a
> particular subcultural way. In contrast, Pauline discourse seems to have a
> contracultural relationship with the Greco-Roman system of self-esteem - deeply
> embedded in it, but inverting some of its social aspects...Concerning Jewish culture,
> Pauline discourse appears to have a significant contracultural relationship with it -
> deeply imbedded in it, but inverting key aspects of it (Robbins 1996a, 187).

As does Robbins, care must be taken here to avoid projecting precisely the reality
that Paul's letters helped *create* with the situation at the time of his writing (Wisse
1986,179). Just as many contemporary Christians are surprised to realize that Jesus'
followers were in fact Jews, so Paul's congregations did not arise *ex nihilo* but instead
came from the very 'ground' of Hellenistic culture, marginal though their membership in it
may have been. And while Paul helped create a sectarian community, his letters are full of
evidence that such attempts represented a beginning only. Indeed, in addition it may be
argued that Paul's own 'sectarianism' must be understood in light of his message. When it

comes to the very marginal context of first century Christianity, Fee's words from his Corinthians commentary on the later Paul are telling:

> Paul is not a separatist, at least not in the ordinary ascetic sense of that word that is one of the hallmarks of sectarian groups. The Pauline principle is simple: Free association outside the church, precisely because God, not the church, judges those on the outside... (Fee 1987,227).

Paul the Rhetorician and the Context of the Corinthian Congregation

A final objection may be raised from Paul's own comments about *not* preaching using the 'words of wisdom' (1 Cor 1:17, 2:4). Although this is dealt with in more detail in a later section, some initial observations may be made at this point. That Paul's writing contains a critique of 'worldly wisdom' is clear, but it does not follow from that polemic that Paul was hostile to rhetoric when such techniques did not distract from the gospel. Rather, it appears to have been when wisdom (including rhetorical wisdom) led to 'puffed up' pride (1 Cor 4:6) and to judgement that Paul objected. Paul's polemic against 'words of wisdom' thus may be understood as a polemic against specific uses of rhetoric. Litfin (1994) maintains that Paul argued against the sophistic uses and abuses of language and against the resulting status which he himself may have been accused by the Corinthians of lacking. As Fee notes, Paul's defense is in fact of his preaching and delivery, and so his criticism of rhetoric is both more specific and more nuanced than is generally allowed. Paul states that his primary concern was – and is – the primacy of his gospel (the 'cross' of Christ'). If, as it is presented by Paul, his ability 'on the ground' in rhetorical oral presentation was being judged by the Corinthians, such a preoccupation with form over substance would represent a challenge to the gospel itself.

Were Paul's criticism a straightforward rejection of rhetoric, then, as Fee goes on: "As many have pointed out, 'methinks the man protesteth too much.' His letters, which at times have all the character of speech, are in fact powerful examples of rhetoric and persuasion. Nonetheless, Paul can confidently assert before those who have come to care about such things that his preaching was not of this kind. This seems to make certain that it is not rhetoric in general, but rhetoric of a very specific and well-known kind, that he is disavowing" (Fee 1987, 94 n.27).

If indeed Paul criticizes the popular culture of this day by pointing to 'something better', it does not necessarily follow that his argument derides rhetoric so much as its misuse as false language or social indicator (c.f. Winter 1997). Were this the background

to Paul's letter, as Litfin (claiming he is reviving the traditional exegesis) maintains, Paul's disagreement with rhetoric would represent an attempt to guide it. It sounds similar in many ways to Plato's critique of the rhetoric of his day. The comparison may be fruitfully explored, for like Plato's philosophy, Paul's gospel had need of being persuasive, and so it is not surprising to see both presented rhetorically even as they argue for an alternative to 'empty words' (Pogoloff 1991, 351).

Thus neither Paul's background nor his theology can be adduced to argue against a familiarity with Greco-Roman conventions of rhetoric. Add to the above the fact that Paul spent most of his active career living and travelling in the Greek-speaking and thinking world of Asia Minor, and you have a plethora of circumstantial arguments for supposing that Paul was affected by the popular culture of rhetorical display and consumption. Paul's audience - sectarian or not - was both urban and Greek speaking, and exposed to both the power and the flourishes of rhetoric.

As noted at the beginning of this section, we must distinguish (as Paul does in 2 Cor.10: 10) between Paul's original spoken message(s) and his letters. Even if we did not have the evidence of those letters themselves in front of us, we would be able to infer with some certainty that he was required to use structured persuasion - i.e. rhetoric - in his letters because that was the considered the proper way to communicate with others. By writing in Greek, says Kennedy, New Testament writers were forced to accept "some conventions of Greek rhetoric. When early Christians spoke, wrote, heard or read religious discourse in Greek, even if relatively uneducated, they had expectations of the form the message would take and of what would be persuasive" (1994, 258). What Aper said of audiences in the courts applied to the crowds which flocked to hear the orators on the streetcorners: "Everything has become common property...there is hardly any [even] casual auditor in the well of the court who, if he has not had a systematic training in the rudiments of the art, cannot show at least a tincture of it" (Tacitus *Dialogus* 19.5, quoted in Litfin 1994, 130). Neither, as Stambaugh and Balch point out, would the people to whom Paul wrote would have expected any less:

> It is difficult for us to know the exact level of rhetorical training and sophistication
> among the Christian communities to which Paul's letters were addressed, but the
> allusions to rhetorical and philosophical commonplaces that are scattered throughout
> remind us that the average resident of a Greek city had a basic acquaintance with the
> classics, with tales of mythology, and with rhetorical principles, reinforced by the
> plays and mimes and recitations of street bards at festivals, and by the lectures and

discussions of rhetoricians and philosophers in marketplaces, gymnasia, and street corners (Stambaugh and Balch 1986,122).

It is, of course, possible that Paul's level of rhetoric was above that of some of his readers (see, for instance, 2 Peter 3:16). However it also seems likely (Fee, Litfin), that Paul's portrayal of the Corinthians as those who considered themselves skilled enough to be Paul's rhetorical judges, at least when it came to his delivery, is based on some mutual historical recollection. In any case, the picture we get of ancient audiences is that they were played to by the orators of the day. Dio surely flatters when he says to an audience in Phrygia: "You are devoted to oratory to a degree that is remarkable, I may even say excessive, and you tolerate as speakers only those who are very clever". *Discourses* 35.1 quoted in Litfin 1994, 131). Audiences were sometimes gullible, but also capable of turning on the very men who sought to gain their assent, often more concerned with the style than the substance of a debate, but able to discern good from bad speech and express their opprobrium or appreciation accordingly: (Cicero *De Oratore* 3.1.198): "just as the public sees a mistake in versification, so it notices a slip in our oratory...".

While in building his case for the person and training of Paul, Winter's reliance on biographical material from Acts (1997, 216 ff.) may also be subject to question, his observations about the rhetorical milieu of Paul's Corinth are independent of such evidence. Litfin, in his 1994 *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation* covers the same historical backdrop, and comes to similar conclusions. Using the evidence of the waxing and waning fortunes of the first century rhetorician Favorinus in Corinth and archeological evidence of a podium in Corinth patterned after the *Rostra* in Rome, Litfin concludes that rhetoric was an important part of public life there as early as Paul, and that the "Corinthians of the early Christian era, like their contemporaries across the Roman empire, loved and rewarded *logos* and *sophia*. On the other hand, they had not the slightest compunction about standing in judgment over the speakers who came before them" (Litfin 1994, 146). Winter criticizes Litfin for failing to realize that Dio Chrysostom's 'Diogenes' speeches are in fact a literary device for historical retrojection and describe first century Corinth rather than the fourth-century BC. However, this critique of Litfin is not really over the substance of the latter's conclusions, with which Winter agrees. We may conclude that for his part, Litfin's case ultimately rests on his assertion that Corinth was so clearly a Greco-Roman city, and rhetoric was so clearly a part of that culture, that it would be difficult not to maintain that Corinth had a vibrant culture of rhetorical display, judgment, and consumption. Witherington (1995, 349-350) likewise builds the case for a thriving rhetorical culture in 'Paul's' Corinth, using as evidence also Epictetus, Favorinus, and

Didymus. In the end, all these scholars present a picture of first-century Corinth as a thoroughly cosmopolitan Greco-Roman city where rhetorical display was, if you will pardon the pun, commonplace.

What was true of the recipients was certainly no less true of the author: Paul was familiar - whether by training or natural talent - with rhetoric, whatever his relationship to rhetorical theory. No matter what the Apostle's formal training may or may not have been, as Kennedy says,

> ...He and the evangelists as well would, indeed, have been hard put to escape an awareness of rhetoric as practiced in the culture around them, for the rhetorical theory of the schools found its immediate application in almost every form of oral and written communication: in official documents and public letters, in private correspondence, in the lawcourts and assemblies, in speeches at festivals and commemorations, and in literary composition in both prose and verse (Kennedy 1984, 10).

But in the end, despite this wealth of indirect evidence, the strongest argument for Paul's use of rhetoric need not be inferred. Its form may be debated, its scope and limits may be argued, but Paul's use of rhetoric is everywhere evident in his writings. Paul proves his familiarity with rhetoric in practice by *using* it throughout his letters. Forbes notes: "...if the three primary characteristics of the 'Grand Style' are its breadth of amplification, its emotional force, and its intention to move its audience...then I cannot doubt that Paul's 'boasting' deserves to be placed in the category" (1986, 23). Although scholars have tried, one does not need to prove that one of Paul's letters follows, from start to finish, a standard rhetorical pattern. As shown in chapter two, part of the point is that the ancients were not required to do this. Also, Paul's writings contain myriad smaller examples. From an encomium on Love (1 Corinthians 13) (Mack 1990, 64-66), through an ironical treatment of high and low birth (1 Cor 4:10) (Fee 1987, 176[5]), to the arrangement of parts of 1 Corinthians (Witherington 1995,39) or Galatians (Betz 1979), rhetorical argument is everywhere apparent, even when we may debate the actual forms used. Chreia, refutations, diatribes, *topoi* (i.e. Gal 4:12; Phil 2:2, 4:15), comparisons, *gnomai* (i.e. 1 Cor 3:8, 5:6 - compare Gal 5:9) and the like are employed throughout the Pauline corpus.

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[5] Fee notes that Theissen has missed this literary angle entirely in his occupation with sociological concerns - a methodological problem which I maintain often accompanies too quick a turn to the task of historical reconstruction.

Paul and the Sophists

A cultural and rhetorical movement that became known as the 'second sophistic' swept through the Mediterranean world during the first and second centuries AD. It is called 'second' sophistic because, although the exact fortunes of rhetoric between the time of Plato and Paul are somewhat unclear (Kennedy 1963, 264), it appears that the movement represented a second flowering of the public thirst for, and personal excellence in, oratory which had so characterized ancient Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BC and featured orators like Gorgias, Isocrates and Antiphon. This later renaissance of rhetoric is called 'sophistic' for the sophists, hugely popular public orators who were part showman, part teacher, and who parlayed their public finesse into private fortune. Kennedy describes them: "the most famous sophists traveled widely, giving demonstrations of their skill in theatres or at religious festivals; became friends with powerful Romans, including emperors; and acquired a fame comparable to that of movie stars, athletes, and musical performers today" (Kennedy 1994, 231).

Historians have usually regarded the second Sophistic as having begun in earnest in the West sometime after Cicero (106-43 BC), and in the eastern Mediterranean later, with Dio Chrysostom - 'the golden tongued' - whose speeches date from about 68 AD He is, Kennedy notes, the earliest of the sophists described by Philostratus whose works have survived. This simple observation, however, raises some important questions.

Is it appropriate or even necessary to restrict our own understanding of this renaissance of rhetoric to the persons or times described by Philostratus? Bruce Winter, in his *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, argues that one should date the movement earlier, and that scholars have omitted or ignored some substantial evidence from the first century, especially in the writings of Philo (1997, 7). Although he predates Philostratus' accounting, Philo certainly seems to give evidence of a vibrant cultural movement already taking place in his native Alexandria and beyond. "Sophists," he wrote, were "winning city after city, and drawing well-nigh the whole world to honour them" (in Winter 1997, 4).

But for our purposes it is Winter's work concerning Paul that is of greater importance. We know - again from Dio Chrysostom, who stayed in Corinth in the late 80's and early 90's - that sophists were active in that city at that time (Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 6 and 8). Winter draws on Dio Chrysostom and other contemporary sources including Epictetus and Plutarch to argue that decades earlier - in other words, already by the time of Paul - sophists and their students were present and vigorously active in Corinth, and that their fame and influence was such that Paul's words about 'worldly wisdom' must be seen as a reaction against the movement. Winter critiques Litfin, who also deals extensively

with this period, for ignoring the evidence of Epictetus, who carried on a late first century discussion with a student of rhetoric from Corinth. (1997, 8-9, 9 n.25). Winter concludes that Paul's rejection of sophistic rhetoric was embodied in his style of preaching only. Although overlooked by later commentators because of its sectarian origin and development, Winter maintains that in his *writing* Paul - like Philo - is an early and unique example of a Christian current in the second sophistic movement. It is an important insight - and one we will return to - that among the ongoing repercussions of the long history in which Paul's writing gained its privileged position (in other words, became 'scripture') is the simple fact that it is not considered to be an example of first century persuasion when clearly that is exactly what it is.

In other words, Paul's letters have been seen by so many for so long as the 'ahistorical' word of God that they are sometimes overlooked by those outside the New Testament field as examples of unprivileged but very rhetorical writing during an historical period where there is almost no other primary evidence of the same. In that same light, for instance, it is noteworthy that despite his own labours in the field, Kennedy's *New History of Classical Rhetoric*'s chapter on Christian writings is entitled "Christianity and Classical Rhetoric" and not "Christian (or sectarian) Rhetoric in Classical Times".

Winter states: "But we do not deny Pauline rhetorical ability with respect to writing. The point is that he renounced the use of 'grand style' in preaching" (1997, 217 n.68, compare Forbes 1986, 23). Ultimately, I find a hard distinction between Paul's writing and preaching somewhat artificial. Apart from the few autobiographical references which the apostle makes in his letters to the Corinthians (2 Cor 10:10; 11:6; 1 Cor 2:3) and which themselves form part of his argument (and thus serve a rhetorical function), we simply do not have records of Paul's original preaching. Whether he was a suitably impressive orator or not at first contact cannot be answered. Two factors suggest themselves: a/ Paul takes the charge that his "bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible" seriously enough to put the phrase in the mouth of his literary opponents while developing his own case for a different legitimacy of ministry; but also b/unless, like Kloppenborg, you entertain the idea that Paul's position as 'founder' at Corinth is itself his fabrication, then at least his preaching/rhetoric was effective enough to have founded the congregation he later writes to. Contrast Kloppenborg (1996, 248): "Paul's self-descriptions as the 'founder' should be weighed in the balance of rhetoric and not immediately taken for granted", with Paul's words in 1 Cor 4:15: "For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers" or 3:6 "I planted, Apollos watered..." Kloppenborg's 'rhetoric of suspicion' is hard to maintain against Paul's statements in light of the dearth of

any real evidence *contra* Paul. Paul's spoken word was effective enough to have helped create the audience he later wrote to.

This is surely not to say that Paul's level of rhetorical skill in speaking and in writing were identical. Firstly, no matter how rhetorical his aims, and no matter how far the image of the readers presented by him in the text may differ from historical reality, it is hard to believe that Paul would have written 2 Cor. 10:10 the way he did to people (some at least of whom had met him), were it not largely true. Paul could not have been an impressive orator and still have said such things about himself. Secondly. Paul maintains in 1 Corinthians that whatever power his actual physical presence and message had were due to the power of the cross, which he painstakingly contrasts with the influence of someone skilled in rhetoric.

In any case, Paul maintains that whether or not he cut an imposing figure physically, his letters fairly represent his message (2 Cor 10:11): "what we say by letter when absent, we will also do when present". For Paul, preaching and writing coincide - presumably in his willingness to use rhetoric (if not his ability) as well.

Paul as ἰδιώτης

In 2 Corinthians 10:10 Paul gives what may be a rare clue to his own person and appearance by putting a criticism in the mouths of his rhetorical opponents: "For they say 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (NRSV). Because all we have left of ancient rhetoric (including Christian rhetoric) are the texts it has left behind, we naturally tend toward the working assumption that speech - or text - was the sole crucible within which argumentation took place, and therefore assume also a reading culture similar to our own. But by so doing we emphasize *logos* at the expense of *pathos* or *ethos*. Even the physical appearance of the rhetor was important to the audience who came to hear him speak. If, in 2 Corinthians 10:10 especially, as Pogoloff, Winter and others attest, allusion is made that Paul's physical appearance had been attacked as part of the general critique he received as a speaker, this would not have been unique. Quintilian gives assent to this tactic in Book five of his *Institutio Oratoria*:

> Sometimes however we are justified in attacking, not merely their manner of speaking, but also their character, their appearance, their gait or bearing. Indeed, in his attack on Quintus, Cicero does not confine himself to these topics, but even attacks his purple-bordered toga that goes trailing to his heels... (*Inst. Or.* 5,13,39).

Whatever Paul's appearance and voice were like, he himself makes these part of the issue between himself and the Corinthians by bringing them up. Yet he does so, not to provide us with tantalizing historical clues about his person, but to further his argument that status has a whole different meaning in the world envisaged by the gospel.

Further to this point, in 2 Corinthians 11:6 Paul writes of himself: "I may be untrained in speech, but not in knowledge..." (NRSV). The term "untrained [person]" (ἰδιώτης) has sparked some debate - but perhaps not as much as it should have - about what, if anything, Paul may be revealing about the content or limits of his rhetorical knowledge. Since all rhetorical critical studies of Paul's letters presume some rhetorical awareness on the part of the apostle and some attribute to him considerable skill, it is incumbent on us to examine a passage where he himself seems to deny any rhetorical credentials.

As early as 1984 Kennedy noted about ἰδιώτης that it "basically denotes a private person, not a professional," and that "it does not rule out the individual's informal acquaintance with a subject or practice in it" (Kennedy 1984, 95). Pogoloff adds "We must remember that virtually all educated people were rhetorically trained, but only a small percentage spoke in the courts or declaimed in public" (Pogoloff 1992, 149; c.f. also Henderson 1996, 6). In other words, ἰδιώτης may simply mean 'amateur', as opposed to professional; someone who has not taken up speaking as a public career and - note - does not gain his livelihood by speaking (*nota bene* Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 9!). Here Kennedy is paralleling the Arndt, Gingrich and Bauer Lexical understanding of the term, in which definition they note that it seems not to make any specific judgement on knowledge, but rather to indicate that the person described is outside 'the guild', whether that be the guild of the military (as in Josephus) the priesthood (their example from Philo) or the philosophers (as Plutarch has used the term). Were this the only meaning of the word, we might be content to conclude that Paul, despite whatever rhetorical knowledge he possesses, knows himself to be and presents himself to be something other than the self-promoters who so commonly went by the sophist label.

Evidence from the earlier period of rhetoric supports this understanding. No less a personage than Isocrates called himself an ἰδιώτης, because while he taught rhetoric and wrote rhetorically, he did not himself speak publicly, "claiming he was not gifted at the latter" (Isocrates *Against the Sophists* 14, quoted in Pogoloff 1994, 149). Not all students of Isocrates' famous school came to him in order to become official rhetors in the agora or the court, but many for the numerous other openings such training gave them (Pogoloff 1994, 149).

By Paul's day, the term ἰδιώτης could take its meaning not from what it denoted so much as by being opposed to the term *sophist* when the latter was used pejoratively. Thus Plutarch has Aristarchus jeering at the many sophists by saying that in the old days there were barely seven sophists (the Seven 'Wise Men') whereas now an equally large number of non-sophists (ἰδιώτης) could not be gathered together (Plutarch *De frat. Amor., Mor.* 478C., quoted in Pogoloff 1994, 150). In this context, the ἰδιώτης might be the more persuasive person, taking on an almost populist nuance. Indeed, claiming one's status as 'just one of the folks' is the stock-in-trade of rhetoric in our own day, nor was this trick just invented. One can see the rhetorical advantage in using this status as part of the *ethos* of effective argument. By emphasizing that he is a 'common man' like the listener, the writer of a rhetorical document makes his very lack of status a strength, playing the plainspoken Jimmy Stewart to the oily rhetorical charmers from the 'big city'. Does Paul do this?

In the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians one finds the following comparisons:

1:17	in words of wisdom	the cross of Christ
	ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου	ὁ σταυρὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ.
2:1	fancy words or wisdom	Jesus Christ and him crucified
	ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας	Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον
2:4[6]	persuasive words of wisdom	demonstration spirit and power
	ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας (λόγοις)	ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως
2:13	human (words of)wisdom as teacher	Spirit as teacher
	ἐν διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις	ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος

The opposition between words/wisdom on the one side and cross/Jesus/Spirit clearly illustrates an ongoing polemic against wisdom in 1 Corinthians. This, however, only raises more questions. What, exactly, is this wisdom which Paul castigates? Σοφία has been variously identified by modern critics with Greek philosophical tradition, gnostic

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[6] On the textual difficulties in v. 4 see the discussion in Fee (1987, 88). I concur with his translation of πειθοῖς.

knowledge, Jewish wisdom tradition especially as mediated through Philo (Fee's overview 1987, 64 n.79), and lately, rhetoric (Pogoloff 1992, 113; Marshall 1987, 385-89). In general, the position adopted here is the last, but in a specific sense. I argue that the use of the term in these examples refers to the status given practitioners in the 'technology' of rhetoric more than to the content of that knowledge itself. It seems to me that such a distinction best suits the 'plain reading' of the text, and the context of Paul's argument overall. Paul is attempting to persuade the readers that status comes from somewhere other than what their civic sensibilities might normally suggest. In that light, 'wisdom' is the cipher for whatever gives status and prestige *normally* in the Corinthian world, and 'the cross' or 'the spirit' is Paul's alternative. In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul may be paraphrased: "Christ sent me to proclaim the gospel, not with fancy rhetoric, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power"(I agree with Fee 1987, 64, that the genitive λόγου is descriptive, qualifying the way in which the σοφία is presented).

The sharply drawn contrast between "words of wisdom" and "Spirit and power" in 1 Cor 2:1 and 4 lead Marshall to argue in his book *Enmity in Corinth* (1987, 389) that Paul proclaims his message as the "very antithesis" of Greek rhetoric. While I believe that his argument recognizes the sharp contrast Paul makes between the ways he uses words and what they are used for in Corinthian society, I feel the analysis must go one step farther. It is the status brought by 'words of eloquence' or more specifically, the way those words are being used to judge the Gospel message, which is the problem. In other words (and I do not believe it is too fine a point), Paul's argument is not against rhetoric *per se*, which he plainly uses, but against its use as a yardstick by which the Gospel may be judged. As Paul presents them, the Corinthians are willing to choose rhetorical form over gospel content. For Paul, nothing stands over the Gospel, and a dismissal of his message on technical grounds only supports his contention that this Christian rhetoric has another purpose altogether than gaining social status for its speakers.

This argument is based in part also on Pogoloff's understanding of this passage. Part of his contribution is to show how the linkage of the words σοφία and λόγος (the words paired in almost all of our oppositions above) in ancient usage denotes "a whole world of social status related to speech" (1992, 113). If we take this meaning, the contrast in the verses listed then becomes, in every case, a contrast between a 'high' social status in the speech-conscious Mediterranean culture, and what the apostle posits as the real alternative - being 'in' the cross of Christ, Christ or the Spirit.

Thus Paul's approach is not really populist in the way first suggested, since the alternative to the high-status sophists or powerful rhetors is not a man 'of the people', but a

person 'of the cross'. In other words, Paul is not suggesting an alternative *within* the existing structure of Corinthian society, but completely outside it, in the realm of the cross or the Spirit. It is here that his creative rhetoric finds a role to play.

So what, then, does Paul say of himself and his training? Once we grant that the purpose of his words is more argument than self-description, the answer may be: very little.

In 2 Corinthians 11:6 Paul writes of himself: "I may be untrained in speech, but not in knowledge..." (NRSV). Given the above discussion of the term (ἰδιώτης), what Paul says about himself could perhaps be paraphrased thus: "While I may not be a professional wordsmith, I lack no status when it comes to wisdom, as indeed has been made clear to you everytime, and everywhere". Paul's remarks serve in his argument not to deny rhetorical training of any sort, but rather in light of his lack of oratorical skill to point (as he does consistently throughout the first few chapters of 1 Corinthians) to another source for status for both his readers and himself – the *substance* of his message, which is the 'cross of Christ'. It is, in fact, clear that whatever his official 'rating' might have been in a society very conscious of status and status differences, Paul knew how to use rhetoric and did so in his letters to the Corinthians.

Conclusions About Paul's Training

In the end, whether Paul was a 'trained' rhetorician in the full sense of that term, or even what the full sense of that term might mean, are not questions that need to be solved here. As does Kennedy in one of his works, we also may state that "it is not a necessary premise of this study that the evangelists or St. Paul had formally studied Greek rhetoric" (1984, 9), or perhaps, in Antoinette Wire's words: "Just as a child can speak her native tongue correctly without schooling, so a man can sell a horse or a conviction very persuasively without reflecting upon how he does it. In Paul's case the data we have is this persuasion itself" (Wire 1990, 2).

Classen identified at least four possible sources which may explain rhetorical features in a text. They are: deliberate application of rhetorical theory; the conscious imitation of other written or spoken rhetorical communication; unconscious borrowing from those same sources; or a natural and untrained gift for effective speaking and writing (1992, 323). One is reminded of Augustine's later words: "we know many men ignorant of the rules of eloquence who are more eloquent than many who have learned them; but we know of no one who is eloquent without having read or heard the disputations and sayings of the eloquent" (*On Christian Doctrine* 4,3,5). Since learning Greek usually meant reading

Greek literature (Classen 1992, 344), it is likely that Paul met with rhetoric applied in literary documents. Yet even if he did not, his writings show some skill in its use.

In any event we are concerned, not with the origin of Paul's rhetoric, but with its purpose and effect as they relate to the many rhetorical critical studies which examine his letters. Whatever Paul's formal skills, and whatever polemic he may be engaged in in 1 Corinthians, it is certainly true that Paul practiced in a general sense the art of rhetoric, if we accept Cleanthes' definition of an art as "a power reaching its ends by a definite path, that is. by ordered methods" (Quintilian *Inst. Or.* 2.17.41), or Quintilian's proposal that an art "consists in perceptions agreeing and cooperating to the achievement of some useful end". No less a teacher of rhetoric than he would say that "even moderate eloquence is often productive of great results and, if such studies are to be measured solely by their utility, is almost equal to the perfect eloquence for which we seek." This however, still leaves the question that was as ancient as the untrained heroes of Homer: is natural eloquence the same as rhetorical skill?

Clearly Paul intends to be persuasive. What is more important to the present argument is that he accomplishes this in a structured fashion. Kennedy, at the conclusion of his *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* says that the recognition of the extent to which forms of logical argument are used in the New Testament is a "striking result" of his study (1984, 159).

One might note again at this point that no clear criteria have been used to distinguish between the conscious use of rhetorical conventions, and the unconscious use in rhetorical speech of arguments that are similar to those employed by trained rhetoricians. Was Paul a trained rhetorician? It is impossible to say with certainty. If you hold that anyone who wrote fluently in Greek in the first century had undergone some rhetorical training, then Paul would qualify - but the term 'trained' (literate) may be so general and apply to so many even in the first-century context, that it requires qualification. Here, what Henderson says about the gospel writers, I believe to be true also of Paul:

> Within ancient rhetoric it is, moreover, possible to specify narrowly "the minimum formal rhetorical equipment of any literate person from the Hellenistic period on," an equipment certainly shared by anyone capable of writing or of reading any of our gospels or their sources.
>
> The same equipment was, moreover, the stock in trade of public speakers and their audiences, literate or not, in Greek or not, at every educational level in a commonwealth of societies rich in literature, but powered by the well-spoken word (1996, 6).

Did Paul *use* rhetoric? The answer to this question is an unqualified yes. Thus when this work calls Paul a rhetorician, it is in this sense. Whatever his background and education might have been, and whatever his polemic against the rhetoric of his contemporaries might have been, in light of his clear use of both specific rhetorical techniques and rhetorical strategies of persuasion throughout his letters, Paul himself wrote rhetorically.

Augustine, while clearly trained, and superior as a rhetorician to Paul, followed the apostle in the subject matters of his work, especially his *On Christian Doctrine*. In an odd disclaimer on the utility of rhetoric, Augustine explicitly denies that he is setting about to teach the art: "I must thwart the expectation of those readers who think that I shall give the rules of rhetoric here which I learned and taught in the secular schools"(4,1,2). And yet is he as consistent in separating the craft from his Christian subject matter as he would have us believe? It seems at least possible that he saw a uniquely Christian approach sanctified in the same biblical texts he used rhetoric to elucidate. Indeed, at the conclusion of *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine's model rhetor has more than a little Paul in him:

> A teacher with these virtues, in order that he may be obediently heard, speaks without shame not only in the subdued and moderate style but also in the grand style because he does not live contemptibly. He chooses a good life in such a way that he does not also neglect good fame, but provides 'what may be good not only before God, but also before men', in so far as he is able by fearing God and caring for men. In his speech itself he should prefer to please more with the things said than with the words used to speak them...This is what the Apostle meant by 'not in wisdom of speech, lest the cross of Christ should be made void'."

Augustine assumed that Paul's own use of oratory fell in line with the definition of rhetoric as the task of persuasion. Not everyone is brought to the truth through teaching or delight (4,12,28), although these are forms of persuasion in their own right. It is noteworthy also how Augustine contrasts the persuasive power of rhetoric with his belief in the power of the cross. While following Paul's warning about 'wisdom of speech', like the earlier apostle but more explicitly, Augustine approves of rhetoric in service of proclaiming the Christian message. Rhetorical techniques are not themselves true or false (2,36,54), and (following Cicero) although subdued manner is to be preferred, Augustine's model Christian rhetor, patterned on Paul, is able to use rhetoric fully and to effect when the occasion demands: "when something is to be done and he is speaking to

those who ought to do it but do not wish to do it, then those great things should be spoken in the grand manner in a way appropriate to the persuasion of their minds (4,19,38)".

Paul the Rhetorician

Among the questions which began this chapter were: Was Paul a trained rhetorician, or was the pervasiveness of rhetorical culture in his day such that for our purposes it doesn't matter? And: Does the fact that a text aims to persuade make it rhetorical? The answer to the first question is that while Paul's precise training seems to be beyond our ability to reconstruct, his unambiguous literacy in Greek, his clear use of rhetoric and the ubiquity of rhetoric in the first century all approve our study. The second question, which is in fact a question about the boundaries and definition of rhetoric, has more than one answer, for there was (and is) no single rhetoric. Having shown that Paul's writing was intended to persuade, we are justified in treating his letters as rhetorical texts, even in those passages which contain no specific examples from the rhetorical casebooks ancient or modern.

Certainly Paul's rhetoric was not that of the rhetorical giants whose public lives were played out on a stage so much more central at the time than his own. Both his writing and his audience were more modest, while we hear from him that his actual 'stage presence' was something less than remarkable (2 Cor 11:6). As Paul's own disclaimers seem to indicate (and he is writing to people who indeed have met him), in the public eye of Corinth he even came off poorly compared to the sophists who declaimed in practically every major city. Yet history shows that in the end - perhaps for reasons entirely unrelated to his rhetorical skill - at least some of Cicero's description applied to Paul's "Words...not of wisdom": "This eloquence has power to sway men's minds and move them in every possible way. Now it storms the feelings, now it creeps in; it implants new ideas and uproots the old" (Cicero *Orator* 97, quoted in Litfin 1994, 92).

In the end, Paul's 'modest' rhetorical skills - at least, modest in speaking if not in writing - paled by comparison to his rhetorical goals, which were far more grand. Paul aimed at the "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17) he believed God intended. Did he succeed? It is hard to distinguish in later years any Greco-Roman Christianity that is *not* Pauline. I am reminded of Bultmann's phrase (1955, 16,189): "The so often and so passionately debated question, 'Jesus and Paul', is at bottom the question: Jesus and Hellenistic Christianity". If Christianity truly did follow Paul's path, then Paul's rhetoric was in large part responsible.

CHAPTER FOUR: Rhetorical Criticism's Less-Than-Tidy Situation

Current Uses of the Term 'Rhetorical'

> "For some hold that rhetoric is concerned with everything, while some restrict its activity..."
> Quintilian *Institutes* 2.15.15

In the last two chapters we have witnessed agreements and disagreements between ancient rhetoricians about the nature, purpose, and even legitimacy of their art, and essayed an overview of how Paul fit into the rhetorical milieu of his day. In the process we turned up as many questions as answers. Now we turn to the contemporary situation in New Testament studies of rhetoric. The first thing to note is that many - perhaps most - New Testament rhetorical scholars since Betz and Muilenburg regard their work as either a continuation from or in some cases even a restatement of ancient rhetoric. Given what we now know of that heritage, it should come as no surprise that despite much profitable labour, our own contemporaries cannot agree on the definition of rhetoric, much less how its insights may be applied to the New Testament. While it is important to remember that few scholars are so extreme, figure two, below, shows in general terms the opposite poles represented in contemporary uses of rhetorical criticism:

Figure two:

modern debates

repristination of ancient rhetoric	new and more global definitions
stylistic criticism	literary criticism
study of styles and figures	study of argumentative strategy
historical goal (setting)	literary goal (meaning and performance)
rhetoric as argumentation only	rhetoric encompassing all forms of discourse: argument, exposition, narration, description

There is currently no single accepted method for undertaking a rhetorical analysis of a Pauline letter. Some New Testament scholars use only Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions, while others make more use of modern conventions, sometimes embracing the latest literary theories as well. Often scholars will use a mixture of both ancient and modern techniques. Some authors (for example, Mitchell) argue forcefully about what they will and will not consider proper rhetorical 'instruments' for exploration. Others are much less clear.

Some scholars, such as Clifton Black (1989,253), seem to bemoan the plethora of methods and presuppositions while others (Wilhelm Wuellner) rejoice in the pluralism of rhetoric 'reinvented' (Stamps 1992, 277). E. Schussler Fiorenza (1987) and E. Castelli (1991) have pointed to the importance of the ideological aspect of Paul's writing, hoping thereby to avoid the methodological straitjacket of being restricted to either literary or socio-historical concerns, a hope echoed in this present work. Since Vernon K. Robbins' work on socio-rhetorical criticism (1996 a and b especially), more attention has been paid to his call to let specialized methods of textual analysis interact with each other, while examining the many, interacting 'textures' of the text. Despite this much-needed refinement and corrective, however, rhetorical criticism's present situation continues to be admirably summarized by Henderson as "a centrifugal movement of growing eclecticism, pluralism, and uncertainty about methods for New Testament interpretation" (1996, 38).

Rhetorical Intent

Like their ancient counterparts, modern theorists generally define rhetoric as the art of persuasion (Marshall 1987, 279; Henderson 1996, 243), while making allowance for the fact that they are dealing with texts rather than living speech. We must reiterate that there was a living oral dimension to written letters in antiquity; for Paul's dictation of his letters may have included a certain training of the person intended to carry the letter and of their delivery of the message (Botha 1993, 417). The important recognition of this oral dimension, however, only emphasizes the definition of rhetoric as 'patterned' and therefore conscious persuasion by widening its scope and tying it more closely to the ancient practice of speech making.

Whatever its form - oral or written - rhetoric served a purpose. A brief survey of New Testament rhetorical critics reinforces the understanding that behind every rhetorical presentation there is an intent, or purpose. Mack, for one, concentrates on the consciousness or intent of the orator. "Rhetoric," he writes, "is capable of describing an exchange of words and ideas as a strategy by which an author seeks to influence his or her

readers" (1990, 93). Kennedy, despite his other disagreements with Mack, agrees in the emphasis on the goals of the orator or writer: "Rhetoric," he states "is that quality in discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purposes" (1984, 3)."Rhetoric is...wishfully normative speech," says Henderson (1996, 13). While Kloppenborg (1996, 252) ostensibly distinguishes between "descriptive and prescriptive" rhetoric, I believe that only the latter really exists; in fact Kloppenborg implies the same by noting how even the arrangement of descriptive statements can be used to argue a point.

The 'old' and the 'new' rhetoric in modern scholarship: Kennedy as a point-of-departure

Kennedy, Mitchell, Betz and others, in their individual ways, all push for a repristination of the classical norms in contemporary scholarship. That is, they feel they have recovered for modern scholarship the techniques and tools that were available to ancient practitioners of the craft but since have suffered neglect. For example, Betz stated quite simply at the beginning of his Galatians commentary that the letter "can be analyzed according to Greco-Roman rhetoric"(1979,14) - and proceeded to analyze. His commentary, while certainly not lacking a methodology, does neglect to make plain to the reader all of the critical presuppositions behind it (for example, see Meeks' critique in JBL 100.1981: 304-307). Kennedy was the first to describe a complete rhetorical-critical methodology which others could follow, in his *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (1984). Kennedy's six stages for rhetorically analyzing New Testament texts can be identified as follows:

> 1. Determine the rhetorical unit; 2. Define the rhetorical situation (that is, the historical situation which required a response); 3. Identify the major rhetorical problem or in classical terms the *stasis* which is at issue; 4. Examine the arrangement of parts into a unified rhetorical section; 5. Analyze each part for its invention and style; and 6. Evaluate the rhetorical effectiveness of each unit (34-38).

It is important to note that Kennedy himself did not see this method as linear. Rather, he hoped that the results of each stage of analysis of a text would lead to more refined conclusions in the other stages, so that, for example, discoveries about the style of a passage might shed more light on the rhetorical problem or historical situation addressed. He intended this type of analysis to be a "circular process" (Kennedy 1984, 33).

Perhaps because of its completeness, Kennedy's proposal had the happy result of focussing debate on the main questions facing any rhetorical critic. For instance, the relationship between the terms *rhetorical situation* and *historical situation* has bedeviled or at least beguiled a number of studies, and determining the actual species (judicial, deliberative or epideictic) of a specific rhetorical unit has not been as straightforward as one might have hoped. For instance, Mitchell (1991, 12), makes the determination of rhetorical species one of her five working principals and states that it requires "perhaps the heaviest burden of proof upon one employing rhetorical criticism with New Testament texts".

Secondly, Kennedy's proposed stages were presented almost as if all are of equal importance to the critic when subsequent studies illustrate clearly that they are not. Most rhetorical critics have an end in mind when they undertake to isolate a rhetorical unit or analyze the process of invention, and that end is usually to get back to the historical situation which underlies the apostle's writing. Thus Kennedy's step two (that is, defining the rhetorical situation) tends in practice to be both the working guide and the *telos* of rhetorical analysis, and the other stages of his process serve to support whatever historical conclusions the scholar in question makes. Finally, Kennedy's method presumes as do most rhetorical scholars, that there was indeed one single classical or Greco-Roman rhetoric that the modern scholar can rediscover and use in searching Biblical texts for their meaning. As we have seen, ancient rhetoric was a battleground only slightly less rancorous than is modern rhetorical criticism, with its own debates about theory and method, style and substance. Wuellner states:

> All appearances (of ancient rhetorical handbooks, or of modern interpretations of ancient textbooks...) to the contrary, there never existed a uniform or unified system of classical rhetoric. Rather, we find an ongoing and unresolved struggle for redesigning the institutional structure of rhetoric, as in Isocrates' fight against the sophists on the one hand, and the Academy on the other...The institutionalization of rhetoric as part of the educational system (*paidea*) as one of the three 'liberal arts' (the *trivium* of grammar, dialectics/logic/philosophy and rhetoric) encouraged the notion, consolidated by centuries of scholarship, that classical rhetoric was a more or less fixed 'system' (1991, 172).

Other, more general questions are also raised in a helpful fashion by examining Kennedy's method (Watson 1995, 220-221). Mitchell and others have noted its over-reliance on the rhetorical handbooks. To what extent does this method recognize the kind of flexibility that we have seen figuring so prominently in ancient rhetoric? At the conclusion

of his work Litfin notes this very characteristic: "When all the minutiae of Greco-Roman rhetorical theory are pared away and the essence of the thing lies before us, we discover there what we have called the dynamic of rhetorical adaptation" (Litfin 1994, 245).

How might Paul's rhetoric have adapted or evolved in ways perhaps unfamiliar to a classical understanding of 'standard' Greco-Roman forms, as espoused by Kennedy? And is his method as it has been used, with its more or less explicit aim of looking into the historical circumstances of authorship (the 'original setting' for the rhetoric), also useful for those who are seeking the meaning and performative aspects of rhetoric (i.e. its outcome)? In fact, Kennedy's own aim seems to imply that he is seeking more than categorization of Paul according to ancient Greco-Roman rules also: "my goal...is the more historical one of reading the Bible as it would be read by an early Christian", he states (1984, 5). It strikes me that this goal requires going beyond the setting of the original writing to the point where one asks what the writing in fact might have accomplished. It means putting yourself in that reader's shoes and asking what the rhetoric invites you to do. Kennedy makes this explicit in outlining what the proper goal of rhetorical investigation should be: "The ultimate goal of rhetorical analysis, briefly put, is the discovery of the author's intent and of how that is transmitted through a text to an audience"(12). I do not believe that Kennedy stays true to this particular goal, but instead returns to the 'holy grail' search of history more common among New Testament rhetorical critics. For our part we will return shortly to his emphasis on the audience and the point of reception of the text as part of our own inquiry in that direction.

As part of Kennedy's call to return to ancient norms, he makes it clear that rhetoric has always been more than the study of figures (that is, specific examples or typical paradigms of this or that rhetorical technique), and that therefore in his own method he does not want to be restricted to stylistics:

> If fundamental and universal features of rhetoric are kept in mind and if we seek to use them in describing the logical and structural features of the text before us, rather than simply quarrying a text for examples of classical figures, we can significantly enhance our appreciation of its meaning without violence to the author's intent (12).

I note here especially the adjectives 'fundamental' and 'universal' applied to features, which I take to mean those features that serve the primary purpose of rhetoric, namely persuasion. Here I believe Kennedy opens himself to the possibility of using insights gained from outside the classical tradition, whether that be the kind of argumentation found in the Biblical texts, or observations that might now be assigned to

discourse or literary theory. He states again that certain forms of argumentation are not specifically Greco-Roman but rather common to the human experience. For instance, he notes about the *progymnasmatic* forms: "Because these forms are common types, found in many cultures, something analogous to them can be found in the Bible, though they are rarely developed there in accord with the specific suggestions of the Greek and Roman schools" (1984, 22).

Margaret M. Mitchell, in her work on 1 Corinthians, denies that any rhetorical categories other than classical rhetoric are appropriate for her study, and also makes it clear that rhetorical criticism is simply another of many historical-critical methods (1991,6). She rejects the validity of the school of rhetoric sometimes called 'The New Rhetoric' when it is applied without qualification to ancient texts, and lays the confusion found in modern rhetorical-critical studies squarely at the feet of those, like W. Wuellner, who mix ancient and modern theory (Mitchell 1991, 7 n.23). Yet unless one specifically mistakes a modern rhetorical strategy for an ancient form, or wrongly identifies a genre because of this mixing of methods, as she accuses Wuellner of doing, I see no reason why modern theory "should not be..intertwined with historical arguments about Paul's rhetoric in the light of Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition" (Mitchell 1991, 7). If one is claiming to be listening to Bach as one of his contemporaries did, nothing less than an original instruments recording will do. But unless that claim is made, the intricacies of the music can - and have - been explored on everything from violas to coke bottles. Of course the classification of Pauline texts according to Greco-Roman categories requires that those categories be used (although as we have seen, in practice they may have been more fluid than has sometimes been thought). But if one is searching for historical data about the author or the situation, or as is the case here, one is looking at the results of the writing, no technique of analysis should be dismissed in an *a priori* manner.

Help From the Not-so-new 'New Rhetoric'

Thus despite the richness of the classical tradition, a number of contemporary scholars find themselves going beyond the categories of Greco-Roman rhetoric. The power of speech and the function of language overall, the issue of how meaning is given and received - these and other questions, many of them stemming from the literary-critical schools, they believe require a reconceptualization of rhetoric to answer fully. In their individual ways, such scholars as Pogoloff, Jewett, Schussler Fiorenza, Stamps, Classen, and Wuellner all have moved back and forth between modern theory and ancient practice.

These scholars - and modern rhetorical theory - owe much to the impetus provided by one work: Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca's 1958 publication *La Nouvelle Rhetorique: Traite de l'Argumentation*. At its appearance, and especially since its translation into English in 1969 by John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver, it became the point of departure for the debate over what direction the recovery of rhetoric in Biblical studies should take, and in the process gave the name 'the new rhetoric' to the heterodox movement which now contains so many currents:

> The 'new rhetoric' represented by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca has been particularly popular. Modern rhetorical criticism of the Pauline epistles is often interdisciplinary, combining literary criticism, text linguistics, semiotics, social description, stylistics, reader-response criticism and discourse analysis (Watson 1995, 222).

As mentioned earlier, what made Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's work seminal was that it so firmly rejected limiting rhetorical criticism to the study of examples, and instead concentrated on rhetoric above all as a global theory of argumentation. Argumentation they define as speech which works "to create or increase the adherence of minds to the theses presented," and a successful argument may have two effects: it may lead to immediate action, or it may create in the hearers a "willingness to act which will appear at the right moment"(1969, 45), what Aristotle called "bringing the giver of judgement into a certain condition" (*Rhetoric* 6,2,1). As such, argumentation is usually oriented to the future (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 47). Rhetorical argument, in their minds, is based most often on inductive reasoning. Thus listeners who respond to argument, if they are neither fanatic nor skeptical, do so by commitment, not necessity. The parallels to what Bultmann called the *kerygma*, or the message of the church about faith, are obvious.

Although Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca do not go as far as some who have followed them, inherent in their work is the notion that almost all language in some way is involved in argument, that is, that in community we are always either on the giving (rhetorical) or receiving (hermeneutical) end of language which is calling for action of some sort. Simply put, language is never value-neutral, never objective. Language always has a purpose, and in fact rarely do words perform a task as simple as denoting objects in some one-to-one fashion. Although one can see the genesis of this understanding of language in de Saussure's linguistic theory and even in the philosophy of the will before that, proponents of the new rhetoric claim it is no novelty. Indeed, in an ironic turn it goes as far

back as Plato. Far from inventing the notion of the social implications of language, modern interpreters state that they are simply recognizing again in their hermeneutics what the ancients knew in practice and what has existed since utterance began:

> The rhetoricians recognized the fundamental insight recovered in contemporary hermeneutics: words do far more than simply encapsulate prelinguistic ideas. Rather than this instrumental view of language, rhetoric views speech as shaped by and in turn shaping the situation, and thus as highly social. The rhetoricians were interested in performative language, in speech acts: what language *does* and how it does it (Pogoloff 1991, 342).

Part of the debate lies in the difference between seeing rhetoric as producing a 'speech act' or seeing it as producing a text. Of course, as Kennedy notes, the rhetoric of now-vanished historical periods can only be studied through their texts - we no longer have the living words of Paul to guide us. One is reminded also of Gadamer's comment that "all writing is a form of alienated speech". It is also true and worth noting again when such distinctions become too defined, that even classical figures studied texts, as for instance, in Aristotle's use of the *Iliad* in his discussion of demonstrative topics (*Rhetoric*, 199) and throughout his *Rhetoric*. For these reasons, there is an understandable overlap between rhetorical and literary criticism on the level of both precedent and technique, and in fact some form of literary criticism is as old as rhetoric itself.

Alternatively, emphasizing the 'speech act' which occurs when a text is received at every reading, including the most modern reading, makes one look at that text as essentially transhistorical. In other words, sometimes one is searching only for a text's rhetorical effect and how it achieves it, and not really for the cause of its writing or the results of its reading at some definite time. Seen in this light, classical forms or prescriptions have no more or less authority than any other theory of argumentation. What is important is what 'works' - i.e. What will describe most accurately the ongoing process of communication between text and reader.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca were careful (more careful than many who followed) to distinguish their interest in rhetoric from those of the ancient rhetors. Yet when one examines their opening comments it is not the whole of ancient rhetorical practice that they claim to be 'going beyond', but only rhetoric as it was used in the public squares and in teaching. On closer inspection their disclaimer is somewhat disingenuous, and begs the question: was there in fact rhetoric in the ancient world apart from those two arenas? Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, in fact, seem to be contrasting rhetoric as practiced (the

ancient world) with rhetoric as analyzed for its communicative strategies (the modern interest). What follows is essentially their justification for treating rhetorical matters as they do:

> It is clear, however, that our treatise on argumentation will, in certain respects, go far beyond the bounds of the ancient rhetoric and at the same time neglect certain aspects of the matter which drew the attention of the ancient masters of the art.
>
> Their object was primarily the art of public speaking in a persuasive way...We see however, no reason to limit our study to the presentation of an argument by means of the spoken word and to restrict the kind of audience addressed to a crowd gathered in a square.
>
> The rejection of the first limitation is due to the fact that our interests are much more those of logicians desirous of understanding the mechanism of thought than those of masters of eloquence desirous of making people practice their teaching (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969. 6).

Comparing the 'New' Rhetoric and Contemporary Rhetorical Criticism

It can safely be said that, like Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, no modern biblical scholar is interested in rhetoric solely for the purposes of their own public speaking, or to teach eloquence. New Testament scholars are interested in texts: we are interested specifically here in Paul's letters. Clearly, this already puts the modern scholar outside the normal practice of the ancient rhetor.

Just as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca were interested in the mechanism of thought, we are interested in the mechanism of persuasion, and perhaps in what historical evidence rhetorical criticism might provide when used as a critical method. The requirement that one must be restricted to ancient forms of rhetoric appears to be based on two false propositions: a failure to recognize that what is being practiced is rhetorical criticism, and not rhetoric itself (if by the latter one means the techniques of speech), and a failure to recognize that the theory of rhetoric of necessity goes beyond forms to questions of how and why rhetoric accomplishes its persuasive task.

In some ways, the problem of differing goals in rhetorical interpretation is the familiar dilemma of one group describing apples and another oranges. If you will for a moment indulge a dichotomy more real in theory than in practice, we may state it as follows. Issues spring from the fact that while using the same term - 'rhetorical criticism' -

one approach tends to be 'diachronic', that is tracing meaning and effect *through* history (literally: 'through time'), while the other approach is more 'synchronic', finding meaning at *this* time (literally: 'with time').

Those with diachronic concerns want to find modern meaning by clarifying ancient contexts: "the historian's work is to prepare the reader sufficiently for his own understanding," writes Betz at the beginning of his *Galatians* commentary, or, as Kummel (1975, 28) puts it: "the science of [New Testament] introduction is a strictly historical discipline which, by illuminating the historical circumstances of the origin of the individual writings, provides for exegesis the necessary presuppositions for understanding the writings in their historical uniqueness". Sometimes the goal of criticism is simply historical clarity, and relevance to modern interpretation is either ignored, or it is assumed that more historical knowledge will in some (usually unspecified) way bring better modern reading. Kummel, for one, assumes that New Testament introduction serves *Christian* theologians by illuminating the 'doctrinal content' of the New Testament. (1975, 28). Sometimes the goal is to 'correct' what is perceived as an imbalance in the history of interpretation of a text by showing that the original setting was different than tradition would have it. Antoinette Wire provides a good example of this approach, and at the same time of the historical optimism of many who use rhetorical criticism to reconstruct 'original' settings:

> ...The measure of the audience as the speaker knows it can be read in the arguments that are chosen. It has taken the computer generation to discover the precision with which one person speaks to another in human communication, drawing on elaborate 'programs' that both share. These programs tell us far more about an audience than the occasional descriptive comment (Wire 1990, 3. For a critique see Wisse 1986, 177-190).

My own feeling is that such 'precision of communication' operates little if at all in human discourse. We talk over, around, beside, and often past, each other. If human communication were as precise as Wire posits, disagreements would never be misunderstandings! Although Wire is very clear in her own introduction, the very debates over the meaning of 'rhetorical criticism' elsewhere illustrate how imprecise even (or especially) academics may be when discussing terms.

While Wire's conclusions concerning the role of women prophets in Corinth represent an original contribution, her methods are those of many others who have turned to rhetorical criticism. Perhaps the majority of New Testament rhetorical scholars have either explicit or implicit historical goals while conducting their research, and so follow what is here called the 'diachronic' path to rhetorical criticism.

Among those in the 'synchronic' group, the concern is less for where the text came from and more for how it works. Among New Testament scholars engaged in rhetorical criticism it is harder to find a 'pure' example of a synchronic approach, although Scult, Botha, Pogoloff, and Wuellner (1989, 460) in their various ways all rely on the lessons gained from it. Synchronic approaches to understanding the Bible were adopted first among the literary critics, and it was, in fact, New Testament literary criticism which gave birth to this text-based emphasis in rhetorical study. Since Amos Wilder's 1964 publication of *Early Christian Rhetoric* the fields of literary criticism and rhetorical criticism have been linked - although not always to the pleasure of the historical camp. Wilder emphasized the power of metaphorical language. Ricoeur, in turn, picked up this emphasis and developed the notion of metaphor to include the 'world within the text' (a concept dealt with in detail later). Northrop Frye's work on the Bible has been and continues to be useful to those who think about the Bible and language.

But perhaps the foremost advocate of freeing the text (any text) from the restrictions of its historical place of birth is Hans-Georg Gadamer, who noted that "What is fixed in writing has detached itself from the contingency of its origin and its author and made itself free for new relationships" (1975, 357) and again: "A written tradition is not a fragment of a past world, but has always raised itself beyond this (1986, 847)" or finally (and contrast this to Kennedy's goal of reading 'like the first reader'): "the idea of the original reader is full of unexamined idealisation" (1986, 850). It would be hard to find an opinion more inimical to the entire thrust of biblical criticism of all types! Yet Pogoloff has given Gadamer's apparent opposition to any historical interpretation of texts greater nuance:

> Many interpret him to mean that attempts at historical reconstruction are not important for interpretation. However, since, for Gadamer, conversation is the model for all hermeneutics, and conversation requires listeners to be in dialogue with speakers, he recognizes that historical reconstruction is helpful. He only wants to warn us of two things and celebrate another. He warns us, first, that pretense to objectivity guarantees misunderstanding; and second, that historical reconstruction, while helpful, is no more than a means or phase toward the end of understanding. Further, rather than viewing temporal distance as a problem to be overcome, he celebrates its hermeneutical fruitfulness through the creative and filtering processes of tradition (1991, 343)

Lies, Damn Lies, and Rhetorical Facts

If the historical element in the Bible were a conscientious, inaccurate, imperfect history like the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, we could understand how important it would be to make a fuller reconstruction of that history. But when it shows such an exuberant repudiation of everything we are accustomed to think of as historical evidence, perhaps we should be looking for different categories and criteria altogether." (Northrop Frye, *The Great Code*, 42).

As discussed, the majority of Pauline scholars have set themselves an historical task. Witherington is representative of many when he states: "Rhetorical criticism can be thought of as part of literary criticism, but it has a decidedly historical interest"(1995, xii). As Mitchell pointed out in her work, when employed to determine historical information, rhetorical criticism is simply another, promising, tool in the historical-critical "toolbox". Much, perhaps most, Pauline study still consists of attempts to sift through the letters in search of smaller, but in scholars' eyes and often for unexamined reasons, more important nuggets of critically-established history. Since it is manifestly clear that the Pauline letters do not share this concern - that is, they are not in any way histories themselves - historical observations must be inferred. Thus every name Paul drops, whether it be King Aretas of Damascus (2 Cor 11:32) or Euodia (Phil 4:2), is analyzed eagerly for what it may indicate of the date of Paul's travels, his attitude toward women, the social stratum of his followers, or any one of a host of other questions. Even if we assume a neutral, objective Pauline attitude - and when is Paul ever neutral? - the materials we have for historical work are meager indeed. When it comes to those who are presented in his letters as Paul's enemies, the difficulty of gaining a clear view of the original history is increased even more. "Imagine," remarked Elaine Pagels to a reporter once, "having to re-create the thinking of Karl Marx on the basis of a handful of anti-Communist tracts from the 1950's" (Murphy 45).

We have seen already how a number of factors impede the accuracy of attempts to reconstruct ancient Christian history using Paul's rhetoric. Some of these limiting factors lie within the text, others within the interpreting community. They include: 1/ Paul's letters were written neither for the purposes of historical documentation nor autobiography, making them, if not hostile, at the very least opaque to historical research; 2/ the long and fractious history of historical-critical interpretation of the New Testament cautions the modern interpreter, with many examples, that our reading of ancient history tends to reflect our own biases as much as it contributes to our knowledge of the ancient church; 3/

especially when it comes to Paul's letters, the dearth of other literary or archaeological evidence about the ancient church makes it extremely difficult to corroborate anything other than the most modest conclusions we may infer from the text; 4/ as with the split between Pauline and Jewish Christianity, it is easy to mistake the outcome of a Pauline letter with its background, thus confusing source and effect; and 5/ the principle of what I would call 'communicative economy' (that is, the assumption legitimating so much reconstruction, that every saying, exhortation, etc. in Paul had a determining sociological context, what in form criticism is called a *Sitz im Leben*, often used to justify an historical reconstruction based on a Pauline comment or exhortation) is positivist, simplistic, and not justified by what we experience every day in our own discourse.

In a more general sense, the very nature of rhetoric helped form the ancient attitude toward the recounting of events, an attitude which we may find somewhat disingenuous in our own day, but which nonetheless influenced even the most overtly 'historical' of Paul's references.

New Testament scholars hardly need reminding about this. Perhaps most introductory New Testament courses begin by regaling students with the news that the ancients did not have the same definitions of 'history' or 'historical writing' that we have operated with since the enlightenment. Nor did the ancients have a reverence for historical 'accuracy' similar to that which has dominated modern criticism. That some people still read the Bible like a newspaper says at least two things: firstly, they still believe the newspapers; and secondly, they have not learned to distinguish writing for faith from writing for information. When this observation is handed down in first year classes it is intended to help the student overcome the common but naive assumption that the Bible is a history book, written to give us facts.

But in seeking to distill the 'hard history' out from the mass of narrative, teaching, advice, and preaching in the New Testament, we may sometimes fall into a more sophisticated version of the same flawed thinking. For instance, a comparison of Paul's journeys taken from Galatians 1-2 (his own account) and Acts 15 (Luke's description) illustrates this tendency. Although we regard the Acts account with suspicion because of its overall aim of showing the early church in a positive light, we tend to take Paul's account at face value simply because it is in the first person. This critical corrective goes far as back as F.C. Baur, who proposed Acts to be an extended apologia reconciling Paul and Peter's missions and thus a letter which is suspect historically. Yet Baur's acceptance of the Galatians account was itself uncritical: "the statement which has the greatest claim to historical truth is that which appears most unprejudiced and nowhere betrays a desire to subordinate its historical material to any special subjective aim" (Kummel 1972, 135).

Accepting that the apostle always had a 'subjective aim' creates a new level of critical distance from history.

Quintilian wrote, in his advice to orators:

> A bolder form of figure, which in Cicero's opinion demands greater effort, is impersonation...without sacrifice of credibility we may introduce conversations between ourselves and others, and put words of advice, reproach, complaint, praise or pity into the mouths of appropriate persons (*Inst. Or.* 3.4,2,29-30).

If the persuasive speaker, as part of their effort, was encouraged to treat this freely the history of others, their own was even more open to 'rhetorical colouration'. To be sure, Quintilian also noted that such invented conversations or comments, to be effective, must be in the character of the represented persons, or should represent 'what may reasonably be supposed' to have happened. But in the end it is a fair bit of latitude allowed to the rhetorician. Quintilian goes on to note that the rhetor may "introduce not only imaginary sayings, but imaginary writings as well" (*Inst. Or.* 4,2,34). If we believe Paul to have written rhetorically, we should bear this in mind.

We have noted from the beginning how the persuasive aim of an argument makes deduction of historical information from that argument a very difficult, if not impossible, undertaking. It seems that rhetoric, far from being the 'tool' imagined by those who categorize it as just another criticism in the toolbox of the modern interpreter, might better be understood by the metaphor of the 'filter' through which light passes and is changed, or in some cases, which changes the picture of reality beyond recapture. Yet the reminder given to first-year New Testament students still applies: Paul was not being dishonest any more than we are when we slant our own arguments toward a desired conclusion. If we judge him for a lack of concern for historical precision, we are imposing later, 'scientific' standards on a letter which never claimed to have to live up to them (and which, incidentally, we rarely live up to ourselves). Paul's desire was to awaken, or to sustain, faith. He did so, we believe, using the ubiquitous and effective mechanisms of rhetoric. Keeping this in mind guides the modern interpreter.

All this said, perhaps some ground needs to be held for the historical position. After all, Paul's letters are historical documents, and so the above cautions cannot be pushed to the point where one maintains that Paul's letters have no diachronic meaning - in other words, no context or historical setting - whatsoever. Historical investigation has, does, and will continue to yield results, although we must always examine our reasons for interest in historical details and also admit that the lack of much non-textual evidence for Christianity

in the New Testament period is a severe limiting factor in our explorations. For example, despite Gerd Theissen's careful contribution to our general knowledge of Corinth in his *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, especially in chapter 2, he still grasps for specific evidence that may apply directly to the congregation. But despite this paucity on the historical side, Paul's letters are also texts that yield meaning to the modern reader, and so it is worth employing the more synchronic techniques of scholarship (including the so-called new rhetoric) also to them.

The present proposal, then, is for a more balanced approach. The methods for extracting information or building theories using Paul's letters may have changed, as have the specific objects of historical scrutiny. Increasing interest in social milieu, status, and religious behaviour continue to prompt new work. Scholars now may turn to rhetorical and literary analyses, reader-response criticism and sociological analysis to aid them in reconstructing Paul or his audiences. But when Victor Paul Furnish notes the "rapidly growing interest in examining, with fresh questions, sharper tools, and new resources, the social history of earliest Christianity" (1989, 330), we see that what is judged to be new and exciting is the historical question that is being asked. When it comes to the basic aim of critically establishing historical data, little has changed. I believe that this leaves room for an examination of Paul's congregations as - and primarily as - they appear in what has been called a 'sermonic' way in the text.

But perhaps most importantly, such an approach is called for by the nature of the documents themselves. While it is difficult and in some cases impossible to reconstruct the historical Pauline congregations with any certitude, the letters fairly bristle with Paul's hortatory images of his churches. Concluding her article in *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility*, Lynn Poland states: "I believe that a contemporary criticism is possible that is at once thoroughly historical and capable of addressing the Bible's rhetorical sublimity" (1990, 45). Thus far, the tension between historical and synchronic concerns has split modern rhetorical criticism. But with Poland I believe that such a bipolar contemporary criticism can exist, and furthermore, that it may take several forms.

History and Interpretation: an all-inclusive package

While the split between diachronic and synchronic approaches to rhetorical criticism is helpful for understanding not only scholars' tendencies but also their disagreements, on closer inspection the line is never so elegantly cut in practice. Kennedy labels his goal as 'historical', and yet it is not 'historical' in the same manner as the many subsequent studies

that search for historical information about author, reader, or social milieu. "My goal," he states, "is the more historical one of reading the Bible as it would be read by an early Christian". Taken at face value, this statement would show that the early Christian - apart from their literacy - is NOT him or herself the object of Kennedy's scrutiny. Rather, what is being sought is a contemporary, literary, and surprisingly personal, goal: a faithful reproduction, when reading the Bible, of the way that such a person would have read their scripture, that is, a re-enactment *now* of their 'rhetorical literacy' *then*.

If we return to Betz's introductory remarks to his commentary, we find that his comments, also, about being an historian are made together with a refreshingly honest disclaimer about his 'other role', and therefore his present-day concerns for meaning:

> The present commentator does not deny that his work is also that of a theologian, although he wishes to state clearly what he means by this often misunderstood term. It simply means that he is conscious of the fact that he knows what Paul is talking about. This awareness has been put to use to let Paul say what he wants to say. There is, however, no clear line of demarcation between one's own intention to let Paul say what he wants to say and one's own saying it. The process of understanding quickly becomes a dialogue...This commentator, however, hopes to have avoided the danger of making Paul say what the commentator himself wants to say (1979, xv).

Laudable as Betz's candour may be, it is becoming more and more difficult to maintain that *any* act of historical interpretation, however carefully circumscribed, does not reveal the biases of the present day reader or reading community. In addition to personal bias, "the history of historical criticism reminds us that there are constant shifts in theories" (Vorster 1991, 17). As an example of this, W.S. Vorster notes how the literary theory that one must know the biography of the author to understand his or her work has held on in New Testament circles after having been largely rejected in the field from which it was adopted (17). Kee, in his 1980 *Christian Origins in a Sociological Perspective*, goes back to show how the historical work of Harnack and Sohm was dependent on the philosophical currents prevalent at their time of writing, especially liberal idealism.

We are perhaps more subtle than those Protestant scholars who contrasted the Judaizing opponents of Paul (read: their contemporary Roman Catholic Church) with Paul's principles of freedom (their own Protestant church), but projection in the act of historical reconstruction continues. One can either celebrate or condemn this dimension brought to historiography by the scholar and the community. Gadamer (1989, 846), notes: "The overcoming of all prejudices, this global demand of the enlightenment, will prove to

be itself a prejudice..." Burton Mack devoted the entire first chapter of his *The Myth of Christian Beginnings* to the use of the past, beginning his work with the words: "Christians, like others, cultivate the memory of the past for the uses of the present"(1988, 1). Castelli and Taussig bemoan the fact that in New Testament studies "the field has far too frequently produced work that obscures the project of critical historical reconstruction through steady commitments to thinly veiled Christian historical agendas"(1996, 7). They might have added other agendas (and it is telling that they did not), since it is not always a commitment to a specifically *Christian* doctrine, but indeed to any ideological camp, which will influence interpretation. It is accepted that F.C. Baur's picture of the early church came under the influence of Hegelian dialectic (Kummel 1975, 31), and it is no stretch to see the political theory of manifest destiny behind Foakes-Jackson's early 20th century picture of the primitive church. More recently, the feminist, structuralist, or post-modern biases of various treatments also becomes clear in reading them. It is an irony of modern scholarship that we can now apply 'rhetorical criticism' to many historical-critical studies from our own or recent periods.[7]

It was, perhaps, Gadamer's attack on 'disinterested exegesis' which spawned the modern scrutiny of historical interpretation for its underlying presuppositions. Because they form the background to so much of what underlies this synchronic tendency in interpretation, it is worthwhile to examine Gadamer's views again. In his *Truth and Method* he summarizes with the words:

> Historical consciousness fails to understand its own nature if, in order to understand, it seeks to exclude that which alone makes understanding possible...To think historically always involves establishing a connection between those ideas and one's own thinking. To try to eliminate one's own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible, but also manifestly absurd. To interpret means precisely to use one's own preconceptions so that the meaning of the text can really be made to speak for us (1986, 851).

What Betz's introduction to his commentary tells us, what literary critics like Gadamer maintain, and what historians such as E.H. Carr have said for years is the same: all historical endeavor since Heroditus has been undertaken to serve a present need or desire, however clearly or ambiguously it may be expressed. In this way historical scrutiny

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[7] See the section entitled "The Rhetoric of Biblical Scholarship" in Schussler-Fiorenza's 1987 presidential address to the SBL, published in 1988.

has a contemporary dimension whenever it is practiced. Certainly this is also true of modern rhetorical criticism.

Likewise, the fact that most rhetorical critical treatments of the New Testament - even at their most literary critical - seek to say something about the historical situation of the author, the author's situation, the first reader or their community, indicates the inescapability of historical consciousness to any critical treatment of the Bible. There seems to be an almost innate desire on most critics' parts to "convert literary into historical conclusions"(Henderson 1996, 285). Schussler-Fiorenza wrote "How then can we utilize rhetorical criticism in order to read a historical text in such a way that we move from the 'world of the text' of Paul to the actual world of the Corinthian community?" (1987, 388). The distinction she draws between these 'worlds' is of course the same one drawn in this present work, and I believe an observation as useful as it is simple. Yet it is not easy to move from one world to the other. While in practice Schussler Fiorenza seems quite optimistic about making the interpretive move from vision to historical background, I do not see how she has distinguished rhetorical situation sufficiently from the *Sitz-im-Leben* of form criticism. We already have, in Paul, all we need to identify this 'visionary world'. But the evidence is simply not there for much of a reconstructed historical world, as Fiorenza's own efforts (1987) show.

That there is a vision of what 'should be' in the letter seems clear (Castelli 1991, 103). Yet neither can we deny that Paul's letters have historical context. Indeed, Christian scripture - and especially the New Testament - is clearly and self-consciously set in history, and yet makes transcendental claims. This simple datum of Christianity flies in the face of all interpreters who would elevate either ideals or history and ignore the other. Frye (1990, 83) turns the words *synchronic* and *diachronic* on their heads by showing how it is precisely the 'history-influencing' rather than reflecting, aspects of the world's Biblical religions which make them diachronic. As I maintain, viewing Paul's rhetoric as visionary more than descriptive is not an ahistorical approach, rather it simply puts history 'in its place', so to speak; that is, it recognizes that rhetoric's foundational and fundamental connection with history lies with the future rather than in the past.

Thus, while the contrast between synchronic and diachronic approaches to rhetorical criticism is a helpful guide as we seek to understand the debates in the field, the distinction between these approaches must not be overemphasized. For instance, Henderson (1997, 38-39) critiques Stamps (1992) for setting up a false polarity in the latter's description of New Testament rhetorical criticism. Yet clarification almost always begs a necessary (if somewhat artificial and temporary) distinction, just as Henderson contrasts "the aesthetic and phenomenological discipline of poetics with the socially

inclusive, historically and psychologically particular business of rhetoric" to show how in his opinion modern scholars have confused these fields (44-45).

Rather, such labels must be used to point to the differing objects of scholars' attention: is it an understanding of how persuasion works (and still works) in Paul's letters, or a conclusion about the actual sources for his persuasive techniques, and therefore some historical conclusion about Paul's life, learning, or language? Is the object of a modern rhetorical critical analysis to justify a view of Paul's congregations as firmly planted in the popular culture of their day, as sectarians firmly opposed to that popular culture, as members of a sub, counter, or contra-cultural group (Robbins 1993, 447-459), or is the study indifferent to any such conclusion on its way to finding rhetorical stylistic features in one of his letters? Even if the subject of the rhetorical critical study is rhetoric itself, a multitude of goals is possible: are the ancient theories of rhetoric being studied, or their practice, or whether such a distinction is possible? Or is the real subject of discussion the contemporary situation, i.e. the legitimacy of a certain type of New Testament rhetorical criticism within the larger, modern renaissance of rhetoric?

Each rhetorical critical study must be judged on its own with regard to such questions. At the least, asking them will keep us from some of the methodological errors made when we assume that rhetorical criticism is a unified theory.

Conclusion: Making History

> Underlying the arguments which relegate rhetorical criticism to being simply another tool of historical research or alternatively, always a recognition of the contemporaneity of language is an attempt to restrict text to either artifact or event. The dichotomy is false. Paul's rhetoric is both: in a complex way it reflects something of the historical situation of the Corinthians, but it also and more importantly aims to create a new reality. Furthermore, clues may be found to indicate its early successes and failures in doing so.

Thus far we have seen that there is no single modern rhetorical criticism (just as there was no single ancient rhetoric). Rather, there exists at present in New Testament studies a large field of endeavor loosely called rhetorical criticism, where some scholars mine texts for ancient Greco-Roman types or seek to fit Pauline letters into classical paradigms, while others use the same materials to seek to answer philosophical questions of meaning and communication. Some modern interpreters are looking for author, others for authorial intent or context; some search for theological conclusions, some for historical

facts, others for linguistic conclusions without reference to any historical period whatsoever. Using evidence from Kennedy, Wuellner, Schussler-Fiorenza, Betz and others, I have shown not only that rhetorical critics have very different goals one from another, but also that their own stated goals sometimes do not match the work that they have accomplished. Most commonly, a personal aim for writing (Kennedy, Schussler-Fiorenza, Betz, Witherington) results in historical conclusions which seem to do little to answer that interest.

Much has been learned as rhetorical scholars have pursued these options. The problem with most discussion about rhetorical criticism thus far seems to be the lack of recognition that scholars have accorded *each other* when embarking toward their differing goals - what Stamps calls "The Rhetoric of New Testament Criticism" (1992, 268 ff.; see also Schussler Fiorenza, 1988; Vernon K. Robbins in his conscious adoption of an interdisciplinary approach is perhaps the most prominent exception to this statement). Most often, I suggest, this stems from the unfortunate lack of clarity in the terms. It is ironic that so many have been 'speaking a different language' from each other precisely while engaged in the joint enterprise of researching some aspect of the art of language's use for persuasive communication.

Therefore it is incumbent on rhetorical studies of the New Testament to state clearly their goals, whether socio-historical, literary, ideological, some fruitful combination of specialized methods, or something else. In fact, this is happening (Robbins 1996 a,b; Castelli 1991; Henderson 1995) as the nuances of modern rhetorical criticism are being explored. Quite naturally, New Testament scholarship overall has become more careful since Betz's words in his pioneering commentary on Galatians, quoted earlier.

For my part, I wish to reiterate: the form of rhetorical criticism that is employed in this study will explore features of Paul's style and composition, including parallels to classical forms of rhetorical writing. But its primary goal is not description, and for that reason it is possible to go beyond the Greco-Roman forms. Likewise, I am interested in *how* 1 Corinthians is persuasive, but unlike some literary critics I am not ready to abandon the historical connection altogether and concentrate on the text as object. I am interested in hermeneutics, not least because I suspect that there is a natural connection between modern theories of meaning and ancient and modern rhetorical ways of gaining assent. Finally, for many of the reasons outlined earlier I am profoundly skeptical of our ability to reconstruct the whole skeleton of the early Christian's social world at Corinth based on this one bone known as 1 Corinthians, and wish to sound a warning in that regard.

Thus the *rhetorical criticism* employed here is used to get at the argumentative strategies of Paul's letter, whether those be revealed in classical forms or other devices of

writing, and the *goal* is twofold: to open up what has been called the 'world of the text', and then to see, as much as possible, how that world became effective in history in the lives of the letter's readers.

CHAPTER FIVE: Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism as Used in This Study

Attempting To Define the Term: Rhetorical Situations

Lloyd Bitzer, in a 1968 article in *Rhetorica*, is credited with giving the term 'rhetorical situation' to the field of modern rhetorical criticism. It has become something of a mixed blessing. At first, the phrase would seem to be fairly self-descriptive. But just how complicated the concept quickly becomes is illustrated by Bitzer's definition:

> Rhetorical situation may be defined as a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence (1968, 1-14).

Bitzer appears to be discussing a 'real' historical situation that requires a rhetorical response. We might think, for example, of the public outpouring of grief over the 1997 death of Princess Diana, and the subsequent drop in the estimation of the monarchy as the royal family's reaction was judged negatively by British public opinion. This was a very real historical situation, which, in the mind of Queen Elizabeth II, apparently required what might be called a 'rhetorical response': namely, her unprecedented televised speech from the open doors of the palace with the mourning crowds in the background. In this understanding of the term, the situation is 'real' and the response 'rhetorical'. 'Rhetorical situation' is simply another term for historical situation or - in the case of Paul's letters - 'epistolary occasion' (Stamps 1993,1). Schussler Fiorenza (1987, 387) uses the terms 'rhetorical situation' and 'historical situation' to describe each other, and in the process reveals the historian's optimism of which we spoke earlier: "1 Corinthians is able not only to say something about the rhetorical techniques and narrative strategies of Paul's letter to the community in Corinth, but also something about the actual *rhetorical historical* situation to which the letter is addressed" (emphasis mine).

This appears to be the basic understanding of the term as it is employed also by Kennedy. He goes so far as to equate Bitzer's term with the *Sitz im Leben* of form criticism, and so emphasizes the historical and, some might say, objective aspects of the definition. If there is a difference at all between 'rhetorical situation' and *Sitz im Leben*, it is - again following Bitzer - that the former occasioned the use of rhetoric at some historical moment, and can perhaps be reconstructed through the analysis of that same rhetoric.

But other authors, leaning on literary theory, propose that rhetoric not only answers, but also determines the rhetorical situation. These authors (Wuellner, Stamps) accuse others of a form of 'historical idealism'. For these critics, there is no historical situation which sits aloof above or behind the rhetorical communication and can be separated out from it. Rhetoric helps determine how the circumstance is both presented and perceived - that is, it helps set up the very questions or needs which it then seeks to answer. One might note, for example, that the public focus on the legitimacy of the British monarchy mentioned above as an example was itself partly the product of a media frenzy, a situation 'set up' by rhetorical agents. Wuellner calls this the "argumentative situation", indicating that he means by this the same as "communicative situation", "discursive situation", or "rhetorical situation" (1976, 331). In 1987 he went on to clarify how this differs from the historical situation: "The rhetorical situation differs both from the historical situation of a given author and from the generic situation or conventions of the *Sitz im Leben* of forms or genres in one point: the rhetorical critic looks foremost for the premises of a text as appeal or argument" (1987, 456). Clearly, Wuellner is emphasizing the internal warrants of a text over any historical factors. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca again led the way to this understanding. In 1969 (1958 publication in French) they had defined rhetorical situation as the "influence of the earlier stages of the discussion on the argumentative possibilities open to the speaker" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 491). Wire states that as such, the situation is always changing, "as previous stages of the discussion influence how later stages will be received", although she appears to assume that a text 'crystallizes' one moment in this ongoing evolution of argument (1994, 158).

In these and similar definitions, the rhetorical situation is the circumstance set up in the minds of the author as he or she writes, and the readers as they read. As such it is never neutral nor necessarily agreed upon by author and reader, but exists as part of the overall persuasive process. Stamps calls such a rhetorical presentation of the circumstances a "selected, limited, and crafted entextualization of the situation" (1993, 193). In another work he clarifies this by adding that the "inscribed rhetorical situation is in essence the story of the relationship between the sender and the addressees told from the temporal perspective of the time of writing and from the point of view of the sender." In other words, Paul could be made to say: "This is my view of things as of this moment". While I have some difficulty in understanding how Stamps aims to separate out this vision - what he calls the "narrative and deictic" references - I wholeheartedly support his conclusion that in some fashion at least Paul's letter presents a "new reality" in which, if nowhere else, author and reader may concur (1993, 210).

Given what we have already seen in the field of rhetorical criticism, it is apparent that the differing understandings of the term 'rhetorical situation' arise out of scholars' now familiar differences of focus on either history or text. It seems to me that at least here the latter option is to be preferred. If a rhetorical situation is simply an historical situation met with a rhetorical response, the term 'historical' is clearer and should be retained. Since the 'rhetoric' is in the text, our focus should also be there.

Beyond these differences in understanding how the term 'rhetorical situation' itself should be understood, also inherent in Bitzer's definition is the possibility for confusion in a related area. How are we to distinguish between the practical meanings of the term 'rhetorical situation' and the terms 'exigence' or 'exigency'. Is an exigence simply a more tightly defined 'rhetorical situation'? That is, in the example just cited, was the fate of the British monarchy the rhetorical situation, while the opinion polls represented the exigence? If this is what is suggested, it allows for considerable overlap - and thus confusion - in what the two terms describe. For instance, Witherington III (1995, 47), equates the two. Also, it is possible to foresee how several exigencies might be present in one 'rhetorical situation', a situation which may reflect life's complexity more fairly but should bedevil attempts to reconstruct history based on 'exigencies'.

Is it fair to limit the exigence facing Paul, for instance, to, say, 'divisions in Corinth' (1 Cor 1:11) or the spread of a 'false σοφία' (1 Cor 3:18)? What about the apostle's defense of his apostleship (1 Cor 9:3), his urge to preach the gospel (1 Cor 2:2), and his concern for passing on tradition (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3)? Most of these have, at one time or another, been presented as Paul's main concerns, and as the situations that called forth the letter. On the other hand, might not the most obvious exigence of all be the letter Paul had received from Corinth (7:1) or the more recent 'report from Chloe's people' (1 Cor 1:11)? Yet even the report is not sufficient explanation for Paul's response, since 1 Corinthians so clearly goes beyond it. Part of Paul's 'exigence' must lie in his own thoughts, attitudes, and the working-out of his vision. In other words, exigence may be historical, as Bitzer presents it, but the point that I wish to make is that it may also and even at the same time be ideological, religious, idiosyncratic, and personal. These more personal urges may well be the more powerful 'exigencies'. Certainly, Paul seems to give some evidence of this in 1 Cor. 1:17, 2:7, 3:8 etc.

Thus while the general concept of exigence is both useful and makes good common-sense, it breaks down if pressed too hard in the service of historical reconstruction. It shows how pernicious is our pretension to historical clarity that, having given up the idea of such clarity on the level of 'situation', we seek to recover it under the guise of 'exigence'. Behind attempts to see a one-to-one correspondence between rhetorical

text, authorial writing, and historical factors is the notion that human beings react with the economy of programmed machines to external and internal stimuli. Or, put in another way, the presupposition of this type of reconstruction seems to be that in human communication, like physics, 'for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction'. While a tempting theoretical construct, human interaction has never been so predictable.

Kennedy's discussion of rhetorical situation, though brief, seems to allow for several 'levels' of exigence (1984, 35), including that an evangelist 'feels' an exigence to proclaim the gospel. I propose that this last, presented almost as an afterthought in Kennedy, is in fact the primary exigence for Paul, and should condition how we examine the other, more overtly 'historical', factors.

Plank defines a rhetorical situation as having the following basic features: a speaker's perception of him or herself, of the audience, and of the exigence they share (1987, 12). Here he is echoing in rhetorical theory the insights of the reader-response critics and at the same time simplifying the schema first outlined by Bitzer.

However, it is under the rubric of the 'exigence' that I find Plank's definition connecting to the concerns of the present work. Plank notes, about Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "The two-fold exigence we have suggested above - Paul's need to defend his apostleship and reorient the Corinthians - we will discuss as the apologetic and homiletic contexts of 1 Corinthians 1-4." It is the latter which interests me especially, since I believe there to have been a homiletic rhetoric (centuries later crystallized and set in place as a discipline by Augustine) already present in the writing of Paul, and evident in 1 Corinthians. This homiletical exigence goes beyond that suggested by Bitzer, for while Bitzer's is firmly set in real or potential condition, a homiletical exigence may not reflect an actual historical situation as much as it reflects a person or community's beliefs, ideas, or vision of 'the way things should be'.

The Forgotten Aspect of Rhetoric: its historical outcome

Figure three:

1.	historical situation	
2.	author - authorial intention; author's vision and dream	
		/author as presented in the text
3.	text	situation as presented in the text
		\reader(s) as presented in the text
4.	historical reader	
5.	historical outcome of text	
6.	modern reader	

Freud may have said that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar, but when is a New Testament letter just a letter? Never. By the time a modern biblical critic - or reader of any sort - comes to one of Paul's letters, it has gone through a complicated process of reflecting, encoding, deciphering, and changing history.

The 'route', for lack of a better term, of a Pauline letter is surely more complex than this, but contains at the very least these elements: 1/ arising from - but not necessarily reflecting in a direct way - an historical situation (as in Corinth); 2/holding forth what Paul wanted to say - certainly revealing his vision of the way 'things should be', and perhaps revealing something of his personality in the process; 3/crystallizing within itself a rhetorical picture of a situation, and of the author and the reader which assists Paul's purposes; 4/speaking to its first, historical reader; 5/ having some kind of demonstrable, historical effect on that reader and the situation; and finally, after centuries of reading and re-reading (including canonization and all that it involves), 6/ coming to the modern reader and having some effect also on him or her (what modern critics call the 'performative' aspects of a text).

Identifying at least these basic stages in the origin and subsequent fate of one of Paul's letters helps us as we continue to clarify the modern debates. For a more nuanced and fuller diagram of the workings or 'textures' of a text, see Robbins 1996b, 35 and 37.

The confusion shown in so many studies' treatment of other work, and the arguments over who has or does not have legitimacy in their definition and use of rhetorical criticism comes down, I believe, to the question: what results is the modern scholar looking for? If one is looking for a result contained within the first two points of figure three - the historical situation and the author or, as the case may be, the author's intent - these are properly historical concerns.

Yet whether one uses rhetoric to reconstruct an entire (and often remarkably modern) social setting or even if one is content with the firmer - and fewer - historical crumbs, I believe that "reading the Bible as it would be read by an early Christian" means more than historical investigation. It also involves the contemporary rhetorical critic in questions of the *purpose* and *result* - what I would call the repercussions - of the rhetoric employed in Paul's letters, for these are issues which certainly played themselves out in the lives of his first readers. What is often overlooked in the task of historical reconstruction is the very purpose of rhetoric, or at least, of 'primary rhetoric' as Kennedy has labeled it: action. When it did what it was supposed to do, rhetoric *changed* things: governments, judge's decisions, people's minds. To analyze Paul's rhetoric without querying in any way its effects is akin to finding prehistoric smithies or quarries without accounting for what was built with them.

It is not novel for us now to concentrate on these repercussions of Paul's rhetoric. Rather, for New Testament scholarship to do so is simply to respect something of the original vitality of the art of rhetoric. The social aims of rhetoric and the literary mechanisms by which it accomplished and accomplishes them were never far apart. Nor by adopting an 'end-results' approach are we forsaking a more purely rhetorical approach for some kind of hermeneutical angle on the question of modern rhetorical criticism. 'Pure' rhetoric has always been concerned with not only the production of meaning, but of course with its reception and therefore rhetoric's *result*; 'pure' rhetorical criticism in our own context should at least be open to scrutinizing the same aspects of communication. In fact one of the promising insights of modern theory is the way that it identifies Biblical form with content - and I would add, Biblical form with prescriptive aim. In this way the 'old' and 'new' rhetorics, the classical form and the theory of communication are found to be mutually helpful, not conflictual, ways of understanding the New Testament. What Clifton Black (1989,256) somewhat disparagingly refers to as the 'hybridization' of rhetoric in contemporary studies when these dimensions are brought together is not new, surprising, or - contrary to what he may believe - unhelpful. Rather, it is to return to the very first questions put to the art. 'What can it do?' demanded the young men of Athens who flocked to the sophist teachers, and 'what can't it do?' wondered Plato. The very real role of rhetoric in helping create, defend, tear down, or renew institutions may have been overemphasized by some, but remains the *raison d'etre* of an orator like Cicero or a writer like Paul. Much earlier, near the beginnings of the systematization of the art, Isocrates waxed eloquent about the creative power of rhetoric:

> There is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish...This faculty...which we use in persuading others when we speak in public, we employ when we deliberate in our own thoughts...None of the things which are done with intelligence take place without the help of speech (Isocrates, *Nicocles or the Cyprians* 6-9).

Rhetorical criticism ignores its own rich heritage when it restricts itself to mining its past for historical clues. This is something alluded to by Kennedy near the end of his *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*: "For some readers of the Bible rhetorical criticism may have an appeal lacking to other modern critical approaches, in that it comes closer to explaining what they want explained in the text: not its sources, but its power" (1984, 158). Yet most New Testament scholars continue to seek answers, not to

the issue (which has always been the proper concern of rhetoric itself), but to the genesis of Paul's letters.

Another dilemma faced by those trying to reconstruct history based only on Paul is that we can be caught in a methodological circle. Paul's letters may also have helped form some currents of Christianity which later, we identify as the context behind them. Wisse (1986, 179), in a discussion of early church history in light of F.C. Baur's work, notes that "Baur was well aware that Paul's polemics against the Judaizers were, to a large extent, a self-defense. His letters appear to be as much the cause of a division between Jewish and Gentile Christianity as the result thereof". Although it has often been ignored in practice, that there were historical outcomes to Paul's writing has been recognized in modern scholarship since the last century, and should at least be acknowledged as a caution and, as much as possible, examined.

Is there another way that the relationship between history and rhetoric can be explored? Returning to figure 3 above, one can see that there is indeed another place where a rhetorical text 'meets' history: at the point of its outcome. This is identified as step 5 above. Rhetorical texts not only come out of an historical context but of course they also help create a new one. Wisse again notes that:

> Particularly for those canonical and other early Christian writings which soon found wide acceptance and use, it is important to distinguish between the historical situation they *reflect* and the historical situation they *created*...Religious books are generally not written to state what is but what the author thinks should be. The historian who ignores this runs the danger of creating parties or religious communities which never existed or which did not yet exist... (1986,179-80)

Whatever else one might be able to say about Paul, he self-consciously styled himself in his letters as a church founder, and presented his work as helping God create of people and communities something radically new and different. Immediately upon opening 1 Corinthians, for example, in the usual spot where the addressee is listed, Paul identifies his readers, not for their Corinthian context, status, or connections, but rather as "those who are sanctified, set aside, consecrated (ἡγιασμένοις) in Jesus Christ, in order to be called saints". He also, tellingly, indicates a wider audience and implies a greater authority to his words by also listing as recipients "all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord..." Already in the first words of 1 Corinthians, we have an alternative vision of Paul's readers and the idea that Paul's letter were something more than private

communications. We would be remiss not to take these most basic facts into account when examining his rhetoric.

Paul's writing, then, is rather more predicative than denominative. It was addressed to a specific group of people at a specific time, yet even the words of introduction hint at a greater audience and role. It embodies past and future in the way, to borrow Frye's words, that it *resonates* ("resonance would be impossible without, first, an original context, and second, a power of expanding away from that context" (1990, 218)). The cautionary value of an awareness of Paul's creative, rather than reflective, rhetoric is helpful to the modern scholar. Historical-critical studies can profit from this recapturing of the original intent of rhetoric. But does this awareness also allow that scholar to transfer his or her gaze to what was created by that same rhetoric?

Once reminded of this creative aspect of Paul's rhetoric, it seems to me that it is possible to read his statements about the Corinthians in this same light. Aristotle had counseled that, following the opening of a speech, the speaker should include a narration in which he states clearly his own version of the facts (*Rhetoric* 10,3,16). Although it is unlikely that Paul had Aristotle directly in mind, it is striking that his own *narratio* is not about who the Corinthians are in their community (the concern of so many social historians), but who they are - and are not - in God. In 1 Cor 1:28, he writes "God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are."(NRSV). Ricoeur (1989, 430) describes how, in order to 'redescribe' a reader's experiences, one first needs to 'suspend' or 'abolish' the normal terms of their experience. Surely Paul is doing just that in 1 Corinthians with the oppositions in 1:27-28 (τὰ μωρά...τοὺς σοφούς, τὰ ἀσθενῆ ... τὰ ἰσχυρά) culminating in the phrase 'things that are not' (τὰ μὴ ὄντα) to describe his hearers and their position. But it is ultimately not this tearing-down aspect of God's judgement, expressed rhetorically by Paul, which is of interest to the apostle, for he immediately continues: "God is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God..." Paul's negations only serve as a prelude for his affirmations about what has been created, namely a new community, with himself at its centre. The self-proclaimed church founder speaks a rhetoric of creation much more than reaction, and of prescription much more than description.

Biblical Rhetoric as a Genre of Ancient Rhetoric

Naturally, being the indicated and obvious way of reading the Bible, and scholars being what they are, typology is a neglected subject, even in theology, and it is neglected elsewhere because it is assumed to be

bound up with a doctrinaire adherence to Christianity...Typology is a form of rhetoric, and can be studied critically like any other form of rhetoric...

Northrop Frye *The Great Code*, 80.

Although the connection of history with the result and not the origin of Paul's letters has been a minor focus of study in modern scholarship, it has always existed alongside the more common and more respected historical source studies nonetheless. Despite his differing objectives, even Kennedy alluded to the thesis developed here; namely, that rhetoric has its historical connection in the way that it creates a group identity: "In so far as we can approximate to the linguistic expectations of an audience in a given culture, rhetorical analysis can tell us something about how 'identification' - the key feature of rhetoric according to Kenneth Burke (1950) - was achieved and maintained" (Kennedy 1990, 196).

In fact, it is not surprising that Kennedy turns to Kenneth Burke to help explain this aspect of rhetoric. Robbins (1996b, 106) calls Burke a pioneer in identifying the social and cultural texture of texts. Burke's unique form of literary criticism, while it has thus far had minimal impact on New Testament rhetorical criticism (Crafton 1993, 430 n.6), shares the view that rhetoric means an understanding of language and texts as having their own power which they exercise on the reader to change his or her perceptions of reality. The text, for Burke, is never neutral, but always a conscious instrument for change. Likewise a text rarely if ever is content simply to mirror either an author or an historical context. Rather, it presents a vision suggested by the author and urges the reader in various ways - but especially through 'identification' - to adopt its view of past, present and future. Jeffrey Crafton notes the applicability of Burkean criticism for those who are looking for reasons behind the power of a transforming text:

> Burkean criticism, therefore, is concerned with how an author uses language to act upon self, community and world. Texts are instruments of change and should be interpreted as such. While most critical methods in use today isolate facets of a text - authorial intention, reception by original or subsequent readers, social and historical influences, ideological connections - Burkean criticism looks for the way in which all of these elements working together manufacture a text's power (Crafton 1993, 431).

Does the fact that religious rhetoric was not a type identified by ancient authors mean that it is not a valid definition for our purposes? It should be clear by now that our goal of finding general rhetorical strategies restricts us neither to ancient nor modern

theories (Thuren 1993, 471), neither to a Theon nor to a Burke, since what we are describing is one facet of universal human communication.

Yet while distinguishing Paul's rhetoric from the three classical genres, we should not lose sight of the similarities. Paul did not face a simple choice between one prevailing classical model for speaking and writing and a new and sectarian Christian rhetoric; rather this is a false polarity we tend to assume because of our particular interests. Reminding ourselves again of the vitality and complexity of rhetorical culture in the ancient world keeps us from oversimplifying the situation. Because of the strategy of adaptation, which was stressed by the ancient teachers but lost its importance in the long ossification of the art, the similarities between biblical rhetoric and other variations of what was, in the end, a heterogeneous Hellenistic rhetorical scene (Robbins 1993, 447) may not be so large as is sometimes supposed. As Litfin has stated "For the ancients primary rhetoric always focused on adaptation for the sake of effecting results" (1994, 35). Or as Henderson (1995, 168) puts it: "Outside the schoolroom and its handbooks, 'rule' is probably a misnomer for rhetorical models which value variation as highly as conventionality". On the margin of the Hellenistic world and in good rhetorical fashion, Paul simply was using the materials at hand for the most persuasive message possible.

Quintilian also reminds us that the best orators used whatever tools for persuasion were at their disposal. His comments about having to 'follow the rules' might be remembered with profit by those who would restrict Pauline rhetoric to classical paradigms:

> Let no one however demand from me a rigid code of rules such as most authors of textbooks have laid down, or ask me to impose on students of rhetoric a system of laws immutable as fate...which some speakers follow as though they had no choice but to regard them as orders and as if it were a crime to take any other line. If the whole of rhetoric could be thus embodied in one compact code, it would be an easy task of little compass: but most rules are liable to be altered by the nature of the case, circumstances of time and place, and by hard necessity itself. Consequently the all-important gift for an orator is a wise adaptability... *Inst.Or.* 1.2, 13

Paul's rhetoric was marked by its adaptability. Not only do we see this in the manner in which Paul argues throughout the letter, but he also expressly states the importance of adaptation in 1 Cor 9: 19-23. I believe that the prevailing definitions - ancient and modern - of rhetoric as persuasion again provide a key here. A text that seeks to persuade is rhetorical. Concentrating on forms which parallel ancient rules of speech can be profitable, but may at times risk 'missing the forest for the trees', since the persuasion of

rhetorical writing takes place in a multitude of complex ways including the *interaction* and overall effect produced by the multitude of rhetorical strategies, many or few of which may use the classical forms. Since Betz, scholars have been more reluctant to propose a complete and undisturbed rhetorical structure for one of Paul's letters along classical lines - although both Witherington III (1995) and Mitchell (1991) are notable exceptions. But this does not mean that Paul's letters do not contain a complete rhetorical argument in a wider sense. Here I disagree with Doty (1973,45), who proposes that Paul "breaks into" his own rhetorical structure and otherwise interrupts his rhetoric "with exclamations, quotations and additional observations". With Plank I suggest, rather, that the supposed interruptions form part of Paul's larger rhetoric, bolstering his argument with emotional appeals, scriptural use and allusion, and elaborations: "[Paul's] language does not so much ornament his gospel as become part of its fabric" (1987,1). Rarely is a reader or listener convinced by a single syllogism, *chreia* or other form. Indeed, the more techniques used, even in the emphasis of a single point, the stronger the argument, according to Cicero (*De Or.* 3,53,203-205). In any case, as he notes, it is the 'figure of thought' which endures (*De Or.* 3,52,200).

This brings up another point worth remembering. By defining Paul's rhetoric as 'Biblical', we are hardly stating that Paul's rhetoric was unique (c.f. Kennedy 1994, 258). Quite the contrary: we are placing it within a much wider tradition. In addition to its Greco-Roman heritage, Paul's rhetoric also fell within an historical tradition of speaking and writing stretching back at least to the prophets of ancient Israel. In this tradition, the "exclamations" and "quotations" of which Doty speaks and the use of scripture as proof all take their place as accepted - even welcome - parts of an argument.

Since persuasion operates on the reader over the entire course of the Pauline argument, we need to look at the larger picture and what effects are produced by the argument in a more global sense. This means going beyond the words used, to their effect, and involves us in questions of imagination, redescription, and acceptance. What Ricoeur says about metaphor is partly true here also: "Classical rhetoric...was not wrong, but it only described the 'effect of sense' at the level of the word... While it is true that the effect of sense is focused on the word, the production of sense is borne by the whole utterance" (1989,426). In order to understand how Paul's rhetoric worked to change the self-perceptions of his readers, we need to cast a wider net than the examination of single forms of speech.

Moreover, despite what Ricoeur says about classical rhetoric, one may find in Cicero hints about the kind of argument that we are discussing. While the term rhetorical 'identification' may have been coined by Burke, clearly the rhetorical technique of getting a

reader or audience member onside before actually suggesting a course of action is a long-established tactic. Thus Cicero notes:

> But there are two kinds of argumentation, one of which aims directly at convincing, whereas the other is less direct and is aimed mostly at the feelings. It is direct when after stating what it proposes to prove, it gives the reasons on which it depends and when these have been established, it comes back to its original proposition, and concludes. But the other kind of argumentation, proceeding as it were backwards and in an inverse way, first of all presents the reasons it has chosen and establishes them solidly and then, having excited the minds of the hearers, it finally lets out that which it should have described to begin with (*Part.Or.* 46).

Of the 'reasons' Cicero names that help determine a hearer's reaction, one of the most effective would have been establishing the very nature or character of the recipients. In other words, define your opponent before you define the argument, and the argument will be easier to present. Paul tends to do this in the 'thanksgiving' section of his letters, immediately after the opening. In fact, one can understand the Pauline thanksgiving as taking the place of the *exordium* in a standard thesis form - helping introduce the apostle's argument, his relationship to the readers, and describing who they are - if not in fact, at least in Paul's rhetoric! Witherington III (1995, 87), concurs with this understanding. But I disagree with his proposal that the *actio gratiarum* - the speech of thanksgiving given by a consul on assuming his office, may have acted as a symbol of how Paul was 'assuming control' over the Corinthian congregation.

Paul may well have fervently wished - even believed in one sense at least - that his thanksgiving for the Corinthians was true, but the context of the following chapters makes his words that the Corinthians are "enriched in speech and knowledge...not lacking in any spiritual gift" seem odd. Is it too brazen to suggest that Paul's thanksgiving to God is actually (or also) a rhetorical device by which he suggests the 'true' *ethos* of the readers in contrast to their reported actions, an *ethos* or character that he expects them to live up to? By using his thanksgiving as a reminder of who the Corinthians actually are 'in Christ', Paul is setting the grounds for his later argument firmly in his favour and showing a rhetoric of identification. What many Pauline scholars have identified as the 'indicative-imperative' debate of Pauline ethics is also at play here. I do not believe that the interplay of indicative and imperative statements in Paul only illustrates Paul's ethical concerns, but also his style and rationale of argumentation, and I would like to suggest that rhetorical criticism

is another proper avenue for exploring this aspect of the apostle's thought. This relationship will be explored in more detail shortly.

What has been called 'identification', I would call a type of 'redescription'. Paul was hardly the first, nor the last, to employ this tactic in argumentation. It is the realization of this redescriptive capacity in language that has led to the current fashion for North American police to call members of the public 'clients', and at least one North American 'superstore' to relabel its employees as 'associates'. One could quibble that a language change should be based on at least some form of real organizational reformation (i.e. employees being awarded shares in the company; greater citizen control of police brotherhoods), but the example reminds us that changes of language are still considered at least potentially to lead to changes in behavioral patterns.

While Burke's theory is hard to systematize (and therefore explain) and his language hard to understand, the notion of 'identification' especially, is useful for this present work. As has already been noted, rhetoric works best when the decisions urged upon the reader are those that follow naturally from accepting a certain vision of oneself. When Paul writes to Philemon, he clearly precedes his request for Onesimus' freedom with a vision of who Philemon is and the kind of decision he should make as a result. Paul presents his relationship to Philemon, the latter's status and obligations as a Christian, and his desires quite literally as 'pre-text' for the decision Philemon *should* make. This is rhetoric working at the level of the reader's self-definition, what Burke calls identification. When Crafton draws together Burke's thoughts on identification, it is easy to see Paul with Philemon, and even with the Corinthians:

> An author may create identification at several levels: (1) explicitly connecting the self to the audience through references to one's relationship to them, positive self-presentation, and shared symbols; (2) bonding with the audience more subtly through boundary definitions, insider/outsider symbols, and the purification cycle; and (3) creating an unnoticed 'we' who agree with each other and with the proposed outcome by strategic use of terministic clusters, form, metaphor, entelechy and synecdoche. When identification has occurred, the symbolic action of a text is complete (Crafton 1993, 437).

In their various ways, Burke, Ricoeur, Crafton, Wuellner, and others, and even (although less obviously) Cicero (*De Or.* 2,121), point to a sort of penultimate step in the persuasive process, a spot before the reader has embarked on the action, but after they have imbibed the rhetorical argument and accepted its general frame of reference for their own

decision making. This step may be called 'identification' (Burke), 'a new congruence' (Ricoeur), or 'resonance' (Frye, 1990, 270 ff.). Or it may be identified in classical terms as the 'assent' for which rhetoric has always sought. But the process is basically the same in all descriptions. It is a recognition that before we embark upon an action or a set of actions, we have a motivation for doing so, and that the most effective motivations are those which seem to flow most naturally from our own characters. I find Thuren's (1993, 469-9), distinction between 'argumentation' leading to assent to a thesis or opinion, and 'persuasion' leading to assent to the speaker's will to be useful, but perhaps overly refined. My point is that when rhetoric changes the 'is' (ontological assertions) of the reader, it invariably also will change their 'ought' (functional assertions). If nowhere else, this is proven in Paul's casting of his indicative-imperative phrases together. "If we live in the Spirit," he says in Galatians, "let us walk in the Spirit".

Thus it becomes the task of the effective rhetorician to 'recall' his or her readers to their own truest natures, even before presenting more formal arguments for their consideration. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, 444), note the power of what I call 'redefinition': "Definition is an instrument of quasi-logical argumentation. It is also an instrument of the dissociation of concepts, more especially whenever it claims to furnish the real, true meaning of the concept as opposed to its customary or apparent usage." Redefinition may be accomplished either through shame or inspiration, and Paul seems to be able to use both. For instance, he pictures the Corinthian Christians as babies, unable to handle solid food (1 Corinthians 3:2) while he, their parent, must feed them (3:2) or discipline them (4:21). Yet elsewhere (1 Corinthians 13) he rises to rapturous heights in inventing or adapting a poem to love (Mack, 1990, analyzes it as an encomium) which is rightly recognized as one of the most inspiring passages of religious literature. Both of these instances may be seen as rhetorical techniques by which Paul reminds the Corinthians of who they 'really' are and in fact moves them, rhetorically, in that direction. Yet how does this 'moving' take place?

The place of authority in Biblical rhetoric

The word used most often by modern critics, especially literary or narrative critics, to describe how rhetorical texts work in the general sense indicated above is that they 'invite' the reader to adopt their alternate view of the author and reader's world. Thus Crafton on Burke: "Burke would have the critic discover a text's function: how an author uses words to create a symbolic orientation to a situation, and how a text invites an audience to participate in this world" (Crafton 1993,432).

While I agree with the process described by these scholars, I believe that Paul's letters, and probably Biblical texts in general, are less polite than the word 'invite' implies. I think, rather, that Paul's rhetoric demands, cajoles, orders, expects, and embarrasses the reader into accepting the world he presents as the 'true' reality of the Christian. Paul is neither diplomatic nor democratic. He uses the rhetorical techniques of *ethos* and *pathos* to great effect throughout his letters. Most often, he seems simply to present his new reality as if it is already in place, with seeming despair or surprise when in his opinion his readers are failing to live up to the ethical or community results of such a new self-understanding. And although Paul uses many techniques to advance his argument, at the root of most of them seems to be, not the logic of rational argumentation, but rather the authority of religious discourse (Mack 1990, 102; Kennedy 1984, 6; Jasper 1990,136; Castelli 1991, 117) which points either to itself or to the inevitability of the new way-of-being that a person has in Christ. However, I would argue that in 1 Corinthians, as opposed to later Christian history, this authority is not so much given to Paul as it was logically argued for by the apostle himself. As Castelli (1991, 103) puts it: "'Become imitators of me' is a call to sameness which erases difference and, at the same time, reinforces the authoritative status of the model". In other words, Paul increased his own stature as part and parcel of his authoritative argument for ecclesiastical unity.

Near the opening of Book Four of his *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine deals specifically with the question which has preoccupied us thus far: how one should evaluate the rhetorical status of Christian scripture. It comes as no surprise, given our own discoveries, that he insists on calling the writings of Paul, among others, rhetorical. But he precedes us also in noting that, while they are rhetorical, they express their persuasiveness in a unique way:

> Here someone may inquire whether our authors, whose divinely inspired writings have formed the canon with a most wholesome authority for us, are merely wise or may also be called eloquent. This question is most easily solved for me and for those who think like me...there is a kind of eloquence fitting for men most worthy of the highest authority and clearly inspired by God. Our authors speak with eloquence of this kind... (*On Christian Doctrine* 4,6,9)

In describing the kind of eloquence scripture possesses, Augustine ties that eloquence several times to the importance of authority. Various authors have hinted that the way in which this is done is something which distinguishes all religious rhetoric from that outlined by Aristotle. Thus Kennedy: "at the heart of it [religious rhetoric] lies authoritative

proclamation, not rational persuasion" (1984,6). But neither can this biblical rhetoric be identified in this way with the 'new rhetoric' of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. The didactics of the philosophers was based on rational logic or deduction, the new rhetoric of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca on probabilistic, contingent reasoning. Biblical rhetoric and the rhetoric of Paul, as Augustine pointed out, are based on an appeal to authority. Yet, at least according to Augustine, the appeal to divine authority is not a tool or a trick in the same way as might be the calculated laugh or gesture. Somehow, it must be both more real and more natural than an oratorical artifice. The Christian orator is to be "a petitioner before he is a speaker" who, when "the hour in which he is to speak approaches...should raise his thirsty soul to God in order that he should give forth what he shall drink..." (*On Christian Doctrine* 4,15). Despite its often cynical use by the powerful (one recalls the example of Peregrinus in the mid-second century) this 'mutual culture' of belief between Christian writer and reader, speaker and listener is a powerful bond. It exists even between those who share unequal power relations and still speaks against those who would too quickly adopt Foucault's criterion of the use of differentiations in sustaining power relations and also represents another 'weak link' in Castelli's use of this model (1991, 122). In a communication rooted so deeply in Christian culture as was Paul's, the shared conviction of speaker and listener that it is in some way God's message that is imparted lends to the oration an authority unique in ancient rhetoric.

For us it is especially this derived - rather than demonstrated - authority appealed to by Pauline rhetoric which distinguishes it from more 'mainline' rhetorics of the first century. In a religious rhetorical document or speech the force of the argument is brought to bear through the normal channels of *ethos, pathos* and *logos*. Yet part of the *ethos* of biblical persuasion ultimately comes from some perceived divine authority, albeit represented by the speaker or writer. Here I disagree with Schussler Fiorenza (1987, 395), who states that appeals to authority represent the 'breakdown' of Paul's persuasive argument rather than a part of it, and I concur in general with Robbins, who identifies the importance of ideology, and Castelli, who uses Foucault's "analytics of power" (1991, 122) to identify how authority is an intimate factor in Paul's appeal's both to be imitated, and for unity in the congregation.

Moreover, the extent to which Paul's appeal to his authority functions in the argument for unity is shown also by Robbins (1996b, 196 ff.) in his section on the 'ideological texture' of texts. In conversation with the work of E. Castelli, Robbins shows how those who oppose Paul's message of unity are described by the letter not simply as holding conflicting views, but being "in opposition to the community, its gospel, and its savior" (Castelli 1991, 103). Positively, Paul prominently displays himself as the source

and model of the new way of being in Christ and being in community (and this pairing of Christ and community is all-important to the present argument). All the while, negatively, Paul obscures - almost hides - his authority behind the community, Christ, and the gospel so that being opposed to one is, rhetorically, being opposed to all. The particular 'flag' Paul was wrapping himself in was the cross of Christ, but the end was larger than self-defense or aggrandizement, as we shall see.

We began this section with the question of whether, in the ancient world (and thus in the eyes also of some modern interpreters) 'Biblical' rhetoric may be identified as its own separate *genus*, in addition to the deliberative, epideictic and judicial forms. We have shown that its reliance on Hebrew tradition and scripture, its appeal to authority, and especially its creative desire to create community all support identifying Biblical rhetoric as a unique form of rhetorical communication in the ancient world.

Indeed, the location of Biblical rhetoric within a canon of scripture is probably the main reason why more attention has not been paid to such an important body of rhetorical literature earlier (Winter 1997). But neither is identifying Biblical texts as unique rhetorical documents new to our age. Augustine comes to the same conclusion in Book Four (6.9) of *On Christian Doctrine*, where he speaks of the Biblical writings having an "eloquence suitable" (i.e. unique) for them - in effect already in his day defining Paul's letters as a unique, if recognizable, form of rhetorical argument.

Biblical rhetoric as evident in First Corinthians

Augustine believed that rhetoric was the natural vessel in which Christian speech took place, but its effect was attributable to God in the same way that Christians give medicines made by human beings and attribute the healing to God *(On Christian Doctrine* 4,16). This certainly seems to be the case for Paul, who very consciously brings God on side in the first words of 1 Corinthians: "Paul, an apostle called by the will of God". For what it is worth we may assume that Paul, like Augustine, honestly felt himself to be speaking for God. Yet whatever Paul's piety, Paul's prescript is disingenuous: if it is accepted fully by his readers, then he need not establish further his *ethos* nor prove his case, since after all it was God's case. Of course, Paul then needs to prove that he is in fact God's representative, and his defense of his apostleship is intimately tied to how he has, or has not, already displayed God's authority and God's power. In the first few chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul balances several themes: the nature of power, his status as an apostle, and his message of what status should mean in the Christian community. Paul's defensive rhetoric about himself turns out to be, at one and the same time, his creative rhetoric for the

community, since his words about his own actions and status are woven in and around what he says about Corinthian self-understandings.

I believe that this view of 1 Corinthians cannot be overemphasized, for it explains the rather complex way in which the apostle's identity and that of the congregation are drawn rhetorically together. Stepping back from the immediate issues identified so well elsewhere, namely divisions in the congregation, Paul's own status in Corinth, and Paul's training and reputation as a speaker, allows us to see how Paul's appeals that the Corinthians be unified and that they imitate him work as twin parts of a larger argument about Christian identity.

That Paul had to work hard, rhetorically, to establish his authority seems clear from a plain reading of the letter. The whole tone of the epistle assumes that Paul did not have the same status among those first readers that he soon achieved in the Christian church, and we do well not to 'retroject' that authority. Neither do we have to make assumptions that go beyond the text to make this modest assertion. From the letter it would appear that Paul had his work cut out for him in establishing his *ethos* among his readers. Yet why should the founder of a congregation, if Paul is to be believed in 3:6 and 4:15, appear to be struggling to establish an authority we might reasonably assume would have been granted him as a natural right? In terms of process, Paul indicates (1:17; 2:3-5) and we can assume, that before the instruction and correction of 1 Corinthians, came the preaching and teaching of his visit. In writing, Paul was following a path Augustine would later state as a principle: "instruction should come before persuasion. And perhaps when the necessary things are learned [the hearers] may be so moved by a knowledge of them that it is not necessary to move them further by greater powers of eloquence. But when it is necessary, it is to be done" (*On Christian Doctrine* 4, 12,28).

Quite apart from extended discussion of the nature of apostleship in 1 Corinthians 9 (see Robbins 1996b), most discussions of Paul's authority in 1 Corinthians revolve around the supposedly autobiographical statements let out by the apostle in 1:17; 2:1-4; and 3:2. Most interpreters also have in mind (although reading these back into 1 Corinthians must be done with caution) 2 Corinthians 10:10 and 11:6, which, in the words of Pogoloff (1992,143), "either continues the same narrative or revises it".

The picture we (and presumably the Corinthians) draw from these passages is familiar and in repeating it we are accepting Paul's portrayal of himself and his situation: his letters are forceful but he is something less than impressive in the flesh; his stay with the congregation was marked by personal difficulties of some sort; and while he may claim some effective results in his work with the congregation, personally and when judged according to normal Hellenistic standards of wisdom and rhetoric he comes off poorly,

even as compared with other, later Christian teachers. Unlike the original recipients of the letter, we were not there when Paul first stayed in Corinth, so we must be content with his letter. Since he is writing to people at least some of whom would have experienced his initial visit, however, we also may assume that Paul's presentation of himself is guided somewhat by their memories as well as his. At the same time we should beware of reading too much into these so-called 'autobiographical' statements. Once we have accepted that all materials in a rhetorical text are there to serve the function of persuasion, we must treat even the most 'objective' of assertions in this way. And self-deprecation was a well-known rhetorical technique already by the time of Paul (see: Witherington III 1995, 145-146).

Thus we must ask whether a spirited defense of his apostolic authority against organized criticism within Corinth would be the only exigence which might explain Paul's rhetoric in the first few chapters of 1 Corinthians. However useful or interesting one might be, I do not believe that the reconstruction of an elaborate historical situation of conflict or distrust is necessary to explain Paul's rhetoric. This is not to deny that there might have been problems, perhaps even grave problems in the community there. It is only to say that Paul's constructive rhetoric required a reframing of his authority as the first step in the attempt to redescribe the status of his listeners also. As in deliberative rhetoric (Witherington III 1995, 204), Paul must establish his *ethos* in order to present himself as an example. In other words, Paul used himself as evidence of who his readers should be. The purpose of Paul's rhetoric, even in this most 'historical' of Paul's letters, was to envision a new community as much as to regulate an existing one. In fact, the letter intends to do the latter by accomplishing the former.

I am attracted to Robbins' analysis of Paul's rhetorical strategy in 1 Corinthians (1996, 188-189). Specifically, he proposes that the apostle: a/ describes his readers in that congregation as more factionalized than they perhaps were in order to b/ "evaluate that factionalization as unacceptable", and therefore c/ "introduce a solution with Paul at the centre" (189). In other words, what is at work in Paul's letter is an attempt to consolidate his position as the anchor to Corinthian unity, 'painting things blackly' so as to make his rhetorical solution all the more pressing also. On what basis does his writing intend to accomplish all this?

The range of nuance and meaning around the English words 'authority' and 'power' should inform but not restrict our exploration of Paul's *ethos* as he establishes it in 1 Corinthians. Nor do we need to confine our search for how Paul appealed to authority to those cases where he employs the actual term δύναμις (power). These issues have been explored at some length in Bengt Holmberg's 1978 work *Paul and Power*, and elsewhere (Plank 1987, 17 ff.). With Holmberg I accept the distinction between authority and power

(which depends in turn on the work of the sociologist Max Weber), which maintains that authority does not coerce assent but in some sense commands it. That is, authority may represent a latent power, and thus power may always lie somewhere behind the exercise of authority, but effective authority depends upon its recognition by others. Here rhetoric clearly has a role to play, for in order to persuade others to recognize your authority rhetoric is the natural instrument.

That observation means that Paul argues on two fronts: he uses an appeal to authority as basis for his argument while at the same time asserting or re-asserting that personal authority in Corinth by means of his argument (Fee 1987, 50; Schussler Fiorenza 1987, 397). It is a risky strategy and one that may not have worked. Mitchell, for one, is disparaging. She notes that "it is clear from 2 Corinthians that Paul's rhetorical strategy of appealing to himself as the respected example to be imitated was not well received at Corinth" (Mitchell 1991, 303). While that may have been true in the short term, the same objections to historical reconstruction that I have raised with regard to 1 Corinthians apply also to the apostle's 'second' letter, making our historical inferences from it troublesome. Of course, it may be maintained that the simple existence of 2 Corinthians and of the extended correspondence it represents show the initial failure of Paul's attempts to 'create a new world' among the Corinthians. Paul clearly felt it necessary to write another letter or series of letters, and this must imply a judgement of some sort on his part on the success of the rhetoric of the earlier letter. However that may be, a congregation was still there, and the apostle's own reputation had regained its fortunes by the time 1 Clement was written, when the one who had come in "weakness and fear and much trembling" (1 Cor 2:3) had become "the very type of endurance rewarded" (1 Clem 5). I will return to this debate in the final section, which discusses the historical outcomes of Paul's rhetoric.

Paul's argument for his unique authority, as we have said, is wrapped up in his argument for the nature of faith and the relative status of all Christians in the sermonic world that he envisions. Like Alice, in the land where down is up and white is black, the Corinthians, according to Paul, now live in an world where God has turned many fundamental values upside down: "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame what is wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are..."(1:27-28). Far from providing indirect evidence for the social status of the Corinthian Christians, this passage should be understood as part of the larger argument which entwines Paul's apologetic for his own lack of rhetorical finesse or standing with his view of how all Christians should see themselves and each other in the new reality of being 'in Christ'. Most of the section from 1:18 to 2:16 should be understood as a development of the

various thoughts suggested in 1:17: "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power".

In general, the argument developed in this section is syllogistic, with the major premise given in 1:18 "For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God". Although it would have been debatable to someone outside of the community, the basic belief behind this assertion would have been taken as a given even by the most fractious of Christians at Corinth, as it has been taken by all types of Christians since: that is, that the existence of faith in this 'message of the cross' is a result of the working of the power of God. Paul then relies for his minor premise on the one historical datum which (despite Kloppenborg) we must grant, for without it the letter makes no sense: that is, that Paul was the preacher whose proclamation - despite being given "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling" - first brought the Corinthians to faith and their community into being. Despite Kloppenborg's arguments to the contrary, 1 Cor 3:6,10; 4:15; and 2 Cor 10:14 clearly show, even in the context of a rhetorical document, that Paul considered himself the first to reach the Corinthian congregation with the gospel and presumed the same perception would be adopted among his readers with virtually no argument. 2 Cor 10:15-16 notably shows Paul's preference for new areas untouched by other Christian missionary activity. Would Paul have claimed status as founder of the Corinthian congregation had he not in fact been its primary organizer? It seems extremely unlikely that this should be so. As noted earlier, Paul is writing to people some of whom, at least, experienced first-hand his initial visit. There is certainly room for conjecture that some of the Corinthian Christians had come to faith elsewhere. But without any - even minor - evidence to the contrary, the burden of proof must be on those who would doubt that Paul is the church-planter he claims to be. Certainly his continuing status in the community is somewhat at issue, but this should not be retrojected into the issue of the nature of the community's beginnings.

Once Paul's status as founder is granted (and this seems to be the only 'status' that Paul can hang on to), the logic of the syllogism becomes clearer. We may sketch it out in simple terms. Paul wrote the Corinthians:

> My weak (not with eloquence; 1 Cor 1:17) proclamation led to your faith.
> Faith shows the power of God.

Therefore, the power of God is shown in my weak (i.e. untrained) speech.

Conversely:

> The message of the cross is the power of God (1:18).
> The power of God is emptied by eloquent speech (1:17).
> Therefore, the message of the cross is incompatible with eloquent speech such as the Corinthians were expecting.

In this way Paul weaves his own apparently maligned speaking ability together with the message itself proclaimed originally in his 'weak' voice. Paul presents himself as having preached in weakness about weakness, the weakness apparent in the cross of Christ. The rhetorical identification of these two weaknesses is the masterstroke of Paul's rhetorical strategy, and the main building block in his argument for a new Corinthian social order.

Pogoloff (1992, 156) shows how Paul ties his rhetoric to "the community's narrative of origins and self-identity". In my opinion this is done for the rhetorical purposes of casting his speech as the instrument of the power of God that all would have agreed created communities such as that at Corinth. Paul maintains that his rhetoric or gospel, given God's power, created - and creates - a new reality.

If Paul could with his written rhetoric demonstrate that the power of God lay in his weak and untrained speech, then it naturally followed that divine authority was also his to employ in the present letter to the congregation. I disagree with Pogoloff (1992) 152-3, who concludes that in 1 Corinthians Paul is arguing against those who would *over*evaluate his rhetorical skills, while in 2 Corinthians he defends those skills. Paul is not content simply to defend himself, for his rhetorical aim, as we have maintained from the beginning, is larger: he sets about to recast the very way in which his readers see themselves. Here I agree with Mitchell (1991) 302, that self-defense is not the primary purpose of Paul's autobiographical comments in 1 Corinthians - although I do not see why she does not apply that same logic to 2 Corinthians.

Instead, it is quite natural that Paul should build what Burke calls 'identification' and Ricoeur calls his 'textual world' on the new status he has just established for himself. Indeed, as argued above, it is possible that Paul's attempt to *re*describe his readers was the primary motivation for the way 1 Corinthians reads, and the various historical issues he apparently addresses (schism, immorality, irregularities in the Lord's supper), as well as his self-presentation do not lead to, but follow from, his main argument, which is that the Corinthians have not taken their new identity seriously enough to live it.

Paul accomplishes his identification of himself with his readers in one simple step by taking the implied criticisms of his speech and appearance in the text and turning them into God-given attributes and proof of his message. In other words, he identifies as one and the same the content of his message and its delivery, but instead of arguing from a weak delivery to a faulty message (as does the criticism implied in his argument), he argues from an effective message (proven so by the faith of his readers) to a radically new style of delivery characteristic of what it means to be a Christian who operates by new and differing standards. In 1 Cor 1:17 Paul is in fact making a virtue out of necessity, as it were. He is not arguing for a more positive Corinthian appraisal of what he presents as his 'sub-standard' oratory, but rather is proclaiming it as his own - or perhaps better, God's own - suitable choice for the message of the cross. In his argument, form and content are 'proven' to be identical by the resultant faith. This at first seems strange to the modern critic, accustomed as we are to the division and recombination of these parts of communication. But in essence, Paul is simply saying about himself what MacLuhan said so much later: 'the medium *is* the message'. In this case, Paul states that he is exemplifying - embodying, even - the true nature of God's power and wisdom in his weak appearance and poor speech. This equation is made even more explicit in 2 Cor 12:9, where it is put right into God's mouth. Yet it is not necessary to read the later letter back into 1 Corinthians, for examples there are numerous enough.

What is more - and here Paul comes to the positive point which we see repeated again and again in his writing - weakness is the true nature not just of the apostle but of all who are 'in Christ': it is the way of being in the world that should be typical of all those 'called to be saints' to whom the letter is addressed. If and when the Corinthians accept this vision for themselves, their 'jealousy and quarreling" (3:3) will end. In the very act of universalizing his personal status and claiming it as indicative of God's power, Paul is joining the ranks of Biblical authors who have always subverted their individuality by claiming the authority as divine and not their own to have to promote or defend. In the scheme of faith Paul's authority was derived and impersonal, despite the personality we feel we can read in every verse he wrote.

So to what end did Paul argue for his own authority? Was it as a personal defense, for the sake of holding together a project, or something more? W. Bauer, citing the ancient Muratorian Canon in his *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (1971 ed., 220), noted that 1 Corinthians was popular in the early church precisely because it spoke with the authority of an apostle against a recurring church problem: "the heresies of schism". Mitchell (1991, 303-304) dryly notes the utility of 1 Corinthians in the early church for much the same reason. Yet Bauer goes on to say that the purpose of the letter must have

been more than an argument against struggling factions: "it is really rather peculiar and in need of an explanation that this extensive and multifaceted epistle is supposed to have had only this purpose".

It is our contention that rhetorical criticism shows just how 1 Corinthians can have accomplished more than one purpose at a time. Paul's letter did argue for unity and against division in the specific historical context of Corinth. Furthermore, the letter did defend Paul's abilities and his claim to apostolic authority. But it did all this by going above such particular concerns to develop a vision of who all the members of Christ's church were in every time and place. Paul's *positive* rhetoric thus made the letter useful to later churches, and this, combined with its self-conscious universality, eventually also led to its canonical status, which came remarkably early.

As commentators from Frei to Frye have noted, occasionally when it comes to religious texts we are too sophisticated for our own good. Modern criticism sometimes is guilty of missing the most obvious of self-assertions made by biblical texts. I believe that one of the clearest of all is the belief, everywhere evident in Paul, that proclamation changes lives, and through them, influences history.

By contrast, most of modern criticism is based on the reverse observation: that 'changed lives' (a more neutral formulation of 'changed lives' might be 'religion as an historical and sociological phenomenon') produce texts. Yet from the beginning, the explicit aim of Christian literature has been to influence the reader and his or her beliefs and practices. In fact, we can overstate the point and make the daring assertion that Pauline Christianity is not represented by *any* texts written by the apostle, for Paul's letters are those which brought it about - instead, we should be examining later documents such as the pastorals or 1 Clement. In other words, while it is true that religion produces texts, texts also produce religion, and in the case of Paul, it seems likely that the latter statement is the more important.

This is neither a new nor a novel idea. Yet it is a useful reminder of a basic truth, and it leads us to the next step of our own argument - a discussion of the relationship between rhetoric and hermeneutics.

CHAPTER SIX: Rhetoric and Hermeneutics

> In the so-called 'world of the work' we meet a convergence of the two fields of
> understanding and expression, hermeneutics and rhetoric, for the world of the work is
> both a device of rhetoric, rhetorically constructed, and a way of understanding how
> new meaning is taken on by the person influenced by rhetoric. The ancient art of
> rhetoric and the modern theory of hermeneutics are flip sides of the same persuasive
> coin. One concentrates on production, which was the ancient preoccupation, the other
> on reception, the concern of modern thinkers ever since philosophy brought about
> the well-known 'turn to the subject'.

When Paul wrote to the congregation at Corinth, he pleaded with them to imitate
him (4:16). Readers of the letter have always known that there is more being offered in the
first few chapters of 1 Corinthians than just a picture of the apostle's life and a few
ecclesiastical regulations. What is at stake is a way of seeing the world, and the passage
does its best to affect and effect that vision. Despite a general awareness of this intent,
scholarship has generally ignored the implications of this 'plain understanding', and
discussions as to how the text sets out to accomplish its vision have generally been left to
the field of theology if they find any place in the academic world at all. Indeed, some might
consider an examination of hermeneutical issues to be straying outside the boundaries of
'pure' rhetorical criticism. Yet Kathy Eden (1997) in her *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical
Tradition* has demonstrated just how ancient and complex is the relationship between
rhetoric and hermeneutics. And as literary critics such as Northrop Frye have maintained
for some time, "A reconsideration of the Bible can only take place along with, and as part
of, a reconsideration of language, and of all the structures, including the literary ones, that
language produces" (1990, 227).

The point that will be argued in this chapter builds on previous chapters in that it
proposes that the hermeneutical principle of a 'possible world' put forward by Paul Ricoeur
and in a somewhat different way by Northrop Frye, despite its contemporary provenance,
describes accurately the way that rhetoric is employed by Paul in the first few chapters of 1
Corinthians. In other words, Paul's writing aims to persuade, and does so through implicit
reference to, and explicit construction of, an alternative world or vision of the church.

Behind such immediate issues as what constitutes a world of the text and how it is
available to the reader, lies another central question: is it possible, using as example
chapters of Paul's letters, to link a general hermeneutical theory of meaning-creation with a

performance theory of persuasion? Both Schleiermacher, who insisted that "every act of understanding is the obverse of an act of discourse", and Luther who claimed (and lived the experience) that Scripture is not understood unless it is brought home (*zuhaus*) that is, experienced (*experiatur*)" (Eden 1997, 4) show how strong this linkage has been claimed to be. It is not too strong a point to make that rhetoric makes little sense unless its goal of persuasion takes root in the experience and understanding of the reader. Therefore attention to this proposed relation between hermeneutical category and rhetorical theory is crucial to the thesis which has been developed to this point.

Paul Ricoeur's work is relied on throughout this section. Despite his prolific output as a writer and critic and the general applicability of his theories, only here and there does he concentrate specifically on the Biblical texts. Even in those instances his attention tends to be on the canon as a whole, with examples often drawn from the Gospels and the Old Testament. Although no definitive summary of his work in this regard exists, his article entitled 'Biblical Hermeneutics' in *Semeia* 4 (1975) is a good introduction. Ricoeur's writing tends towards being technical and dense, and he is not the only critic to use the concept of the 'world in the work', yet I have found no other writer who so well discusses its implications, with the possible exception of Northrop Frye.

For the present discussion, the first advantage of Frye is of course, that Biblical texts are his primary subject, although he is tempted often enough by other literature. Furthermore, Frye's writing is lively and his explanations clear. However, the concept of 'the world in the work' is rather more implied in his work (especially in the chapter on metaphor) than it is explicit. He is not as systematic as is Ricoeur. Thus, without attempting to harmonize the thought of these two writers, I have attempted to draw the natural agreements from both as they apply to Paul's letters. A hermeneutical critic and a literary critic both can contribute something to this part of New Testament rhetorical studies.

In this section we continue to examine both the nature and scope of rhetoric, in order to establish the common ground between hermeneutics and the Pauline letter. We will explore the meaning of the phrase the 'world of the text', with specific attention to the role of metaphors, exhortations, and Paul's indicative-imperative schema in establishing and subsequently acting as reminder of such a world. Following this I will discuss briefly the world of the text presented in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians, and the challenge the rhetoric of the letter presented and presents to the reader.

The Species of Rhetoric in First Corinthians

As mentioned previously, ancient rhetoricians divided all of oratory into three classifications. Following Aristotle, these types or species of rhetoric were called either judicial, deliberative, or epideictic. In their original contexts in Aristotle's day, each type of rhetoric suited a particular public arena, be it the lawcourts (judicial), the governing council or assembly (deliberative) or the occasion of a public memorial (epideictic). With some exceptions (Classen 1993, 272-273), rhetoricians continued and continue to seek to divide all of persuasive speech and writing into one of these categories.

In the studies of Paul's letters, much effort has gone into the attempt to identify which of the ancient species of rhetoric best 'fits' the letter, in the assumption that determining the species of Paul's rhetoric will 'unlock' the structure and thus in some way greater meaning, in his letters. In the case of Galatians, which Betz first analyzed as belonging to the judicial or forensic genre, the debate has been fierce. Indeed, as in Betz's commentary, the decision about the genre of rhetoric used by Paul may influence the entire resulting view of the letter, and thus is a methodological step so important that it cannot, in Mitchell's words, "be begged in the analysis" (1991,11).

Yet a number of significant cautions should be sounded before we ourselves are drawn into this debate too deeply. Already we have seen evidence of just how complex the relationship between ancient theory and practice was, how diverse rhetoric was 'on the ground', and therefore how assuming the normativity and prescriptive strength of ancient theories, especially for rhetoric as far removed from the classical rules as Paul's may have been, leads modern criticism to misunderstandings that did not afflict those closer in time to the production of the actual texts. Also, the distinction between a letter and a speech has been used to explain why it is so difficult to 'fix' Paul's rhetoric. As Classen notes with regard to Galatians (1992,339), "it is not surprising that the categories of rhetoric fail us with respect to the structure of this epistle, because it is an epistle, and they were not made nor meant to fit such kinds of composition". Yet even such a caution, as has been shown, ignores the wide-ranging way in which rhetoric, constantly adapted to its various situations, influenced all forms of ancient communication, including letters. If this were not enough to make us cautious, it needs to be asked why (if adaptation was the mark of an able orator and writer) modern scholars often insist that one of Paul's letters must fall rather rigidly in line with one genus or another in order to be considered rhetorical. The apostle who stated that he was willing to 'be all things to all people' would not have balked at a less-than-purist mixing of genres and techniques any more than did the next great visionary Christian rhetorician of the western world: Augustine. Indeed, neither in Paul nor

elsewhere can one find exact reproductions of the templates; theory became practice then as now, and the written or oral results were "more complex and eclectic than the rhetorical handbooks might suggest" (Aune 1987,199).

These factors must all inform our decisions about the rhetorical genre of Paul's letters, and 1 Corinthians in particular. Deliberative rhetoric (also called *symbouleutic* rhetoric), as a rhetoric of the political arena, had as its original purpose to move its audience (the assembly of the πόλις) toward a future course of action. This the rhetor accomplished through persuasion (protreptic) and dissuasion (apotreptic), later called confirmation and refutation when applied to a thesis and not in public discourse (Mack 1990,34). Quintilian noted the importance of the authority of the speaker (surely an issue for Paul) in his discussion of deliberative rhetoric (*Inst. Or.* 3,8,12-13), and goes on to note how "this type of oratory seems to offer a more varied field for eloquence" (3,8,15) than the other species. The deliberative form was suited naturally to exhortation and moral encouragement, as well as to the presentation of the kerygma with its attendant demands on daily living. In fact, Mack (1990, 35), and Aune (1987, 199) believe that New Testament examples of early Christian rhetoric are largely deliberative. Thus it appears that of the three ancient categories, the goal of deliberative rhetoric parallels most profitably that which we are proposing Paul to have held: the creation of a visionary world which he then presses his readers to live out.

Moreover, we have shown already how Biblical rhetoric is unique in its appeal to authority and its future orientation. Classen has noted how, depending on our aim, there is nothing sacrosanct about the number three when listing species of rhetoric. Certainly, the ancients themselves felt free to disagree with Aristotle about this and other aspects of his *Rhetoric*. Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 3,4,2: "Still a feeble attempt has been made by certain Greeks and by Cicero in his *De Oratore*, to prove that there are not merely more than three [species], but that the number of kinds is almost past calculation: and this view has almost been thrust down our throats by the greatest authority of our own times".

Although the three-fold division of oratory has served well throughout the history of the art, Melanchthon for one was both conversant with ancient practice and yet adaptable enough to add a fourth genus - the *genus didacticum*, or teaching rhetoric (Classen 1993, 273). If our goal is to explicate how the text works, and not how it was informed by classical models, nothing should keep us from expanding our search as well. Indeed, we have already gone beyond Aristotle by focussing on authority as the kind of proof generally relied on by Paul and the other Biblical writers, for Aristotle only admitted of three kinds of proof: proof from argument (*logos*), character (*ethos*) and emotion (*pathos*).

In *The Great Code*, and despite the fact that it forms the backdrop to so much of what he is saying, Frye explicitly mentions rhetoric only here and there. But tellingly, he does so at the conclusion of his opening chapter, and again at the conclusion of the book. In those instances he concludes that the peculiar use of language contained in the Bible may be its own type (in essence, a fourth genus) of rhetoric - what he defines as *kerygma*, or proclaiming rhetoric. He is, of course, aware of Bultmann's virtual stranglehold on that term, and seeks to define it in a way quite opposite to Bultmann. Biblical rhetoric, for Frye, is wrapped up in, and not opposed to, myth. It is a rhetoric which works on the reader, not primarily through its figures, but through participation in its world-view, which despite (actually, because of, in Frye's opinion) the poetry of its expression, is meant to be taken as reality.

Beyond Species

Perhaps a shift in focus from rhetorical type to rhetorical purpose will be helpful here also. Even a superficial reading of 1 Corinthians reveals that there is a cause (or a number of causes) being argued, and that the letter is intended to move its readers toward a new understanding of themselves and their actions as, for example, in the aphorism: "Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are" (1 Corinthians 5.7). The text addresses, challenges, cajoles, compliments and threatens its readers. It is seeking to persuade them to do something, to act a certain way (1.10) and cease acting in other ways (5.6).

Jeffrey Crafton (1990, 319) defines rhetorical texts as "attempts to diagnose, order, and interpret situations. They name situations in ways that intentionally encourage others to perceive those situations through a specific vision". Certainly the early chapters of 1 Corinthians present a vision and attempt to bring readers to that same vision. They aim at persuading, as does all rhetoric (Ricoeur 1986, 432). Elizabeth Castelli's category of 'ideology' shows one way in which the particular rhetoric of the Bible may be identified by its larger, programmatic purposes: "The term 'discourse' describes something greater than simple representation. It implies rhetoric cast in its broadest sense, of that which persuades and coerces, that which has a political motive - that is, a motive inscribed by power" (1991, 53).

Building an understanding of a uniquely Biblical rhetoric synthesizing classical and Biblical forms of argumentation, we may watch for specific rhetorical constructions in the text, but it is once more in the most inclusive sense of persuasion that we must identify rhetoric, in large part because of its affinities to the way in which Paul's 'message of the

cross' (1 Cor 1.18) was spread. There is surprisingly little novelty in such an approach. To link persuasion (rhetoric) with 'proclamation' (Gospel) is only to follow the path that early Christians such as Paul and later Augustine explored so well and so naturally in their writings.

Ricoeur also understands rhetoric, at its root, as the discipline, or "master" of persuasion (1977a, 10,12). In similar fashion to the persuasion-proclamation link, he notes a connection between the aims of rhetoric and of what he calls 'testimony': "Testimony is thus caught in the network of proof and persuasion...characteristic of the properly rhetorical level of discourse" (1980,127). In his book *The Rule of Metaphor* Ricoeur traces the now-familiar to us historical reduction of rhetoric from an all-encompassing theory of speech to a "mere botany of figures of speech" (1977a, 10). To combat this trend (and to resurrect a discipline which he maintains had 'died') he sets out a renewed understanding of the purposes of rhetoric as argumentation. While Ricoeur is not a rhetorical critical scholar of the New Testament *per se*, he shares at least some of the latter's understandings; the difference is in the application of these understandings and the arena of debate.

For Ricoeur, to see rhetoric as a simple taxonomy of figures of speech does little justice to a discourse that was, at least once, "a weapon in the public arena" (1977a, 10). Picking up on his understanding of rhetoric - "to influence through discourse" - we begin to see the link with his other writing, in which it is the discourse itself which influences. There is a bond between Ricoeur's theory of how a text creates meaning (through influencing the reader) and why rhetoric is employed (in order to do just that). Here, then, is a fruitful link between hermeneutics and rhetoric, no less rhetorical-critical for looking at the larger elements of persuasion.

Rhetoric may be seen as addressing the problem of communication from the point of view of the producer of that communication, while hermeneutics addresses the reader or hearer as they take meaning from that communication. The situation however is immeasurably complicated when we in our time deal only with rhetoric as found in fixed texts such as Paul's letters, and employ rhetorical criticism (not rhetoric itself, but the study of it without necessary intent to emulate it) to try to recover socio-historical data. I suggest that were the first goal of rhetorical criticism to determine how a text uses rhetoric to create meaning (Eden 1997, 4) then the larger relationship between hermeneutics and rhetoric would be made clearer.

It is thus at the level of authorial intention that we find rhetoric's connection to hermeneutics, and also, in the case of Paul, begin to see the connection between rhetoric and textuality (Eden 1997, 63). I disagree with Henderson's statement (1995, 164) that "The point is not that the ostensibly non-rhetorical genres of antiquity did not contain

rhetoric, but that rhetoric did not contain them. Literature, whether art or technique, seeks to transcend; rhetoric wisely demurs..." Perhaps Paul was unwise, for his rhetorical writing shows no such modesty. Indeed, it is transcendent in the very midst of its numerous and concomitant practical tasks. It seeks to regulate community and individual morals and to chastise what is presented as Corinthian small-mindedness all at the same time as it draws a picture of the Corinthian Christians as saints (1:2) who together make up God's temple (2:16) and will appear blameless (1:8) on the day of judgement.

These two levels of concern - the transcendent and the pastoral - appear together quite deliberately. It is precisely by means of its transcendent claims that religious rhetoric works. It bases its claim to authority on transcendence (see, for instance, 1 Cor 6:3). Moreover, it is through construction of and reference to a transcendent reality (gospel, state of being-in-Christ) that Paul claims authority to judge a whole host of socio-political matters of 'lesser' gravity. The 'spiritual reader' (Eden 1997, 57) discovers how in scripture - including Paul - the "parts accommodate the whole". I believe that it is this aspect of religious rhetoric which provides the key to understanding how Paul's argument as a whole functions to persuade, and why his letters cannot strictly be identified with any of the three recognized ancient genres. As Henderson points out "not all books are equally rhetorical" (1995, 166), and this is surely true of Paul's letters. Yet there is no need to distinguish too sharply between rhetoricity and textuality if we define rhetoric as working by means of the entire sense-effect of a given text.

The 'Glittering Intensity'[1]: What A 'World Of The Text' Is

Precisely because of its attractiveness as a hermeneutical strategy and rhetorical critical construct, the phrase 'world of the text' must be defined clearly. Ricoeur, always the ready systematician, goes to some length to do so:

> By world of the text...I mean that what is finally to be understood in a text is
> not the author or his presumed intention, nor is it the immanent structure or
> structures of the text, but rather the sort of world intended beyond the text as
> its reference. In this regard, the alternative 'either the intention or the
> structure' is vain. For the reference of the text is what I call the issue of the
> text or the world of the text. The world of the text designates the reference of

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[1] Although I have changed its time reference from past to future, this phrase is taken from Frye (1983, 227): "the written word is far more powerful than simply a reminder: it re-creates the past in the present, and give us, not the familiar remembered thing, but the glittering intensity of the summoned-up hallucination."

the work of discourse, not what is said, but about what it is said...and the issue
of the text is the world the text unfolds before itself (1977, 23).

To follow Ricoeur's description, it is first necessary to distinguish, as he does,
between the sense and the reference of various levels of discourse. This brings us to a
distinction which is as old as Plato's 'shadows on a cave wall' description of reality, and
has been debated since. For Ricoeur the sense of a proposition may be determined solely
by comparison with other terms in the system: 'the endless circle of the dictionary', for
instance, or the differential meaning exhibited in a system like Saussure's linguistics. But
reference demands that discourse be "about something" (Ricoeur 1981,33), making
reference toward and applying itself to an extra-linguistic reality (1979,217). "Meaning is
what a statement says, reference is that about which it says it" (1975,81). In other words,
the sense of a word is a concept, while the reference of that word is an object in the world
(Comstock 1986,132). This distinction between sense and reference is true of words,
sentences, and finally (and most importantly for the present argument), texts. By insisting
that there is a reference to discourse, Ricoeur is opposing structuralists and others who
maintain that texts are completely self-contained.

In a way, then, the 'world of text' is to a written document as a whole what
reference is to a sentence or word. The world of the work is the reference of that work, its
claim to reach reality and not just to express meaning. For every unique text there is such a
'world of the text', according to Ricoeur (1975/76,25).

Ricoeur is careful to note that the world is not the world of the author, nor of the
reader, but of the *text*. The text gains autonomy through writing, which Ricoeur also calls
"distanciation" (1981, 131). Having once been written, the text is emancipated from its
author. A hermeneutic that addresses the psychology of the author is misdirected,
according to this view. In the words of Gadamer: "what is fixed in writing has detached
itself from the contingency of its origin and its author and made itself free for new
relationships" (Gadamer 1975, 357). Ricoeur can even say that "thanks to writing, the
world of the text can burst the world of the author" (1980, 99). He appears to want to
avoid a fallacious fixing of the text by defining it according to some criterion outside itself;
his concern, despite the necessity of reference, is for the integrity - and autonomy - of the
text. This does not seal off written discourse completely from its interpretation or its
authorship, of course. But the independence of the text means that it may change both the
world of the author (through what he calls distanciation or inscription) and the world of the
reader (through what we may title participatory interpretation).

Ricoeur has also called this world of the text the 'issue' of the text, and he notes that it only exists in the hermeneutical act required by written discourse. Whereas in speech, two or more persons if need be may refer to the common world surrounding them, "Only writing can, by addressing itself to anyone who knows how to read, refer to a world that is not there between the interlocutors, a world that is a world of the text and yet is not in the text" (Ricoeur 1979, 217; see also 1980, 99). As Henderson points out (1995, 164-165), we should be careful not to restrict our definitions of text too closely at this point. Indeed, the suspension and reconstitution of meaning to which Ricoeur refers is reminiscent of the admonition given in Jesus' words: "He who has ears let him hear". Oral presentations, parables, maxims, aphorisms and whole speeches have always shared with texts the ability to build and then refer to a visionary world. In either case, however, if it is true of anything, surely it is true of New Testament writings and the proclamations behind them that the 'world of the letter' is the Gospel proclamation and its community or communities, even when the text at that point does not make that proclamation specific.

Clearly it is important to qualify Ricoeur's use of the term 'reference'. As he states in many of his writings, discourse, through the world of the work, offers what he labels as 'second-order' reference, and not the 'first-order' reference we normally associate with empirical perception or scientific observation. Second-order reference is not to objects but to participated realities - not what *is*, but what *is possible*. Such second-order reference is by no means inferior to first-order; indeed, Ricoeur hints that it is perhaps the original way of gaining meaning (1980,101). In a related discussion, Frye has enunciated a critical principle that he calls 'resonance' (1983,216) and described how it is the way in which readers continue to take meaning from a text which may at first seem quite distant from their day-to-day experience, an observation which has been made many times of the Biblical texts. Without something like a principle of 'resonance' or 'second order reference', it is hard to imagine how anyone could take an enduring meaning from, say, Paul's letter to Philemon.

Perhaps one of the clearest examples of how this world of the work operates is fictional literature, and again here, Frye has led the way in describing how the reader becomes the focal point of literary reference:

> The historian makes specific and particular statements, such as: 'The battle of Hastings was fought in 1066.' Consequently he's judged by the truth or falsehood of what he says - either there was such a battle or there wasn't, and if there was he's got the date either right or wrong. But the poet, Aristotle says, never makes any real

statements at all, certainly no particular or specific ones. The poet's job is not to tell you what happened, but what happens... (1963,24)

By definition fiction does not make first-order references to events or to persons in the same way that history claims to do so. We know, in reading, that the protagonist is not 'there' in the same sense as the person described in a news report. And yet Ricoeur presses the point that no discourse is so fictional that it does not make reference to reality (1981,141) even if it does not do so in the customary way. By 'destroying' (to use the hermeneutical term) or obscuring the reality to which we are accustomed, the fictional text opens us to possibilities for another reality, as anyone who has lost themselves for hours in a good novel knows by experience.

Ricoeur claims that such a second-order reality "reaches the world not only at the level of manipulable objects, but at the level that Husserl designated by the expression *Lebenswelt* [life-world] and Heidegger by the expression 'being-in-the-world'" (Ricoeur 1981,141). Whereas in an historical sketch we identify the object as a certain war or leader or city, in fictional literature we participate, change, and become a part of the world projected by what we read; in fictional literature we discover the way in which the text's reference is in fact us, the readers. This corresponds also to what Frye concludes about the type of meaning contained in the Bible. "The Bible," he notes, "deliberately subordinates its referential or centrifugal meaning to its primary, syntactical, centripetal meaning" (1983,77). In other words, while clearly they refer incidentally to what we might call 'hard facts', Biblical texts refer far more importantly to *themselves*, with the reader pulled in too.

For Ricoeur, this is the only true task of understanding: to participate in the reference, or the world, of the text, which calls forth on our part a new way of dwelling in it. Likewise, it is not the text itself, but its issue which is the real object of interpretation, for "to interpret is to explicate the kind of being-in-the-world displayed before the text. What is then submitted to interpretation is the pro-position of a world in which I could dwell, a world created by the projection of my own utmost possibilities" (Ricoeur 1975/76, 25).

Consequent to such an understanding of how a text renders meaning are a number of corollary issues. One of the most important is that every world of the text is necessarily an alternative world for the reader. This is true of the New Testament, which unlike the narratives of the Old Testament or of contemporary literature in many cases explicitly demands allegiance to its alternative or competing view of reality. In the same way that writing introduces what Ricoeur calls distanciation into a text, Christians have understood that proclamation, whether oral or written, is capable of introducing distanciation into the

world or reality of the reader/hearer. In the momentary suspension of ordinary reference readers are able to understand themselves in a new way: "you *are* a new creation", writes Paul, for example. The applicability of this view to the biblical text, to the traditional claims made for the gospel, and to the rhetorical aims of 1 Corinthians is obvious, and will be taken up immediately.

The World of the Text in 1 Corinthians 1-6: Initial Objections

Of course, the Bible may be literature, but most Christians at least would insist that it is not a work of pure fiction. Frye would maintain that such an opposition between fiction/non-fiction, myth and reality is misdirected. The Bible is so important that its relationship to most Western literature up until the 20th century is that of foundational document; that is, it provided the 'imaginative framework' for western culture for centuries. T.S. Eliot, quoted in Jasper (1989, 8) noted: "the Bible has had a *literary* influence upon English literature not because it has been considered as literature but because it has been considered as the report of the Word of God. And the fact that men of letters now discuss it as 'literature' probably indicates the *end* of its 'literary' influence." Interestingly, narrative critics go far beyond noting the Bible's *literary* influence on western culture; it is, for them, also the most important foundational document for art, government, and the whole of western culture.

Where Frye (1983,xxi) has been preoccupied, as a literary critic, with the Bible's impact on the creative imagination, my narrower concern in this work is almost the opposite: to underline one of the creative imaginations - Paul's - which had an impact on the *Bible*. To concentrate on this is to recognize what those concerned with historical reconstruction so often seem to forget: the aesthetic, visionary, and therefore creative (rather than reflective) aspects of biblical writing.

In any case, since all 'works' in the Ricoeurian sense - fictional or no - are capable of projecting a world (1975/76,25), the biblical texts share in this ability. In fact, as part of a discussion of revelation, Ricoeur wrote specifically about the biblical texts that: "The proposed world that in biblical language is called a new creation, a new Covenant, the Kingdom of God, is the 'issue' of the biblical text unfolded in front of this text" (1977,26). However the text chooses to name it, there is a proposed world - a world or worlds of the text - in scripture. Here, Ricoeur makes the connection between the general hermeneutical category and the specific canonical literature of Christianity. The terms Ricoeur chooses are often from the Gospels, but clearly it is equally valuable to see such naming of a world

occurring in Pauline terms like Body of Christ, new creation (as mentioned), and God's temple (1 Cor 3.16).

One of the problems faced in applying the world of the work category to 1 Corinthians is that the text is not metaphorical in the usual sense. It contains metaphors; it is not itself a metaphor (although it is based on the metaphorical truth of the gospel, according to Frye). Rather, it is a hortatory letter. Yet, if for Ricoeur "words always imply (hidden) sentences and sentences always imply (hidden) texts" (Comstock 1986, 136), then we are at liberty to attempt to discern the larger picture/model/world implied in the variety of expressions used in the argument contained at the beginning of 1 Corinthians, using the individual expressions as clues. The individual metaphors are many: field, building, and children among others. These as well as ethical prescriptions can act as an interpretive key to the world described in the text.

The necessity for such a methodology underlines the fact that we do not have in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians a world immediately transparent to the reader and developed in a self-contained and unrepeatable text. There is not the same careful description nor the sense of enclosure that one encounters in a piece of fiction, for the simple reason that 1 Corinthians has a different purpose: it is a pastoral letter. Throughout there is the assumption of a knowledge of this world either previous to the letter (in Paul's own proclamation) or external to the letter ("I planted, Apollos watered"). 1 Corinthians is far from being a hermetically sealed document. Yet the world of the text is rarely outlined explicitly in most literature, and the method by which it can be described - careful inference - applies also in this case.

It is worth noting that Ricoeur mentions only a 'world' and not 'worlds' of scripture. Perhaps here closer attention to the particular texts (and not the hermeneutical theory) necessitates a slight shift in emphasis. It seems likely that what we receive in the canon is not one but a multiplicity of 'worlds', for surely the issue of a text like John, when considered on its own, is different than that of a text like Mark. While developing a quite different argument, Ricoeur recognizes just this point: "If we add that a certain variation in the testimony was part of the testimony of the church from its beginning, it seems that a certain hermeneutical liberty, as strikingly evidenced by the insurmountable differences among the four gospels, belonged to the entire primitive hermeneutical situation" (1975/76, 20; c.f. also 1980, 103). It seems to me that the continuity of reference between disparate Christian writings is implied (and sealed) by the canon and the existence of an historical Christianity which claims all the texts as its own. But the uniqueness of the various texts (and of their 'issues') is also and at the same time confirmed by the ways in which this same canon has resisted homogenization. Since, in

Ricoeur's view, the world of the reader plays a role in the derivation of meaning (Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons'), various and often quite different texts are harmonized, perhaps unconsciously, in their reception. In fact, this has long been known to be true for Christian readings of the Gospels. But recognition of this should not deter us from considering individual texts for their individual reference. Since in this case our text is Pauline, so are our boundaries. The specific object of attention is the reference, or issue of 1 Corinthians, as set within the broader (but still limited) context of the Pauline letters.

Also standing in the way of the thesis is the fact that Ricoeur usually discusses his hermeneutical category of world of the work in light of narrative, a literary genre unlike that found in the early chapters of 1 Corinthians. There are a number of ways in which this objection may be overcome.

Firstly, behind our received text it is possible to posit (although not describe in detail) the original kerygma that the apostle preached. Our letter is manifestly not the first contact that Paul had with its original recipients, and presupposed throughout, often in argumentative ways, is the fact that Paul had spoken, taught, preached, and proclaimed in their presence before. He writes, "for I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (2.2). C.f. Also 2 Cor 10:14b: "we were the first to come all the way to you with the good news of Christ" (NRSV). Paul and the Corinthian Christians 'shared a history', and part of that history was a proclamation of the (likely narrative) gospel.

In any case, 1 Corinthians represents at least a second contact between Paul and the Corinthian Christians, and whatever else we might be able to determine about their first meeting, a sharing of the kerygma took place: "like a skilled master builder," Paul puts it, "I laid a foundation" (3.10). In the two instances in 1 Corinthians where Paul makes explicit reference to a 'tradition of the Lord', both have a rudimentary narrative form: the tradition of the Lord's supper in 11.23 ff., and the list of appearances in 15.3ff (it is worth noting that in the latter the tradition is explicitly equated with Paul's gospel or εὐαγγέλιον (15.1: "I would remind you of the gospel that I proclaimed").

Thus, should Ricoeur's category of the possible world only apply in the case of narrative, it would be possible to apply the hermeneutic to expressions in 1 Corinthians by means of this previous and underlying kerygma. But it is not necessary to take this step, for Ricoeur himself has established the precedent for seeing the world of the text in written discourse other than narrative (1975, 109,112; 1980, 73ff). Certainly he is aware of the differences of form and genre within the biblical text. But he is most concerned to show the ways in which various texts in their own ways fulfil the unique referential function he describes. In a similar manner, Frye makes specific the fact that biblical texts practice a

form of reference similar to that of fictional literature, but through their own unique *bricolage* of styles (1983, xxi). It is to this aspect of reference, and how it relates to rhetoric, that we now turn.

Poetic Expression and Rhetorical Writing in Paul

We have seen how rhetoric may use poetic and metaphorical means to assist in its task of persuasion. Any perceived polarity between poetic devices and the employment of rhetoric is resolved if one sees rhetoric as the linguistic instrument of a metaphorical or poetic view of reality such as the New Testament kerygma contains.

The fact that Aristotle, for his part, wrote two separate volumes for his *Rhetoric* and his *Poetics* has to do with the way that he distinguished between the performance of oratory and that of drama (Aristotle *Rhetoric*, 16). Even his definition of rhetoric, we must remember, was engineered to allow for its alliance with philosophy: thus he defined the art of rhetoric as essentially the discovery of topics, or 'finding in any subject matter its persuasive aspects'. While Aristotle does not deal much - or sympathetically - with mythological thinking, and certainly does not link it with rhetoric, there is still room in our discussion for seeing if his work can illuminate our own definition of the art of persuasion (Frye 1983, 64).

Aristotle defined the reality represented by literary writing as more than simply a copy or imitation of nature, and certainly more than fiction or illusion - to attempt to capture its nature he uses the term *mimesis*, or representation. In other words, for Aristotle, there is a reality in literature in which we can recognize truth, even while granting that a particular character in a novel or leaf in a painting does not literally 'exist'. The truth in art or poetry, according to Aristotle, is that it represents not specific, but what might be termed *essential* realities: that is, not what is true of a particular moment in time, but what is always true throughout time. Whether or not the Capulets and the Montagues were ever real noble families, Shakespeare's real reference is not Elizabethan-period Verona but *us*; that is, the message is directed at the needless, senseless violence so evident in humanity that first blocks, and then kills the love that could revive us, represented by the young lovers Romeo and Juliet.

Where the New Testament differs from this concept of essential or aesthetic reality, I believe, is that it states that what is essential has actually come to pass, and what is possible has become real. What are we to do, asks Frye, when a New Testament writer resolutely refuses to allow a metaphor to be 'like' reality, insisting that it IS reality? Thus Paul will say: you are the Body of Christ- and leave it at that. Although in 1 Cor 15 and

elsewhere Paul alludes to a kind of personal and heavenly future state that believers should look forward to (the 'revealing of Christ' of 1 Cor 1:7), he is also insistent that whatever Christ's death accomplishes in and for his readers, it does so now. Although there is a future 'commendation from God' (1 Cor 4:5), the Pauline Christian did not have to wait for 'new life'; it begins the moment the Gospel is received. The theological term for this understanding has been 'realized eschatology', and it seems only natural that it influenced early Christians' rhetorics as much as it did their ethics. What Aristotle defined as 'what is essential', the Biblical texts in general and I believe Paul in particular described as the actual state of being 'in Christ'. This peculiarly Christian reality was no less real to the Apostle for the fact that the early Christians (as every generation since) had trouble in living out such a state of 'grace'.

Metaphorical Function in 1 Corinthians

In *The Great Code* Frye states that the meaning of the Bible is a poetic meaning: that is, that it is metaphorical, participatory and indirect, and more powerful for it. In fact, he goes on to note that the meaning of the Bible is manifest in two ways: "first by tautology, in the context in which all literal meaning is centripetal and poetic; secondly, in a quite specific sense of confronting us with explicitly metaphorical and other forms of poetic utterance" (1983,62). In this light, the fact that Paul so readily mixes hard-nosed personal advice with poetic imagery in 1 Corinthians should not trouble us as rhetorical critics; rather, it should alert us to what is afoot in his writing. Namely, Paul's is a way of describing the world which is far more metaphorical than analytical, and yet mixes several styles within a letter and sometimes even within a thought - thus is likely to frustrate any who require that Paul hold rigidly to one model or another.

Similarly, not all that is poetic in reference is necessarily poetry as classically defined. Ricoeur states that, whether or not they fit the usual description of poetry, many forms of discourse are capable of fulfilling a poetic function. This is "a referential function that differs from the descriptive referential function of ordinary language" (Ricoeur 1975,100). Essentially what he is saying (as was Aristotle) is that it is the nature of the discourse's reference and not its form which acts as the defining characteristic. Poetic discourse does not describe reality in the 'ordinary' way; this is not its purpose. To return to the terms used earlier in contrasting sense and reference: whatever its form, the purpose of poetic discourse is to render 'second-order' reference, reference beyond normal description, confirmation and the like. Such second-order reference is characterized not by description but by participation. As Ricoeur puts it rather poetically himself: "the function

of poetic discourse is to bring about this emergence of a depth-structure of belonging-to amid the ruins of descriptive discourse" (1977,24).'

In this way, Ricoeur's negative definition opens a large category of discourse to description as poetic, including much of the material in Paul's letters. Fictional and lyrical literature partake in this 'second-order' referentiality (Ricoeur 1975/76, 25); Ricoeur indicates that he believes religious literature does as well (1980,44; see also 1977,26). Clearly, what Ricoeur is describing as the poetic function is what Frye and others have also identified as being part of a 'mythological' role - Frye (1983, 46), calls this "the intimate and inevitable relation between mythology and poetry". In fact, he goes so far as to say: "mythical...means being charged with a special seriousness and importance", and "the direct descendent of mythology is literature, if we can speak of it as a descendent at all" (1983, 33-34). The kind of meanings which the Bible expresses are either neutral or even hostile to history if we mean by that history in the textbook sense: "The general principle involved here is that if anything historically true is in the Bible, it is there not because it is historically true but for different reasons. The reasons have presumably something to do with spiritual profundity or significance. And historical truth has no correlation with spiritual profundity, unless the relation is inverse" (Frye 1983,40). Even though Paul was concerned with some of the most concrete matters in Corinth - church discipline, the liturgy and practice of the Lord's Supper - we do well to be reminded of where meaning is located, even for Paul. "As with any other form of propaganda," writes Frye, "what is true is what the writer thinks ought to be true; and the sense of urgency in the writing comes out much more freely for not being hampered by the clutter of what may actually have occurred" (Frye 1983,40).

Yet we are also right to note that the Bible itself claims a special connection with history. Paul certainly writes within the tradition of those who believed that God had acted, in history, for the benefit of believers. Many have noted the curious lack of concern Paul shows for the historical Jesus, an omission which speaks loudly in favour of the present thesis. But we do well to move cautiously in this regard, since in those places where he makes note of the traditions he has passed on, they have a liturgical, yet still recognizably historical, origin. In short, because of the fact that the largest meanings contained by the New Testament - Christ as Savior or Redeemer, the coming Kingdom of God, believers as the Body of Christ - are metaphorical, and yet still the scriptures still claim an historical place and person at the foundation of these meanings, there is an ongoing tension between kinds of meanings in the New Testament. Metaphor butts up against historical consciousness, second-level meaning against descriptive writing. This is what Jasper

(1989,71) has called "the gap between the historical and the aesthetic". So to what kind of meaning should we turn?

Corresponding to Ricoeur's negative definition of poetic discourse by what it is *not*, viz. empirical, descriptive, didactic etc., is a positive definition of such discourse as that which has a metaphorical function. That is to say, although it does not produce meaning in the same way as is claimed for scientific writing, poetic discourse is predicative of meaning through what Ricoeur calls the "metaphorical reference" (1977,24), another name for the second-level function. Metaphor uses an intentional ambiguity or split reference - what Frye calls the "this is that" function - which by its very discontinuity opens the way for new understandings and a new congruence with reality (Ricoeur 1986,431).

Here it is necessary to observe carefully the way in which the term metaphor is used. Metaphor, for Ricoeur, may mean a word, an expression, or a phrase. Yet it is also possible to identify a 'metaphor story' or metaphorical discourse. Further, even nonmetaphorical discourses are capable of participating in the metaphorical function. As with the term and concept of poetics/poetry just discussed (and for exactly the same reasons), there is an overlap: metaphorical meaning is found in writing sometimes with, and sometimes without, the actual use of metaphors. Again, Ricoeur's difficult language may be unpacked with Frye's help. In *The Great Code*, Frye postulated that the Bible was written during, and in fact partially embodies, a "metaphorical phase of language". Despite this the Bible, he writes, "is not metaphorical like poetry, though it is full of metaphor, and is as poetic as can well be without actually being a work of literature" (1983,29). It is, for Frye, mythical in the sense that it points to what Aristotle would have called essential meanings, and the primary way in which the mythology of the Bible expresses meaning is metaphorical and poetic in the larger sense. While the unchanging meaning of the Bible, for Frye, is poetic and metaphorical (in such a way that it seeks to act as the first part of the metaphor against which the readers' lives are compared), there are possibilities for many 'discursive' meanings for the Bible. This is the reason that one book, or rather, canon of books, has been able to support so many widely varying theological and ethical systems.

While the New Testament in general and Paul's letters in particular are a different genre from many of the Old Testament writings on which Frye focuses his attention, they partake in the metaphorical expression of what is real and important for the reader. Firstly, they do so because, despite what we have noted about Paul's Greco-Roman context, his writing is constantly informed also by his knowledge of Hebrew scripture, where metaphor is the regnant form of meaning. Also, and no less importantly, the message that Paul was proclaiming could hardly be understood if not metaphorically. The Incarnation is itself the

boldest form of metaphor for those who believe in it: this (God) is that (human). As Frye points out:

> The sense in Christianity of a faith beyond reason, which must continue to affirm even after reason gives up, is closely connected with the linguistic fact that many of the central doctrines of traditional Christianity can be grammatically expressed only in the form of metaphor. Thus: Christ *is* God and man; in the Trinity three persons *are* one; in the Real Presence the body and blood *are* the bread and the wine. When these doctrines are rationalized by conceptions of a spiritual substance and the like, the metaphor is translated into metonymic language and 'explained'. But there is a strong smell of intellectual mortality about such explanations, and sooner or later they fade away and the original metaphor reappears, as intransigent as ever (1983,55).

Paul's first letter to Corinth was written in the context of this importance of metaphorical or poetic meaning, and we can assume that Paul's original proclamation was also solidly metaphorical in the way of such early Christian preaching. Because 1 Corinthians contains metaphors, has elements of a metaphorical discourse, and is proposed to exhibit the metaphorical function, we will need to discuss each of these instances of metaphor.

Ricoeur, following standard usage, has defined a *trope* as a "figure of expression" (1977a, 59). Several *tropes* can be found in the chapters under discussion, and especially in chapter four of 1 Corinthians. "Stewards of God's mysteries", "you have become kings!", "we have become refuse", "am I to come to you with a stick?" are all examples of the kind of simple metaphors Paul used well throughout his correspondence. In these cases, metaphor fills its rhetorical function through substitution - but a substitution which gains meaning only by its jarring, less-than-exact fit.[2] The Corinthians were not literal kings, nor were the apostles literal dirt ("off-scourings").

The words "kings", "refuse" and "stick" (and others) are used by Paul not just to substitute a figurative for a literal meaning, but to create an impression different from that which the literal word one would expect - "proud", "humiliated", "threats" - might have given. To note the lack of identity between the terms in these metaphors is already to proceed with Ricoeur to the first step of his critique of metaphor and to agree against 19th century rhetorical theory that metaphor admits of both predication and innovation.

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[2] See Castelli 1991, 106-108 on the way in which 1 Cor 4:8-13 is a kind of rhetorical crescendo to the Pauline set of oppositions presented here.

In this regard, Ricoeur notes again and again that metaphor does not fulfil a simple naming or denotative function, rather, it 'predicates' meaning. Furthermore, it does not accomplish this positive and essentially creative function simply through a one to one denotation, but rather through the tension which occurs between two or more interpretations of a larger statement (Ricoeur 1975,77) - the simultaneous and irreconcilable existence of variant interpretations constituting a situation Ricoeur characterizes as "semantic impertinence" (1975,78).

What is true of the metaphor-word is true of the metaphor-discourse. It should be clear that by this point, and following both Ricoeur and Frye, that literary forms may be seen as sharing in the metaphorical process, even when they do not exhibit the classical shape of the metaphorical *trope*. As noted, the first six chapters of 1 Corinthians contain *tropes*, but are not as a whole metaphorical. Yet at the same time they depend on just the type of second-order reference that Ricoeur is so anxious to point to as indicative of the metaphorical process: "Metaphor has more than an emotional value. It includes new information. In effect, by means of a 'category mistake,' new semantic fields are born from novel rapprochements...metaphor says something new about reality" (Ricoeur 1975,80). Frye, in *The Great Code* (1983,59), calls this the "principle of implicit metaphor". This, then, is the process by which the world of the work comes to be. There is an 'impertinence', or suspension of ordinary reference and on the ruins of the literal sense is constituted the "new semantic congruence" (Ricoeur 1986, 431), or what I would call the new worldview. One is no longer a citizen of a Greco-Roman city - rather, one begins to see oneself as a member of the 'Body of Christ'.

Metaphor and Reality in Paul

At the risk of labouring the point, we must recognize what our own particular use of language tends to make us forget: metaphorical meaning can be (and I believe was) *real* meaning. Put even more simply: words by themselves can have power, presence, and the ability to create. Alien as this conception is to us, it is simply an assumption throughout much of the Bible. What Frye calls 'centripetal' language, or in other words language which refers almost but not quite to itself and so creates new meaning in a metaphorical way, is just as capable of bringing insight as is the discursive language more familiar to our modern ears. Just as our age has become suspicious of syllogistic reasoning (and by association rhetoric), viewing it as 'mere words', so our own scientific and positivist worldview has made us uncomfortable with a metaphor that cannot easily be translated.

Unfortunately, this already cuts us off from an insider's understanding of the New Testament message, couched as it is in metaphor.

When metaphor is no longer seen as simply one type of figurative speech but also as a meaning-bearing *way* of speaking and writing, it may be regarded as a key building block in the strategies of various forms of argumentation. It is possible to persuade through metaphor, and to present an alternative vision in the same way. This is the role for metaphors - and for the metaphorical process - in 1 Corinthians, and the link between the world of the work and rhetoric's use of that world. The first few chapters of 1 Corinthians are "turned toward a world which it wishes to express and to convey in language" (Ricoeur 1975, 82). By describing this textual world as having a metaphorical function, Ricoeur admits (although not explicitly) that such a creation has an end: namely, a change in action, orientation or perspective of the reader. I call this intention of the work persuasion, and believe that in this way the world of the work finds its place under the larger rubric of rhetoric. It also represents a natural entry point for modern rhetorical criticism when such criticism is brought to bear on texts as a whole. When rhetoric is a device for community building, it relies quite naturally on the development of metaphorical meaning, and this world it presents is its most powerful tool for doing so.

Through an appraisal of the individual metaphors and expressions, then, the way is open for a description of the world of the work in 1 Corinthians.

A Description of the World of the Work in 1 Corinthians

If 1 Corinthians shares in what to this point has been called variously metaphorical, poetic, or second-level reference, then we may expect that it works also in some way to suspend or annul first-order reference, so as to rejoin the experience of the readers at a more fundamental level. This would seem to be the very process that Paul himself outlines in a paradigmatic verse: "If you think you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise" (3:18). It is advice that the text attempts to carry out in the life - what Ricoeur might call the 'ownmost possibilities' - of the reader. Operating throughout the first four chapters are a series of sharp contrasts: wisdom-foolishness (3:19), weakness-strength (1:25), spirit of the world-Spirit of God (2:12), infants-adults (3:1-2), richness-poverty (4:8,11), all culminating in the ironic dichotomies of chapter four: "We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ" (4:10)...We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day" (4:13). The stated purpose of the text, by means of these oppositions, is to subvert the 'wisdom of the world', and the route the text follows is rhetorical.

Moreover, many of the text's arguments underline this persuasion by being rhetorical also in specific form. Although there are a number of such examples one will suffice at this point. The first chapters of 1 Corinthians offer a very effective satirical encomium of the Corinthian community. Instead of marshalling evidence to prove virtue and bestow honour, the text uses the same structure to accomplish the opposite end, to devastating effect. The encomium may be identified as follows:

A satirical encomium on the Corinthian Christians as 'kings' (4.8)

birth:	(1:26) not noble
education:	(3:1) infants in Christ (3:2) fed with milk, not solid food
virtues:	(1:26) not wise then, nor (3:18) now;
	(5:6) boastful; (4:18) arrogant
manner of life:	(1:11) fractious; (4:6) 'puffed up'
deeds:	(3:3) quarrelling; (5:1) immorality
achievements:	(6:7) lawsuits; (1:12,3,4) schisms and
	(3:16) destroying the temple (community)
rewards:	(3:17) destruction
	(4:21) the apostle coming 'with a stick'

The end result of this rhetorical strategy is a suspension of the Corinthian's normal self-perceptions, freeing them instead for the new possibilities implied in expressions like 'God's temple', 'God's field', and 'kingdom of God'. In this double function (tearing down and building up) the text's rhetorical strategy of persuasion mirrors Ricoeur's category of hermeneutic. The two parts of both are destruction or abolition of current reference, and construction of new reference. Rhetoric works to form the possible world which moves the reader from what is (first-order) to what is possible (second-order). Although it is unlikely he would have described it in such clinical terms, the purpose of Paul's rhetoric, then, might be summarized as in the following diagram:

- Destruction of current reference first-order reality   what 'is'
- Construction of new reference   second-order/textual world   what is 'in Christ'
- Construction of a new reality   the historical 'Body of Christ'   what will be

In Chapter One of this work we examined what has been called - already an acceptance of Paul's terms - the 'troubled situation' in Corinth. We saw how difficult it is,

even given the comparatively historical nature of the writing in the first chapters of 1 Corinthians, to separate out what might have been the actual historical situation in Corinth at the time the letter was written. So many interpretations are possible - and have been given - for the situation that prompted the book, that beyond the fact that there was a Paul and a congregation and the *divertissement* of hunting down the few names given, one is left with almost no historical certainty whatsoever. It was this impasse that led us, not to deny all historical connection, but to explore a different rationale for Paul's letter: a rhetorical, creative rationale. By proposing an over-arching rhetorical purpose, rather than a comprehensive rhetorical structure, for 1 Corinthians 1-4, we also avoid another problem seen in several works: trying to shoehorn what appears at times to be a less-than-tidy piece of writing into the confines of streamlined rhetorical craftsmanship. Paul's writing in places seems unkempt, almost *ad hoc*, and there is always something suspicious about finding in Paul a structure which answers everything.

It is possible then, to return to the stickiest passage, and propose that this creative vision is the same rationale that underlies Paul's writing about 'baptismal parties' in 1:12-17. One might assume, coming as it does immediately after the reference to the report 'from Chloe's people' about the same, that Paul's description of what have been called the 'parties' at Corinth represents historical fact. But what is the real purpose of this passage? If a rhetorical rationale may be found for the verses, the descriptive purpose of the writing and therefore also its historical verisimilitude must at least be questioned.

Paul, via the report from his visitors, seems to quote his listeners in verse 12: "What I mean is that each of you says: 'I belong to Paul', or 'I belong to Apollos', or 'I belong to Cephas', or 'I belong to Christ'. Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" We may see his stinging sarcasm accomplishing its purpose in a number of rhetorical ways.

Has Christ been divided is an argument identified since Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 2,19) as the topic of the possible and the impossible. As such it only makes sense if you see the syllogism: a/ Paul, Apollos, Cephas and Christ all are part of Christ; b/ Christ, being one, cannot be divided; therefore c/ Paul, Apollos, Cephas and Christ cannot be divided.

But Paul also, under the guise of rejecting their 'arguments from authority' (i.e. dismissing their 'authorities') is in fact challenging the whole basis of authority (see Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 307) the implied readers are presuming. Even the person of Christ, when used in the argument as a competing 'leader' cannot be appealed to for authority. (Here Paul is also rejecting baptism as simply entry into the cadre of the baptizer and upholding instead its universality). Rather, in the summary to his section Paul points to one place as having authority, and that is the cross: "that the cross of Christ might

not be emptied of its power (vs. 17)". I disagree with Fee (1987, 61) that baptism is not to be linked here too closely with Paul's reference to the cross of Christ. But I agree that Paul's main concern lies elsewhere - with the concepts of unity and authority.

Of course, Paul intends to show that it is he who is speaking on behalf of that power seen in the cross, as his argument reveals. The argument about 'parties' therefore, functions as a contrast for and thus a segue into, a discussion of the true nature of being in the Gospel-'state'. Once again we are back to the world of the text, and Paul's attempt to make it real, through rhetoric, in the lives of his readers.

Paul may be pre-eminent in the New Testament canon, but he was not unique. Pogoloff notes the usefulness of the "language event", in his discussion of early Christian proclamation overall:

> When language changes attitudes and shapes communities, it is not just referential, but rhetorical and performative. Such language is sometimes called a 'language event' by contemporary hermeneutical theorists, meaning that it has heuristic power to offer to its audience a possible new world springing from the old one. If that new world is embraced, its new language can become the language of a new community, with its own *communis sensus*. Paul explicitly describes such a situation:' the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God' (1 Cor. 1.18).
>
> So in one sense, the first Christian preachers, like other orators, could communicate only insofar as they could speak within the previously established world of their audience. But if they stopped there, they would have been no more than just another group of civic orators. Instead, they claimed that while their rhetoric began with human words it did not end there: 'We also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers' (1 Thess.2.13). The old words had become new speech to a new community about a new world (Pogoloff 1991, 357).

In the first chapters of 1 Corinthians there is clearly a proposed change of reference to the world, although not a suppression of ordinary reference in the same way as Ricoeur identifies in fiction or poetry. But that the 'being-in-the-world' of the first readers (the Corinthian Christians) is at stake seems obvious. In fact, Paul recognizes that his gospel makes second-order (what might also be called competing reality) claims: "we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1:23).

Likewise, the alternative world variously denominated by "God's field", "church of God" etc. is to be the world of the readers, and this is made explicit in Paul's statements concerning judgement. 1 Corinthians 5:12-13, coming at the end of an exhortation to moral purity, is an elaborate play on being 'inside' or 'outside': "For what have I to do with judging those outside? Is it not those who are inside that you are to judge? God will judge those outside". The line is drawn. Interestingly, the text never explicitly states what it is that believers are inside and unbelievers outside. There is no single antecedent to this image in chapter 5, nor in the preceding chapters. For millennia Christians have supplied the missing referent in this text, presumably as did its first recipients. That missing referent is in fact the harmonious and pure church of Christ, the world of the text, and the being-in-the-world invoked by Paul's deliberative rhetorical strategy.

Specifically, the world displayed by this text is a church where there is "agreement and no divisions" (1:10), where human wisdom gives way to manifestations of divine power (2:5), where human leadership is considered unimportant (3:21), except, notably, for the leadership and example of Paul (4:15), and where moral purity is strictly upheld (5:11) by a community that regulates its own affairs (6:6) and is strongly demarcated but not cut off from the surrounding milieu (6:1). Perhaps it should not be surprising that the world of the text, revealed in this way, resembles many more traditionally arrived-at descriptions of the 'Body of Christ', always identified with, but never synonymous with, the Church. The difference in the present analysis lies in the way that the metaphorical description of the text intends itself to be substantively meaningful. The body of Christ, pure and undefiled, where foolishness is wisdom, where the choice of lower social status coincides with God's call and persecution results in blessing, is more than just an image in this letter: it is a proffered, challenging reality which seeks to change those whose lives are displayed in front of it (Ricoeur 1975/76, 25).

It is important to note that the naming of this world of the work is always secondary to a compelling (i.e. rhetorical) description of how it must be lived. The names of the world projected by 1 Corinthians vary: in its early chapters Paul uses terms like: church of God (1:2); dough without yeast (5:6-8); physical parts of Christ (6:15 ff.); God's field (3:6-9); Paul's children in the Gospel (4:14-15); and God's building (3:10-17). What is important is not its title, but its effect, its freeing for new possibilities. The world of the text, in rhetorical terms, demands an *applicatio* (Ricoeur 1979, 227).

The Indicative-Imperative Split as a Rhetorical Device

Here also we find the contact between the hermeneutical concept of the world of the text and the characteristically Pauline formulation known as the indicative-imperative statement. It has long been recognized in studies of Pauline theology and ethics that the apostle's exhortations toward this or that goal proceed, at least in his mind, from the salvation 'already accomplished' in Jesus and somehow 'at work' in believers. Gal 5:25, "if we live by the spirit, let us also walk by the spirit", is a particularly clear example of Paul's tendency to set an affirmation beside an exhortation to live up to the same. 1 Corinthians 5:7, another case, encapsulates what we have identified as the world of the work and its attendant demand on the reader. In this wholly metaphorical passage, the imperative stems directly from the preceding directive concerning the man living with his father's wife. Unlike Galatians, here the imperative is stated first: "Clean out the old yeast". But the intended result -"so that you may be a new batch" - is modified by the recognition that this is the indicative that already obtains: "just as you are unleavened" (καθώς ἐστε ἄζυμοι). Here we can see clearly how the indicative corresponds to the world of the text, for it sets the jarring new possibility before the reader as a sort of *fait accompli*: "this is who you are". The imperative "so now be who you are" corresponds to the persuasion of the text, at times blunt and hortatory, at other times subtle and structural, but in all cases rhetorical.

Other consequences of Paul's 'indicative' are suggested by the syllogistic reasoning he develops in the first chapter. Note the 'destruction-affirmation' pattern contained therein, and the corollary understanding of his own status:

God chose you Corinthians (1:2; 26a)
you Corinthians were nobodies in the world's eyes (1:26b-27)
God chose the world's 'nobodies' (1:28)

Real status comes by being chosen by God (1:31, an external proof)
God chose you Corinthians
you Corinthians have real status

(corollary argument)
In your eyes I have no status
lack of status is a sign of God's choice (as above)
In your eyes, I am - should be - chosen by God

In this case, as in others in Paul, the imperative takes its force from the indicative (or in other words, the exhortation from the 'possible world'). In essence, Paul writes: 'be what you are'. In philosophical terms, there are two ontologies which exist at the same time for the believer, and they are out of phase with each other. Indicative and imperative are *both* true. It is the contradiction inherent in such a statement which drives the hearers toward resolution. The expression is performative in the sense of true rhetoric: it moves the readers toward an intended goal: i.e. "drive out the wicked person from among you". Bultmann was influential in pointing out the importance of the indicative/imperative schema in this way in his *Theology of the New Testament* (1952, 1:100-106).

It is a mistake, however, for scholars to ignore Paul's use of the indicative-imperative schema in his writing (and therefore his rhetoric), or to assign it to the field of Christian ethics and leave it unnoticed and unavailable to rhetorical criticism there. Conzelmann uses just such an argument to show how Paul's writing, however un-theological it might seem in 1 Corinthians by comparison to other books, is always informed by his theology - everything for Paul, he seems to argue, is 'applied theology', an understanding with which this work certainly agrees. The basic, most primary fact of Christian life was what had been accomplished in Christ: from this all action, teaching, and tradition must arise. Moreover, by using phrases such as "the self-understanding of the faith" or "the realm within which I understand myself on the basis of faith", Conzelmann points to the ontological message that we have called 'the rhetorical world'. Yet having given - albeit briefly - this presupposition of Paul's its due, he seems content to leave it and go on to the task of historical-critical study.

Something similar happens in Fee's excellent commentary on 1 Corinthians. There he also begins with full notice of the importance of Paul's eschatological perspective:

> This framework is thoroughgoing in Paul, yet nowhere more evident than here [in 1 Corinthians]. This is true not only of his language (e.g. The kingdom of God is both now [4:20] and not yet [6:10-11; 15:50]) and of his expectations (e.g., the gifted Corinthians still await the revelation of the Lord Jesus [1:4-8]; at the Lord's Table we proclaim his death until he comes [11:26]), but especially of his understanding of present Christian life. On the one hand, because the future has already been set in motion, one's entire present existence is determined by this reality (7:29-31). God's people live 'as if not'; they are not, as others, conditioned by the present order that is passing away (1987, 16-17).

And yet immediately, Fee goes on to limit the force of this observation by saying: "Such a point of view controls Paul's *ethical* imperatives at every step" [emphasis mine]. Perhaps it is not a fault in Fee so much as it is in the way that we artificially separate Paul's thought from the language and persuasive techniques he used to express it. There is a guiding image or better, reality behind Paul's rhetoric and while it may be expressed in traditionally ethical or theological terms as his 'indicative', surely that word means something hermeneutical and rhetorical as well, and should not be forgotten in the latter discussions. In other words, what scholars have regarded for some time and with more or less consistency as a kind of *prolegomena* for Paul's thought should be regarded as the basic presupposition for his language as well.

Paul's indicative may be expressed in a number of different ways, but in every case it is synonymous with the world of the text which we have been discussing. The fact that, in the lives of the readers of his letter, it is not presented as an exact fit to their experience does not detract from our argument but rather adds to its force, for here is precisely where persuasion has a role. Paul in essence says: 'here is what is real for you; now live it'. This phrase corresponds to the more traditional Christian formulation of 'conform your life to the Gospel'. Christian proclamation, contained in a nutshell in this particular phrase, has always relied on a 'visionary world'. The very jarring distinction between these two visions of the Corinthians, both presented as fact, is where rhetorical exhortation finds its place.

Note that it is a similar dissonance which Ricoeur and Frye discuss as the way in which a metaphor brings new meaning to a reader or hearer. Paul's indicative-imperative is another of the 'living' metaphors of the New Testament, and I believe the way in which Christians are asked by the text to 'live out' the metaphor of the Body of Christ.

To go back to the beginning (or at least, Paul's beginning): perhaps this concept will also help explain the wording of 1 Cor 1:10, which many have identified as a paradigmatic verse for the following chapters. If as Witherington III (1994,94-95) and others maintain, verse 10 functions as the *propositio* or thesis statement for what follows, does it make any reference to the visionary world we propose?

Fee (1987,53) has identified the structure of the verse as a series of consequences flowing from the same 'that' clause, which he notes complete the action of the verb 'to appeal' (παρακαλέω), but also come close to acting as a purpose clause (which would be consistent with the discussion of Paul's authority earlier). In schematic form, then:

I urge that

> - You all say the same thing

> > Namely, that there be no divisions among you

> - But (adversative δέ) that you be made complete (κατηρτισμένοι perfect passive

participle of καταρτίζω) in the same mind and the same opinion.

Surely the 'mind' and 'opinion' which Paul urges or orders is the nature of the Gospel, or very real metaphor of the Body of Christ, the visionary but no less real world which lay behind his original proclamation of who his readers were. The concept of the 'body of Christ' should not be restricted to Paul's metaphorical or analogical development of it in 1 Cor 12:12-31; for he uses it throughout his letters in ways that sometimes echo this passage but sometimes depart from it. In any case, Paul's rhetoric starts with what others have called his 'indicative'; and his possible world is the real world of being in Christ that his readers must somehow find their way to living in their daily lives.

A Welcoming And Approaching Rhetoric[3]: The Link between Hermeneutical Category and Rhetorical Purpose

We began this portion of our discussion with the following question: is it possible, using as example the first few chapters of 1 Corinthians, to link a general hermeneutical theory of meaning-creation with a 'performance' theory of persuasion?

It seems, in response, that such a linkage is not only possible, but also natural. A world of the text *is* identifiable in Paul's rhetorical strategy. When rhetoric is defined as persuasion, then all instances where such a possible world is made reference to are rhetorical, for all work to change the world of the reader. Although we have proposed that Paul used a Biblical form of rhetoric with its appeal to authority, even when rhetoric is identified with its deliberative expression, and seen only with certain structures or traits, within the Pauline context there are many examples of rhetoric's dependence on a world of the text. Paul's rhetoric presupposes a world of the text. In fact, Paul's rhetoric has no purpose without it.

Examples of how the rhetoric at the beginning of 1 Corinthians develops and depends on a world of the text have been given above. A number of other arguments may be adduced for connecting world of the work and rhetorical argumentation. To summarize, then:

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[3]   The phrase is taken from Frye (1983, 231

a. For Ricoeur, the referent of the text is inseparable from the reader's response (Comstock 1986, 138); the reader's - or hearer's - response is also the ultimate concern of rhetoric (Litfin 1994, 93). In Frye's category of Biblical rhetoric, it is also the reader who is the focal point of a rhetoric which he describes as "welcoming and approaching" (1983,231).

b. The function of 'redescription' is the same in both the world of the text and rhetoric (Crafton 1990, 318). Both the world of the text and rhetoric also share the complementary roles of suspending current perceptions of reality in order to constitute a new way of living in the world.

c. The reference of both the world of the work and of rhetoric is a new way of 'being-in-the-world'. In both cases the ultimate concern is not what is, but what is possible. Although this concern of Paul's writings links it also with poetic or metaphorical meaning, our proposal is that all rhetoric, and specifically also biblical rhetoric shared the concern over what would become of the reader's own experiences and self-perception.

d. The rhetorical aim of Paul's introductory chapters to 1 Corinthians is to move their readers toward unity, holiness, and a certain view of Paul's leadership. The world of the text that I propose in this same passage is characterized by just these traits. The world projected in the text thus coincides with the rhetorical aims of the text.

One other difficulty must be resolved. Ricoeur states that the 'ultimate referent' - that is, the thing worked on - of the parables, proverbs, and eschatological sayings is not the Kingdom of God, "but human reality in its wholeness" (Ricoeur 1975, 127). While the first section of 1 Corinthians has a different form and genre, in applying to it the poetic or metaphorical function we place it in a similar referential category as other biblical literature, and it seems likely that Ricoeur would understand it in the same way.

At issue here is whether or not Ricoeur's statement means that biblical texts can be reduced to only the possibilities they offer for changes in human existence, which would be a concentration on the anthropological side of the hermeneutic. Certainly the function of breaking down first-order reference and supplying a background for new reference has been central to the argument of this chapter that textual world and rhetorical aim are full-fledged partners in 1 Corinthians. But taken to its extreme, such a position locates all reference in the participation in or 'belonging-to' revealed against the text, and allows no reference to any reality beyond it. We are back to the idea of a meaning internal to the text which is forever marooned and separated from any concrete place outside of it. Despite critique of Ricoeur on precisely this issue (Placher 1987, 44; Wallace 1986, 10), it seems unlikely that such criticism is warranted.

In conscious opposition to the implications of such a step, Ricoeur states that in his hermeneutic "God is projected as the 'subject' for whom the human being becomes the 'predicate'" (Ricoeur 1980,109). Such statements indicate Ricoeur's own priority. Self-understanding - the so-called 'fortress of consciousness' - does not become the final arbiter of meaning, nor the locus of reference. Further, although for Ricoeur biblical hermeneutics is "in turn one regional hermeneutic within a general hermeneutic", it is also unique, in that "all its partial forms of discourse are referred to that Name which is the point of intersection and the vanishing point of all our discourse about God" (1977,26). It seems that a limit on the hermeneutical importance of the self combined with a desire to 'fix' or fasten down metaphorical meaning also lies behind Ricoeur's discussion of the role of what he calls limit-expressions in religious literature (1975,108ff). For Ricoeur, the reference of the text is the way of living opened up by the text; as such it demands and is inseparable from both text and reader. Biblical hermeneutics, despite its claims to special revelation, "can only claim to say something unique if this unique thing speaks as the world of the text which is addressed to us" (1975/76, 29). What makes it unique is a hermeneutical concern; what made or makes it persuasive is a rhetorical one.

Again, examining Ricoeur in this specific context brings us back to the work of Northrop Frye. Although the concept of rhetoric developed by Frye in *The Great Code* was presented with a disclaimer that it was his definition for the purpose of literary criticism, I see no reason why it cannot inform our discussion of Paul's rhetoric and indeed contribute to the over-all discipline of New Testament rhetorical criticism. Frye pointed the way toward defining biblical proclamation as a unique form of rhetoric, yet still rhetoric recognizable within the parameters of the field:

> Kerygma is a mode of rhetoric, though it is rhetoric of a special kind. It is, like all rhetoric, a mixture of the metaphorical and the 'existential' or concerned but, unlike practically all other forms of rhetoric, it is not an argument disguised by figuration. It is the vehicle of what is traditionally called revelation...(1983, 29)

There is such a thing as a 'Biblical' rhetoric. It is not strictly synonymous with any of the three species of rhetoric identified by Aristotle, yet uses elements of all, and I believe comes closest to deliberative rhetoric. It finds its common ground with ancient rhetoric in that it has a marked oral background and is concerned above all with persuasion. Yet it differs from classical templates in its appeal to an authority behind or beyond the speaker, and also in the very heterogeneity which has bedeviled so many attempts to classify it. It is not somehow 'larger' than rhetoric (Henderson 1995, 164) but is found in literature which

is rhetorical throughout. It is a forward-looking, "violently partisan" (Frye 1983,40) rhetoric and the judgement it aims to influence is that judgement which lies at the root of self-understanding: it is after the reader's life. This Biblical rhetoric had its forebears in the Mediterranean oral culture of the ancient world and in Hebrew scripture, and its descendents in the narrower field of Christian homiletics, the only real living form of rhetoric for many years after the collapse of the ancient world.

A Hermeneutical Approach to Rhetorical Criticism: Conclusion
The Rhetorical World of the Text

Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation: "God chose...things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are" (1:28). Strange words, perhaps, but not unusual when one identifies in the text a world of very real possible enactment. In fact, Paul's words become especially meaningful when by means of the carefully argued lines of 1 Corinthians, the 'things that are not' become more real for the reader than 'the things that are'. As Frye noted "...There is another kind of repetition which is the Christian antithesis (or complement) of Platonic recollection, and which finds its focus in the Biblical promise: 'Behold, I make all things new' (Revelation 21:5)" (Frye 1990,82).

Whatever the conscious intent of the apostle Paul, there is little doubt that his letter uses the device of a 'possible world', and by describing it, brings a unique rhetoric to bear on the lives of his readers. The thesis of persuasion through alternative world is true, not only for the Corinthians, but also for all who come to the 'proclaimed' message, then or now. While there are unmistakable differences between the way a world of the text operates in much literature and its role in Paul's proclamation, the two are complementary in every way in the passage we have studied.

In this light, then, it is not enough to define a rhetorical transaction as an exchange within which the listener is being asked "to agree with the speaker's interpretation of the world that is" (Crafton 1990, 318). By means of the world of the work, we begin to see how it is not just the interpretation, but that world itself which is at stake in every reading of 1 Corinthians. The world of the reader is, in rhetorical terms, the subject of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians. The 'how' of persuasion (the possible world) enacts the 'why' of rhetorical purpose. To coin a term: the result perhaps may be identified as the *rhetorical world of the text*. One of the peculiar characteristics of biblical rhetoric may well be its attempt (sometimes more, sometimes less consciously) to impose this alternative world and world-view onto the reader.

For the contemporary interpreter, it is "the task of hermeneutics to disentangle from the 'world' of the texts their implicit 'project' for existence, their indirect 'proposition' of new modes of being" (Ricoeur 1980,35). This is what the faithful have long called "putting the Gospel to work" (Ricoeur 1979,226) and it operated rhetorically on the first readers and hearers of Paul's writing. The original recipients of this letter are no more; but the opening remarks of 1 Corinthians continued to find their referent as generations of subsequent readers discovered their ordinary experience transformed by what is spoken, assumed, and argued in the text.

CHAPTER SEVEN: History in the Making

"Good historians, I suspect, whether they think about it or not, have the future in their bones. Besides the question 'why?', the historian also asks the question 'Whither?'" (E.H. Carr, What is History?, 108).

Again and again, Paul implies that, through his message, God was 'making history'. We have suggested that the way he did this was, to borrow Henderson's phrase (1996, 47), the "transformation of rhetorical *pistis* into spiritual" - and I would add, social - "experience". But such a transition was not easy:

> Hellenism, Judaism and early Christianity are notable for their use of literature to project a public identity beyond any material possibility of actual community. Each of these *ekklesiai*, of free Greeks and Romans, of Jews and of Christians is characterized by the tension between the catholicity of their liberal rhetorical fraternity and the actual impossibility of face-to-face, day-to-day community... (Henderson 1996, 19).

Whether Paul would have been so quick to deny the actual possibility of his spiritual community taking social shape is, I suppose, an unprovable point, but I feel that Paul's whole argument is based on its reality. In Paul's letter to the Romans, which may be seen as a kind of theological self-introduction, Paul notes about himself that he prefers to speak his message in places where no Christian preachers have preceded him (Romans 15:20-24). This passage is overlooked by many critics, but given the present argument flags our attention immediately. In light of the present study, it seems to me that the apostle's preference can be better understood: Paul knew that his 'visionary world' would take root best in a place where there was no competing vision of what the Christian reality might be. Perhaps this is because a visionary rhetoric, by its very nature, is built on opposing the listener's previous life.

One of the most basic aspects of Paul's life is clear everywhere in his writings: he wrote, argued, and cajoled as a pastor, but thought of himself as a church-planter. The irony is that the very letters from which we know Paul do not tell us much about his 'first contacts' but rather more about how his written rhetoric helped shape the earliest churches in Asia Minor. The existence of his congregations was proof that he was an apostle (1 Cor 9:2), lately come on the scene but no less effective for it. The problems of congregational

life presented by Paul do not mean that his readers have not been 'made new', but rather that they have not fully lived up to their new state in Christ.

Does this tension between projected and actual identities, which is abundantly witnessed to in 1 Corinthians, mean that the concept of visionary rhetoric or of an alternate world is faulty? Absolutely not. In fact, as smoke to the fire, so the rough-and-tumble of trying to make the church work in the Greco-Roman society of Corinth attests to the power of Paul's vision of that church. If by 'fictive' he means imaginary, or unreal, I disagree with Kloppenborg's (1996,259) too-modern characterization of the appeal of the Pauline churches as "the fictive dissolution of the relentlessly vertical character of Graeco-Roman social life through the creation of a 'family' that transcended such boundaries". Such a *fictive* dissolution would not lead to the kinds of pressures Paul addresses. The dissonance between what the church should be and what it was was very real and alive, and is the rationale behind Paul's letter, here as elsewhere. It is also, no doubt, what has kept the letter alive and in contexts very different from those of its first writing.

Frye stated in 1962 that the imaginative world and the world around us are different worlds, and "that the imaginative world is more important"(66). He goes on to say that "this ideal world that our imaginations develop inside us looks like a dream that came out of nowhere, and has no reality except what we put into it. But it isn't. It's the real world..." What makes it real, Frye would say, is the way in which it keeps infiltrating the present reality so as to change both us and our experiences.

One such world of the imagination is what I believe Paul described as the world of Christian experience - more real than the reality the Corinthians were experiencing, and neither ideal nor idealistic, but rather ready (in fact impatient, if we are to accept the rhetoric) to be implemented in their daily lives. This was the world of a radically new social order, where Corinthian Christians respected each other (3:3) despite their previous rankings of status (Theissen 1982, 69-119; and Fee 1987, 62) where Christian preachers (the orators of this sectarian group) could not be suborned or exalted through the usual channels of patron-client relations, and where the group as a whole practiced discipline (chapters 5-6) while looking to Paul for guidance, and awaiting the imminent completion by God of the transformations they were beginning to feel. The strongest argument for seeing this as the real world for Paul is that everything he argues is based on its reality. Despite its seeming lack of historicity, this world, not some critically arrived-at picture, is what is presented in a plain reading of the letter.

The Utopianism of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism and the Grounding of Paul's Rhetoric

> "What country can this be?' said one to the other. 'It must be unknown to the rest of the world, because everything is so different from what we are used to. It is probably the country where everything goes well, for there must obviously be some such place". Voltaire's *Candide* on his arrival in Eldorado

In its reliance on the thesis that religious writing is about what is possible rather more than what is, our work on 1 Corinthians may well be accused of idealism - not in the sense of wishful thinking, but the kind of philosophical idealism which since Plato has identified reality with concepts or constructs which exist behind or beyond what we experience with our senses. Alternatively, Paul's message may be seen (Robbins 1996b, 177) as having significant 'utopian' dimensions; that is, seeking radical social change, change which is possible to some limited extent, but even so, a vision which demands that "more change is necessary than the world could ever tolerate", especially at the level of community. Whether Paul's vision is seen as ideal (lying behind or above but never exactly in reality) or utopian (constructive of 'real' communities but never open to full social realization itself), I wish to take up these issues now.

Firstly, and paradoxically, the evocative, rhetorical (and possible) world of Paul may well be less ideal or utopian than some of the more daring historically-reconstructed Corinths arrived at by modern scholarship. Let us ask ourselves the question: which of these really had more of an 'real' existence? The theological and rhetorical construct of the apostle which, after all, affected what we call 'real' history, albeit in a complex way, or the ideological constructs of some modern critics (Wire 1990, Macdonald 1990) which represent a yearning for an ideal past which has disappeared forever?

More to the point of the objection, if we restrict ourselves to how it is presented in the letter itself, we see that the rhetorical world of Paul - what for him was meant by living 'in Christ' and which has been called by later Pauline scholars the 'indicative' state - was not an idealistic construct but rather a very present reality in his teaching. Nowhere does Paul question the possibility that faith does not radically alter life; he only questions when it does *not* do so (c.f. Galatians 3:1-4). All that was required was that the Corinthians follow his example and take their place in the new way of living - and the most obvious signs that they had begun to do this would be their humility and their unity. In Paul's argument this is both desirable and, more importantly, *possible*. After all, the old adage is that 'if something

has already been done then it is possible', and the apostle offers himself as proof of being created new.

If we were to be offended by this characteristic lack of modesty we would be missing the point, for Paul denies personal virtue in the very act of pointing to himself as example...rather, as he states, it comes back to the 'source of life' before whom 'none can boast' (1 Cor 1:29-30). To restrict Paul's 'imitate me' statements to the status of persuasive trickery is profoundly to misunderstand his commitment to his sermonic vision. Only such a commitment explains the thoroughgoing rhetorical intent of 1 Corinthians. I disagree with Mitchell's (1991, 303-4) ironic comments on how it took Paul's death (and a sort of first-century beatification) to make his appeal digestible. Her critique of the effectiveness of 1 Corinthians seems to arise from a pessimism about human nature rather than doubts concerning the apostle's intentions.

Mimesis revisited: The person of Paul as type for the New World

Thus we see also that Paul's defensive rhetoric turns out to be, at one and the same time, his creative rhetoric, since his words about his own actions and status are woven in and around what he says about Corinthian self-understandings. The Corinthians, just by having come to faith, are proof of God's call, while Paul offers himself as living proof of the 'new' or better, alternative, status which God's call brings.

The logical basis for the whole argument, including the argument for the authority of Paul, is the simple, incontrovertible fact of the existence of the congregation at Corinth. Paul makes this existence (and the unavoidable inference for any Christian that their faith is proof of God's work) his justification for authority: "If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord" (1 Cor 9:2). If the proof of being an apostle is to bring a community to faith, and I brought you as a community to faith, then I am an apostle, he is saying, and my pronouncements are authoritative, as an apostle's should be. But - since in fact I am 'weak' and of little account (2:1-3) when compared to others, this shows that status in God's eyes means something different from what society (2:3-4) expects. Finally, if it is true that God's conceptions of status are different from our own (1:27-29), we should not judge each other and be divided according to the old standards which no longer hold.

Tracing the line of Paul's argument shows how his own authority is not the primary rhetorical issue here in 1 Cor 1-4, nor in the letter overall. All attempts using Paul's defensive statement to fix the 'parties' or factions involved at Corinth, even to find the 'slogans' of his opponents, or alternatively, to find which issues split the whole

congregation from its founder, miss the point that Paul's appeals to himself function more positively than negatively in his argument. We do not need to find historical camps in Corinth in order to explain Paul's self-references. Rather, when he refers to himself it is as a positive example of what one's new status should be in his world of the Gospel. Mitchell (1991, 55 n 156) argues this same point, stating that Paul's self-references are part of his "overall deliberative rhetorical strategy", as does Witherington III (1995, 204-205). Clearly as warrant for his argument Paul also refers to strife and discord in a general way, but it is hard to move far beyond that into any more historical assertions whatsoever.

Just how and in what way Paul proposes himself as the example for imitation (1 Cor. 4:16; also in 11:1) leads to a debate on the nature and purpose of the so-called *mimesis* statements (see also Elizabeth Castelli (1991) and JoAnn Brant (1993)). Castelli (1991,16) points out that part of the very concept of mimesis is an emphasis on the positive value of unity and harmony, and a critique of discord or dissension which, as we have seen above, serve a more formulaic than historically descriptive function in this argument. Moreover, Castelli notes that the role of authority in an appeal to imitation is not peripheral to such an appeal but rather central to its success. Chapter three of Castelli's work - the chapter immediately preceding her analysis of Paul - concentrates on other examples of mimesis in antiquity with the aim of proving how Paul relied on a "rich set of associations" (16) operating in the minds of his readers as he made his own appeal to be imitated.

I am less convinced that any particular historical consciousness on the part of the Corinthians - or even of Paul - is necessary to prove the points that Castelli has made:

> To summarize: Paul's double invocation of mimesis language in 1 Corinthians is not fortuitous, but rather is logical in terms of the letter's thematic content. Mimesis is invoked precisely because it is bound up in Paul's discourse with problems of community structure and the authority of leaders, of the community's social identity, of appropriate access to wisdom (correct knowledge) or truth. The call to unity in 1 Cor 1:10-17 and the call to imitation in 4:14-21 reiterate and reinforce one another while rhetorically surrounding a discourse of mimetic examples which build upon one another to create a heightened effect at 4:14-21 (1991, 111).

Castelli effectively shows how the language of imitation both creates and at the same time conceals a fundamental tension: on the one hand it elevates as an ideal the notion of sameness and unity, while on the other hand, by its very structure it reinforces the hierarchy which supports an authoritative person serving as a model to be imitated (1991, 87). I concur that this same tension is evident in Paul's admonition in 4:16, however I

believe that Castelli does not examine closely enough the way in which Paul uses his office as 'apostle' (rhetorically a God-given, and not self-proclaimed status, of course!) to answer this tension. As she points out, the image Paul presents of himself as the 'father' to the congregation (4:15) is key, for it allows him to claim an advantage not only apostolic but personal, and also (if accepted by his readers) implies his special status over against others, like Apollos, who would have similar status as apostles and yet seemingly greater personal or rhetorical gifts. I agree with Castelli (1991, 111) that Paul's paternal metaphor is more political than warmly pastoral as it serves his argument.

Of course, the tension between a model (which sets up a hierarchical difference) that seeks to be imitated (the drive toward unity and sameness) is implicit in the very notion of the special status of Christ. Paul's use of himself as a model to be imitated is both reminiscent of, and quite self-consciously linked to (1 Cor. 11:1), the divine status of Jesus which lies at the root of the Christian proclamation (and is expressed in terms of mimesis in passages like Philippians 2:5-11). It would be too simple, however, to identify the linkage between Paul and Christ only where it serves to elevate Paul's status, as in 1 Cor. 4:15-16. For in 1 Cor. 2:2 we see Paul making the same equation in terms of his bodily 'weakness', and tying his (lowly?) status to Christ crucified, and what is called the 'power' of the cross in 1 Cor. 1:17. We may conclude that Paul's appeal to imitation was not one-dimensional but rather complex. In its position in the text it operates not simply to bolster Paul's authority, but rather more ambitiously, to weld the reader's *identity* to Paul's within a whole concept of community order.

Therefore it is this world of the Gospel, a visionary or oratorical construction (some would say, a place of faith) which gives the rationale for so much of 1 Corinthians and removes the need to find hidden history in every verse. Even hints as to social order only exist to give more credence to the primary status level offered by the letter: that of belonging to God. I believe this to be the meaning of the hierarchy set up by 1 Cor 3:21-23, where "all things" and teachers are presented as "belonging" to the Corinthians, but where they are solidly set under the patronage, to continue with that term, of God (see also Wuellner 1986, 76-77).

Thus far we see how Paul used this type of argument to appeal for unity in Corinth and in a secondary sense only, for his own continued authority. The idea that Paul is here trying to reinstate his authority is a retrojection of the themes of 2 Corinthians. His authority is expressed in 1 Corinthians as the first step toward encouraging the Corinthians toward imitation (Brant 1993,290), leading to their full participation in the world of Christ and the resulting unity (Robbins 1996b, 189) that would bring. That unity is one of the foremost characteristics of the textual world of Paul is evident by the fact that the word εἰς

appears 31 times in the letter. See the discussion of this in Mitchell (1996, 89-91). But attempts to assert that the apostle is proposing even a theological unity apart from a radically new political or social order miss the point of Paul's argument. This also underlines the real importance of the 'body' metaphor used elsewhere in antiquity and developed by Paul in 1 Corinthians (see Mitchell 1991, 157-164; Witherington III 1995, 253-255).

What in fact is most important in this argument is that new world to which Paul refers, and he continues to refer to the reality of the new world (and he as one of its first citizens) in his pronouncements on a number of other issues as well, from lawsuits (chap 6) to marriage (chap 7) to not 'discerning the Body' at the Lord's Supper (chap 11) and finally to the nature of the resurrection. All have to do, at their most basic, with relationships, and all relationships, for Paul, have been re-set by the most basic fact that one is now 'in Christ'.

It is possible to make a few observations about the nature of the new citizen or new person whom Paul presents himself to be in this letter. In 1 Cor 9:19-23 and also later in 10:23-33 Paul goes into extended sections on just how he is to be an example to the Corinthians. First among these statements is Paul's famous comment in 9:22 that he has 'become all things to all people'. There is not even the possibility of schism for someone who would seriously take such a stand. Furthermore, the self-nihilism of such a statement taken at face value only makes sense if taken together with the new status proposed everywhere else in Paul's writing. As Jo-Ann Brant (1993, 286) notes, *mimesis* requires first and foremost, self-renunciation, although I disagree with the split she proposes between ontological and teleological senses of imitation (298). In the very act of distinguishing himself as an example to be imitated. Paul writes that he is seeking similarity (unity) with Christ, and proposes that he has been the first to renounce himself. This shows how the dilemma pointed out by Castelli exists, but aims, not at the 'democratization' (for lack of a better word) of all, but rather the unification of all in the humbled example of Christ crucified. For Paul, the *telos* of Christ's new creation was precisely that state that exerted its influence now and was evidenced in his own life. Moreover, the self-renunciation Paul proposes finds its very conscious model for Paul in the cross, which is not only the symbol, but also the content of the message he claims to have first delivered among the Corinthians.

In 10:33-11:1 Paul states about himself: "I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved," and ends with the formulaic: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ", a bit of syllogistic reasoning that again brings the reader face to face with Christ as both the rationale for, and the first

example of, the new person - but notably, keeps Paul as the intermediary for imitation. As Mitchell has pointed out (1991,56ff), the picture Paul presents of himself overall in these passages is that of an 'anti-factionalist'. In fact, it seems clear that Paul presents himself as a person who is so far from holding on to their own rights that he is subject to abuse (4:11-13), but whose fear of not being found worthy keeps him as disciplined as an athlete is (9:24-27) in his very accommodation to others. Yet it is a very specific kind of accommodation for Paul and has its own proper limits, since he states (9:12) that he will let nothing stand in the way of his freedom to speak the Gospel. Such sentiments are echoed in Dio Chrysostom, who stated: "But he who in very truth is manly and high-minded would never submit to any such things, nor would he sacrifice his own liberty and his freedom of speech for the sake of any dishonourable payment of either power or riches, nor would he envy those who change their form and apparel for such rewards" (*Oration* 77/78,37).

Because openness to others is the defining characteristic of the personality Paul is asking the Corinthians to imitate, and because of his references at the beginning of the letter - especially in the opening statement of 1:10 - to divisions and quarreling, we are justified in accepting Paul's point that there was trouble of some sort among the Corinthian Christians. But given what we now know about social groupings in the ancient world, and the difficulty of uniting a group whose religious *ethos* depended on cutting across social boundaries but whose every waking social moment embodied the opposite, the fact that Paul was writing to only one congregation in Corinth is what is remarkable.

The vision which held the congregation together is attested to everywhere in Paul, once we reclaim it from the realm of 'pure' (i.e. disconnected) theology and argue that precisely as theology it had important *social* outcomes for his readers. That Paul's rhetorical world is a theological world is assumed, for he describes it is a world brought about by God's action in Christ (1 Cor 1:30), revealed to the mature by the Spirit (1 Cor 2:10). Yet to be 'in Christ' meant something more political and public, than pious and personal for Paul (what are his comments about eating meat offered to idols except a discussion of the socio-political ramifications of Christianity?), and surely just as much social as devotional. As Paul argues, he himself is proof of the new social order, where citizenship could quickly lead to judgement from others still living 'according to the flesh'. Remarkably, Paul seems to propose that when - not if - the Corinthians begin to take their proper place in God's world, they will no longer even be 'human' in the normal sense of the word. Thus 3:4, in a discussion of growing up spiritually: "when one of you says 'I am Paul's' and another 'I am Apollos''', are you not human? (NRSV supplies: 'merely'). Fee

(1987, 122-123) correctly identifies the distinction Paul makes here as not being between the followers of Christian leaders, but between the Corinthians' old way of living in the world, and their new way of being in the Spirit and therefore, I argue, in the visionary world presented by Paul.

There is a new ontology, or way-of-being, presented as a reality for the Christian throughout Paul's letters. This is not remarkable - since Aristotle's *Poetics* (Brant 1993, 286-288) *mimesis* can be understood as referring, not to a copy, but to a newly created state. Just such a state was what Paul envisioned in his rhetoric. Because of the pastoral, problem-solving nature of 1 Corinthians, it is harder to find direct references to this theological or visionary rhetorical construct. But such references do exist, and together with the wealth of indirect references to such a new reality, they inform all of the teaching presented in this very practical letter. Historians must beware: Paul's eyes were not focussed on what 'was' in Corinth, but how the much more important fact of how what 'was' in Christ was not being lived up to.

Some Objections to the Idea of Paul's 'Rhetorical World'

From the beginning, my thesis has been that Paul's writing is rhetoric of a special kind which reflects living (or not living) in faith rather more than living in an ancient Greco-Roman city, even one as interesting as Corinth. As such, I have argued that Paul's is a rhetoric which uses recognizable rhetorical forms, but more importantly seeks to persuade its readers by reference to a whole different way of being - what we have called a 'rhetorical world' - also known as the world of faith or the state of being 'in Christ'. It was Wilder who noted that such a world 'forces its language' upon the reader, and there is proof enough of such a separate language in letters where we must negotiate such Pauline terms as 'in Christ', 'in the flesh', 'in this age' and so on.

I have shown how a view of Paul's writings as in their essence socially creative helps explain the difficult first chapters of 1 Corinthians, acts as a brake on too quickly coming to historical conclusions about the Christians in that city, and even helps explain the quick adoption of this very particular book into the Christian canon where it became the property of so many who had no direct connection with either Corinth or Paul.

Having stepped back for the moment from the letter itself, I would like to address some final objections that could be raised to the idea of the 'alternative world' and its importance to Paul.

The first objection, perhaps surprising in light of the title of this present work, is that Paul was not - and could not have been - intending to 'make' history at all. Despite the

usual problems with trying to determine authorial intent in any New Testament text, we are on safe ground assuming that Paul did not have pretensions to leaving his mark on the Christian church for one reason: Paul did not believe there would be much church history to influence. His belief in the immanent return of Christ (1 Cor 15:51) is without question. Whatever its exact form or development, and whether you place it at the centre of his thought or at the periphery (Furnish 1989, 333-336), it meant that Paul was speaking to his generation primarily. His attempt to redescribe his hearers was not part of some larger historical project but a concern for their true understanding of who they were 'in Christ' in the last days.

Defusing this criticism requires first looking more closely at the assumptions that it entails. Central to it is the assumption that in order to create an alternative world or world of the Gospel Paul would have had to have been self-consciously aware of a long-term historical role and at least hopeful of the massive social changes which, over the centuries, his work might spark.

This hardly seems the case. Many have called Paul a fanatic - indeed, this is the way he describes himself (2 Cor 5:13; 1 Cor 9:27) - but he does not seem so self-conscious or cynical as a modern 'ideologue' might be; what is more, his sense of the impending end would necessarily mean that he did not envision long-term historical and institutional dimensions to his church-planting. The immediate exigencies met by his pastoral advice may, in fact, help us distinguish some of the church 'rules' he promulgated (head-coverings, women keeping silent in church) which are so difficult in light of modern sensibilities, from the over-all picture of the church seen elsewhere in his writings.

Paul cannot be said to have been the architect of Christendom (perhaps Augustine, or Constantine, or even Gregory I would be given this honour) but he is without doubt at the fount of Western Christianity. In fact, there are hints throughout his letters that Paul believed himself to be working for posterity. But the difference is that whenever Paul indicates a future dimension to his work, he is referring to a spiritual and eschatological, not simply historical, heritage. Thus in 1 Cor 9:25, in the context of comparing himself to an athlete, he writes: "Athletes exercise self-control in all things, they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one", or in 3:14, in the metaphor of the building, he compares himself to a builder who hopes to receive a reward for his work among the Corinthians.

Of course, the very distinction between 'historical' and 'eschatological' heritages collapses for the person who truly believes, as Paul indicates about himself everywhere in his work, that the present world is passing away and in the process of being replaced. Theologians, basing their work on Paul, have used the term 'realized eschatology' to

describe the belief that history will end and in fact, already has, as the so-called 'last days' begin. Thus, for Paul, making history and making things ready for what he calls the 'Day' (3:13) would have been one and the same task. Robbins (1996b, 178) identifies some of the levels of meaning in that Paul's discourse is about changing others (conversionism) so that all live in harmonious communities with one another (utopianism) until God acts decisively to change all in all (revolutionism). I believe that we are safe in assuming that Paul could not have predicted the attenuated and historical way in which his sermonic reality took hold eventually, but in the end, as he presents it his message depended only on what had already been done by God, not what he thought he might achieve.

A second objection which may be raised would be that Paul was not really responsible for Western Christianity at all in the way sometimes attributed to him - as in Bultmann's phrase: "The so often and so passionately debated question, 'Jesus and Paul', is at bottom the question: Jesus and Hellenistic Christianity."(1955, II, 16, 189); that is, that his role in the founding of Christianity is greatly exaggerated. There are two places where this objection can be made: at the time of the founding of his congregations and in their subsequent history after his death.

Kloppenborg addresses the first of these in his 1996 article, already referred to, entitled "Egalitarianism in the Myth and Rhetoric of Pauline Churches". He concludes that contemporary scholarship still betrays its wishes for a golden age of some sort when it accepts the idea that Paul's congregations were ever egalitarian. Although Kloppenborg is careful with his comparisons to Greco-Roman *collegia* or clubs as models for understanding the Christians in Corinth, his point that Paul did not create the early churches' structures out of nothing is well taken. However, I do not see how this corrective requires one to doubt that Paul was in fact the 'builder' or original 'planter' of the Corinthian church. There is, in fact, no evidence that Paul did not hold the founding position that he claimed for himself; unlike his subsequent authority it does not arise as an issue in the letter. No doubt Paul presents his pioneering role rhetorically and for his own advantage in 1 Corinthians. But this does not change his position at the beginning of this church and in fact at the very beginning of western Christianity. Also, we have been examining, not the institutions which early Christians adapted for their churches, but the visions which gave impetus to those very adaptations.

However successful Paul's vision, however, we need look no further than the canon to see how that vision was taken over within a few short years. This brings us to the second half of this objection: what happened to Paul's visions after his death. The simple fact that he did not set the complete standard for early Christianity as it developed is witnessed to by the fact that Paul was himself the subject of what we might call 'historical

revisionism' soon after his death. As E.P. Sanders has noted: "Acts and the Pastorals can best be seen as efforts to domesticate Paul, to bring him into agreement with the developing orthodoxy" (1977,21). In other words, Paul's rhetorical world may have been the driving force behind much of the inchoate Christian community in Asia Minor, but it did not take root without modification.

Does this mean that Paul's visionary reality died when he did? Answering this hypothetical objection involves not confusing the smaller with the larger. That is, while it is true that Paul's vision of the church was modified, interpreted, perhaps even 'tamed' within years of his death, that such a domestication took place and was practiced by friend and foe alike underlines the creative power and the internal coherence of the initial rhetorical vision. What was being fought over was not Paul's importance, but his interpretation. Even those who seemed to have mixed opinions about his writings would not dismiss them, for their status is granted early on: "our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as *they do the other scriptures*" (2 Peter 3:15-16, emphasis added). You don't try to co-opt a movement which is going nowhere; rather, like the Christian right of late 20th century American politics who tried to influence the resurgent Republicans, Paul's 'interpreters' prove his rhetorical vitality in the very act of claiming his authority or rewriting his history.

If we have succeeded in answering, or at least addressing, some of the possible objections to my thesis which can be raised from the point of view of Paul's time and circumstances, another objection still may be raised from the modern vantagepoint. Does not my view of the creativity of early Christian texts betray the "'myth-making' rhetorics of North American religion and United States politics" (Henderson 1996, 54) which inform our own particularly modern ideologies?

The simple answer is yes. But in my defense, I make two points. The first is that I have attempted, from the very beginning of these pages, to show how my own context as a religious wordsmith not only informed my reasons for searching out Paul's rhetoric, but also informed the search itself. Awareness of one's own social location and interests may be a helpful guide to interpretation (Robbins 1996a, 2). What is more, the kind of reading of which I am speaking (and the rhetorical aims of the letter) demands a response. Of course I find myself in Paul's pages; that this should happen only adds my personal testimony - a kind of external or as the ancients would say, nontechnical proof - to other evidence of the creative power of Paul's vision, although I do not by that reason believe that such a testimonial should take place without reflection and critical thought.

The second point I wish to make is simply that analogues do exist and history does sometimes repeat itself, if never exactly. That is to say, because the search for an ancient rhetoric arises from familiarity with a modern ideological context does not mean that the ancient world saw no such thing as foundational rhetorics. Yes I had in mind Martin Luther King, advertising and Disney World. But I also remembered Romulus and Remus, the *Iliad* and Cicero's speeches to the Roman Senate.

The Work Become Visible: History's Judgement

We have discussed the historical outcome of Paul's visionary world already in general terms, but it remains to check more specifically what is said in the texts which are the nearest in time (and we would say, causality) to 1 Corinthians. If Paul's purpose was to create, rather more than reflect history, how did he do according to these witnesses?

(1) 2 Corinthians

As Mitchell has pointed out in her careful work on the letter, when Paul's argument for himself and for unity in 1 Corinthians is judged by its nearest successor, the book of 2 Corinthians, it appears that Paul's letter was a failure (1991,303). While the situation of the latter writing cannot be read back into 1 Corinthians, with caution she believes that it may be used to judge the initial responses of the community to Paul's rhetorical intervention. Of course, the dangers of historical reconstruction apply equally well here as they did in 1 Corinthians; still, even in its purely literary (some might say *intra*-textual) references, it says something about the earlier communication[4].

Mitchell states that in 1 Corinthians the apostle was unsuccessful on two counts: his 'imitate me' statements were not inspiring but were taken as empty boasting, and the only concord he aroused in the community was that he united the factions in their enmity of him. Her conclusion is important here, for it appears to contradict directly the present thesis: "So 1 Corinthians was a failure in its original historical setting" (Mitchell 1991,303).

However, if one accepts the argument of this present work that Paul, through his letter, was trying to push the Corinthian Christians actually to live out socially, ethically, and politically the state of being 'in Christ' (the so-called 'indicative'), then of course we realize that Paul's work failed, in a far more profound way than simply whether or not the

Corinthians felt the apostle was recommending himself overly much. Paul's vision failed to become reality partly because the transition he believed God to have started in their lives and in the world was not yet completed - the 'Day' had not yet arrived. In one sense, then, the failure of Paul was simply the failure of the *eschaton* to have arrived fully. 1 Cor 16:22, "our Lord come!" (*maranatha* – Μαραvα Θα) sums up the direction of Paul's vision and the anticipation inherent in its force, in his final - almost summative - words of that letter to his congregation. As Robbins would have it, the utopian force of Paul's message was not met by the revolutionist message also encapsulated in his preaching. God's world had not overwhelmed the Corinthians' old reality in every way in addition to their personal experiences. Thus in the meantime, what was at stake for the Corinthians was still their way of being in the Greco-Roman (as opposed to what Paul's letter insists is the 'real') world, and we know by means of 2 Corinthians that Paul at the very least felt obliged to present his vision once again to the community, repeating many of the same themes.

Where Mitchell has noted the places where Paul claims not to be recommending himself in 2 Corinthians (3:1;4:2;5:12;6:4;10:12,18) and then cites these passages as proof that the Corinthian's disagreed with Paul's use of himself as example in 1 Corinthians, I believe something else is also - or more to the point, still - at stake. In all of the instances where Paul discusses self-commendation in 2 Corinthians (with the exception of chapter 10), he does it in a way now familiar to us from the first letter: he relates his self-commendation to the new reality of being in Christ. Thus while it is possible to see these verses as desperate attempts by a man under attack to defend himself, it is also possible, even in the highly-charged situation of 2 Corinthians, to see a more irenic rationale at work. Namely, what Paul does is to present himself once again as first example of how to live in a world where judgement has no purpose. The reason there cannot be judgement according to the old standards Paul makes clear: "therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"(2 Cor 5:16-17 NRSV - Bultmann's remarks about the Christ of faith - Jesus of history distinction come to mind here).

Moreover, although she dismisses 1 Corinthians as a failure among its original recipients, Mitchell immediately goes on to discuss the canonical and symbolic 'success' of 1 Corinthians once it was freed from the historical context of Corinth and allowed to operate as a sort of manifesto for what she labels the 'conservative' drive for ecclesial unity

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[4] That Paul's rhetoric was not entirely successful may be proven equally well by the existence of 'our' 1 Corinthians. If the 'previous letter' Paul mentions in 1 Cor 5:9 had been successful, 1 Cor 5 would not exist.

in all times and places (1991,303-304). Implicit in her conclusions is the assumption that Paul did not intend his letter to be in some sense universally prescriptive, while 1 Cor 1:2b clearly seems to indicate otherwise - we note again here how Paul already implies a larger readership - almost a scriptural function - in at least some of his letters (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 5:27). Yet even the early and enduring popularity of 1 Corinthians was not confirmation of its ideas, she notes. Whether by intention or just through need, as it was already on the fast track to becoming scripture, 1 Corinthians was being co-opted as embodying an important idea with little practical application, according to Mitchell. She concludes her book: "Thus 1 Corinthians continues in its place in the Christian canon, its call for Christian unity above all other considerations revered but still largely unheeded, and manifestly unrealized" (1991,304).

If Mitchell's point is that the heavenly 'Eldorado' of Paul's vision has not yet been achieved, we need only look - as she seems to suggest in this passage - at the fractious history of the church to agree. From the beginning there has been of course precious little unity in an institution which claims to be based on it, despite the existence of 1 Corinthian's vision. Yet if the standard is the 'kingdom of God' we must judge the whole message of the earliest Christian preachers to have failed, along with the messages of millennia of visionaries, speakers and artists since. Such a view, seeing the obvious, ignores the role the 'Day' or *eschaton*, played for Paul in establishing what was in his view, after all, God's visionary reality among believers. Furthermore, the fact that Paul was not successful in moving the Corinthians (or many since) to the *full* implications of being already the 'saints of God' (the 'indicative') does not mean that his rhetoric (the 'imperative') had no effect at all.

Paul's rhetoric, while envisioning the church as the Body of Christ, perfect in every way, had two objectives on the way to this goal, objectives which we might find easier to measure: establishing him as the authoritative representative of Christ and a full apostle to the congregation, and ensuring the existence of the congregation by appealing for unity in the midst of some sort of upheaval. We may test the success or failure of these two limited objectives in very concrete and historical terms.

Firstly, by referring once more to 2 Corinthians, we note that while the authority of Paul may be at issue, the unity of the congregation does not seem to be the same kind of concern as at least it is presented to be in the first letter. Paul addresses only one Corinthian congregation in 2 Cor 1:1, not more. He may be questioning the 'restriction in their affections' (2 Cor 6:12), and the work of the people he calls the 'super-apostles' who have followed him (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11, and see immediately below), but he still addresses the Corinthians as a group. Whatever dangers to unity in the congregation which might be

inferred from 1 Corinthians seem to have passed (I take 2 Cor 12:20 to refer more to the situation between the apostle and the congregation).

(2) Acts

So then what did happen to his other objective, that of presenting himself as the founder of the church in Corinth and a full apostle in no way inferior to others? Another early textual witness written later than 1 Corinthians and from a clearly different perspective is Acts, and Acts shows the steady rise in stock of Paul's status. Robbins (1996b, 241) places Acts as "a primary datum of interest for understanding Christianity near the end of the first century". In Acts 18:1-18 Paul is assumed to be the founder of the Corinthian church, although there are also references to Apollos coming later to Corinth (Acts 19:1), interesting not only for placing him there but also for the glowing way the book has just finished describing Apollos' skill in preaching and argument (18:24-28). That being said, however, the references to Apollos are secondary, for Paul, with Peter, is the hero of Acts. (Perhaps the author of Acts has been influenced by Paul's tendency to mention others together with him and then move on to the first person in establishing his unique relationships to his congregations - c.f. Castelli 1991, 107-108).

Whatever in fact happened historically, and despite the fact that Acts seems to know the reputation of Paul rather better than his actual theology, there is no question of either Paul's status or authority in Acts. Kummel (1975, 181) quotes with approval Vielhauer's statement that "there is not a single specifically Pauline idea" to be found in Acts. But be that as it may, Paul is there given credit as the pre-eminent apostle to the Gentiles. If anyone is a 'super-apostle' by the time of the writing of Acts, surely it is Paul.

(3) The Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus) and 2 Peter

What Acts says explicitly, the Pastoral letters (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) say by their very existence. Since the early 1800's and the work of Schmidt, Schleiermacher and F.C. Bauer (see Kummel 1975, 371), the scholarly consensus has been that these are 'pseudonymous' letters, that is, that they were written by others in the name of Paul but in the language and with the concerns of their own time. The reason, of course, is to inherit the authority of a venerated name. Furthermore, within the letters Paul is pointed out as the source of the Gospel (1 Cor 1:16; 2 Tim 2:2) which the letters portray themselves as safeguarding.

In 2 Peter 3:15, which also dates near the end of the first century, the writer points out how some have twisted the words of "our beloved brother Paul". It is presumed that a number of letters have been collected already by this time, and that the readers know of them, thus we have early evidence of a Pauline collection of writings. Also, the writer makes the ambiguous statement in 3:16 that Paul's letters are twisted by the ignorant and unstable "as they do the other scriptures (ὡς καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς). It is hard to reconcile the implications of this verse with, for example, Kummel's disclaimer that despite the already high esteem which Paul's writings possessed in public Christian use by this time, they were in no way placed alongside the 'Holy Scripture' of the Old Testament. It seems, rather, that implicit canonization had already begun. On the question of Marcion's canon, see Kummel (1975, 486-488). I do not believe that Marcion is responsible for Paul's canonical status; he only recognized it in an extreme way.

(4) 1 Clement

The non-canonical letter known as 1 Clement also provides a valuable vantagepoint for a study of our issues for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is addressed to the church in Corinth, a church that has, according to Clement a "venerable and illustrious name" (chap 1). Therefore - remarkably if we concur with the common picture of a schismatic and quarrelling congregation rent by divisions, but less remarkably if we hold to the rhetorical purpose of such Pauline language - it appears that at the time of Clement there still somehow existed as one group a congregation which claimed (and whose claim was widely accepted) to have historical continuity with Paul's church, even after all the schismatic 'fighting'. Then there is 1 Clement's early date, just before the turn of the first century (and possibly contemporaneous with the Pastorals and 2 Peter). Thus 1 Clement provides a witness to what is claimed as the same, or at least a descended, congregation some 40-45 years after Paul penned 1 Corinthians. Thirdly, the letter shows a clear awareness of, and respect for, the earlier writing. Sometimes this is shown by the way in which the writer of 1 Clement borrows language from Paul (1 Clement 37 - compare 1 Cor 12; 1 Clement 49 - compare 1 Cor 13), and sometimes it is by direct reference to the life, work, and letter of the apostle (1 Clement 5; 1 Clement 47).

The epistle is evidence that for the wider church - since 1 Clement was written from Rome - both the apostle and his letter had become authoritative within a generation of his death. Paul did not succeed in bringing his earlier readers fully to the world of his vision, but two of his objectives on the way to that goal *had* been met by this point. Furthermore, the status accorded the letter of 1 Corinthians by the time of Clement shows how the earlier

letter's 'vision-making' function had been assured by the early church's incipient canonization, for although Clement clearly also quotes extensively from the Septuagint version of Hebrew scripture, Clement also sometimes uses Paul much as Paul himself had used the Jewish scripture.

Again with 1 Clement we may see how the search for historical details has bedeviled interpretation. For instance, to presume that the troublemakers of 1 Clement are the direct theological descendents of earlier Corinthian schismatics referred to in 1 Corinthians is to make two unjustifiable assumptions: 1. That we can determine solely on the basis of the rhetoric of 1 Corinthians that there even were such rabble-rousers and that they are not simply creations of zealous form criticism applied to Paul's rhetorical writing; and 2. To presume of the later letter of 1 Clement that it is an historically reliable document when its author's free use of earlier Pauline material and his own rhetorical style raise the same historical/literary issues as in Paul's own writing (Maier 1991,87 ff.). Furthermore, even if there were schismatics identified specifically by Paul at the time of 1 Corinthians (an assumption over which we have cast doubt), attempts to correlate them across even a half a century to the Corinth of 1 Clement's time show how our urgent need for historical detail tends to 'flatten out' history in an attempt to make sense of it.

It is worth noting that many of the same historical options for 1 Corinthian parties adopted by various modern scholars and discussed in the first chapter are proposed also for 1 Clement: thus F.C. Bauer saw 1 Clement as one of the early documents of orthodoxy asserting itself as the synthesis between Jewish-Christian and Hellenistic or Pauline Christian tendencies in the earliest church. However, as H. O. Maier points out in his work *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius*, 1 Clement 47 itself distinguishes quite clearly the situation in the Corinth of Clement's time from the earlier troubles.

The so-called 'Corinthian dispute' need not have been a single, ongoing, problem which lasted from AD 54-55 until the turn of the century. More likely, as in any group of people, smaller disputes, disagreements, and the like cropped up all the time among the Corinthian Christians. What was abnormal was not that a particular group of people had problems, but that in light of who they were supposed to be, so much was made of these troubles. In the end, there is little evidence to support a single, 'Corinthian' problem. Paul's visionary rhetoric in fact took whatever historical troubles afflicted Corinth and transmuted them to metaphors for Christian communities of every time and place. However, we do well not to ignore Clement's recommendation of the general "excellence and constancy of faith" of the Corinthians - there may be more to such words than mere rhetorical posturing. That the Corinthian congregation had not only survived, but

seemingly prospered, since Paul's time says something for those words and for Paul's vision.

Moreover, Maier's (1991, 26ff) study of the 'Symbolic Universe Implied in 1 Clement' shows how Paul's world-building rhetoric continued to have a force in later tradition in Corinth. Clement uses the phrase 'in Christ' often, as did Paul, and seems to have done so for similar reasons (127-130). While Clement's attachment to the institution of the church which had developed - c.f. chaps 42,43, and 57 - and the way in which he deals with the tardy *eschaton* by referring to nature reflects his own period, style, and perhaps even philosophy, there is still a very Pauline awareness of the church as an alternative to the present world, a rather more real than theoretical model. The differences between Clement and Paul in institutional language (Maier 1991, 101-106) only illustrate each author's circumstances, but they do not imply that their 'world-building' programs differ markedly.

In 1 Cor 15:51, in his discussion of the resurrection, Paul wrote (surely also of himself): "we will not all die, but we will all be changed"[5]. Although Paul did die, his vision of a changed community made up of 'new' persons in Christ was still vibrant, if itself modified by time, at the end of the first century. Although he could not have foreseen it, also by that time his reputation was assured, and the congregation at Corinth, which some modern interpreters have seemed so willing to see self-destruct, was alive and kicking.

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[5] ἀλλαγησόμεθα - a future passive. For a discussion of the numerous variants here see Fee 1987, 796.

CONCLUSIONS

For the thirtieth anniversary of his assassination, the prize-winning American writer Toni Morrison reflected on the heritage of Martin Luther King in a ceremony hosted by TIME magazine and presented in their March 16, 1998 issue. She said about the famous black civil-rights leader: "I have lived in the world of his imagination. Would he be disappointed in me? The answer isn't important. But the question really is, and that is the legacy of Martin Luther King". Perhaps it is because of her highly developed literary imagination that Morrison saw so clearly what King has done. Something *in*tangible has become real. His 'imagination' or in other words, his vision, has helped change her world, and ours.

Paul's letters only rather poorly reflect history. Of course they originated in an historical context and so bear some marks of their time, but we have shown that an historical focus brought to bear on Paul's writings from outside is so far from their own internal purpose as to make them suspect on everything except the most banal points of recollection. On the other hand, unlike fiction Paul's letters do not ignore or escape from history: their aim is to rewrite and redeem it, to change its very nature and purpose by changing the way of being in the world of those who read and hear. Although much of the language I have used throughout this work is derived from literary criticism or hermeneutics, the basic thought behind the arguments presented here has been around much longer. For instance, in 1896 W.M. Ramsay stated that he intended not only to examine historical background, but also historical consequences, to Paul's work: "The aim of our work," he wrote, "is to treat its subject as a department of history and of literature. Christianity was not merely a religion, but also a system of life and action; and its introduction by Paul amid the society of the Roman Empire produced changes of momentous consequence, which the historian must study..." (1896,1). Indeed, one might criticize this work (although I would not take it as a criticism) by noting that it has come full circle to ecclesiology, for by discussing the 'vector' for, or 'fragments' left by, Paul's visionary rhetoric we are in fact talking about the birth of a concept of church. Paul's socio-rhetorical aims took imperfect flesh in the communities which began to hold his work dear. Such was no accident.

This is simply to repeat the point that Paul's writing is far from historically disinterested. If it were, it would be a different kind of writing altogether, and far more accessible to historical reconstruction. The scholar who comes to Paul seeking historical information must take the visionary nature of his rhetoric into account, as well as what Frye labeled its effect on the imagination, or run the risk of being caught in the confusion between what was and what, in Paul's words, was 'in Christ'. Even Litfin (1994), upon

whose work I have frequently relied, uses his conclusions about Paul's preaching (also my concern) to posit that a faction of the congregation in Corinth, incensed by his lack of apparent skill, declared "their independence from him" (1994,187). I believe I have shown how the emphasis on Paul's preaching needs no one over-riding and necessary context, but rather leads to a future contemplated by the apostle's message.

George Lindbeck, a narrative theologian, states that to "become a Christian involves learning the story of Israel and of Jesus well enough to interpret and experience oneself and one's world in its terms" (Lindbeck 1984, 34). The work of narrative theologians such as Lindbeck and Hans Frei bears certain similarities to my present work; however, their concern is the present-day faith and life of the church, and not the narrower subject of New Testament rhetorical scholarship and its treatment of history.

Ultimately, Lindbeck's theology proposes religion (specifically Christianity) as a kind of linguistic and therefore experiential *a priori* to life - a foundational structure in which one sees all personal experience reflected somewhere in the pages of scripture. Whatever one might think of his attempt to reform the contemporary Christian church, I believe that what Lindbeck proposes Christians 'get back to' is what Paul succeeded in beginning to plant, in other words, the 'world of the work'. Contrary to Lindbeck I believe that no grand myth can turn back the clock in this age of cultural pluralism. Even if one could re-institute Christendom there would be many reasons not to do so. Indeed, there is a social conservatism implicit in much of this work - see Frye's (1983, 51), comments on the "fashion for crying up the Middle Ages as a golden era in which all aspects of human life were united in a common body of beliefs and values".

And yet once we turn our sights from the grander social scale to the level of the small Christian community (which is where Paul started out), I see examples of Lindbeck's emphasis on the power of scripture to 'draw reality in' to itself. Again we come face to face with a theological message and an imperfect ecclesiastical result. In any case, the narrative theologians of our own day have succeeded in one thing: they pointed to the integrity of text and community. Hans Frei's observation that for most of western history the faithful have not seen the scripture in their lives, but seen their lives in the scripture takes on greater meaning when we recognize in biblical rhetoric the ability to make another 'world' our own. The rhetoric of Paul's writing continued to make community long after both he and the Corinthians were gone. When we see texts as remnants of community, we are forgetting the role they have had in shaping history, and we ignore the fundamental nature of biblical texts, which is to pass on meanings they judge to be more important than historical ones. Frye writes: "Biblical scholars...are well aware that the Bible will only confuse and exasperate a historian who tries to treat it as a history. One wonders why in

that case their obsession with the Bible's historicity does not relax, so that other and more promising hypotheses could be examined" (1983,42). He goes on:

> If the historical element in the Bible were a conscientious, inaccurate, imperfect history like the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, we could understand how important it would be to make a fuller reconstruction of that history. But when it shows such an exuberant repudiation of everything we are accustomed to think of as historical evidence, perhaps we should be looking for different categories and criteria altogether."

Rudolf Bultmann, in his influential *Theology of the New Testament*, made the now- famous distinction between the 'Jesus of history' the obscured historical figure who walked the land of Galilee and Judea with his disciples and about whom we know so little hard data, and the quite different 'Christ of faith' whom the writers of the New Testament proclaimed and who is everywhere evident in its pages. For a good explanation of the genesis of this observation in modern study and its subsequent development after Bultmann, see Ridderbos (1957 chap I). There is, I contend, one step left in this process of seeing how faith and history interact, a step recognized from the beginning in the proclamation of the church, and implicitly in the work of theologians from Jaroslav Pelikan (in his *Jesus Through the Centuries*) to Hans Frei. That is, after the Jesus of history and *because of* the Christ of faith, there is also what we might call the Christ of history - the historical manifestation or living-out of faith, however attenuated and unrecognizable at first, in the changed lives and self-understandings, the new institutions and ethics and politics of believers. While Jesus preached the Kingdom of God, Paul not only preached Jesus; he also preached (more to the present point) a new believer within a new society, someone who could at least contemplate turning his or her back on the Greco-Roman life they knew so well with its attendant social stratification, and becoming something new, a 'new creation'.

What did Paul accomplish? More than one person has been hailed or derided as the 'founder' of Western Christianity - Paul, Constantine, Gregory the Great, Augustine, and of course Jesus himself (the similarity of this thought to 1 Cor 1:12 does not pass unnoticed). Perhaps the answer to the question of who is responsible for Christianity as we have known it depends on which part of it you are examining. Certainly Paul's was not the only vision even to inform early Christianity (Theissen 1982, 110; Robbins 1996b, 240-243), although we are hard pressed to find the actual communities which scholars have claimed existed behind some writings (what Robbins calls the 'little traditions') other than

Paul. The Gospels, for instance, each show us other ways of thinking about Christian community and ethics, the Pastoral letters change the message of Paul in the very act of revering it, and the Book of Revelation transposes the whole vision into a higher, eschatological key, but we have very little extra-textual evidence for how idiosyncratic or community-based some of these views of Christian life and society may have been.

What is clear and indisputable, however, is that Paul's vision turned out to be singularly powerful as Christianity grew and evolved in the west. Augustine adopted Paul - imbibed and swallowed him whole, almost - even as he put his own imprint on the culture that was to survive the long collapse of the ancient world. It is possible - but I believe unprovable - to say with Theissen that Paul's "love patriarchalism" was the basic pattern of society adopted by late antiquity (1982, 109). If Theissen is talking about the *ethos* of Christianity informing European society as the ancient world ended and the medieval world began, I would concur. If he means a more conscious borrowing, I believe the evidence is lacking. In any case, such boldness about a specific political imprint is not necessary in order to affirm Paul's importance. He has, to borrow Theissen's words, "shaped our ethical and political consciousness" simply by becoming scripture so soon and so decisively, and so becoming the reference point for millennia of people of every rank for decisions ethical and relational as well as social and political in the larger sense. Whether the particular nature of Paul's emphasis on the cross was ever as popular - or as understood - as other aspects of his vision is doubtful. But Paul's version became in Robbins' words (1996b, 189-191), the "great story " by which other strands of Christian tradition have been judged and interpreted to this day.

In our day we are hardly strangers to the volatile mix of vision and rhetoric, although the means of persuasion in our own day has moved decisively from sound through written word to a potent combination of all media. From the most elevated political speech to the most pedantic pamphlet for children, there are literally thousands of people out there peddling their visions of who we are and should be. But the history of Christianity shows, dramatically, what is at stake for those who succeed at such persuasion. It is a change in events, in history. Everyone who is engaged in the enterprise knows that this is the payoff: to change people's self-perception, and in so doing, their course of action and thus, at least in some sense, their destiny. The point of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians - and likely of all of his writing - was to change lives. Conversion, not recollection, is the goal of such writing. The future is where rhetoric, if it is successful at all, touches history.

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174

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Abbreviations Used

ARC	= The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University
ET	= English translation
CBQ	= *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
Inst. Or.	= *Institutio Oratoria* (Quintilian)
JBL	= *Journal of Biblical Literature*
JSNT	= *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
n.	= note (footnote or endnote)
NJBC	= *New Jerusalem Bible Commentary*
Part. Or.	= *Partitiones Oratoriea* (Cicero)
SBL	= Society of Biblical Literature
Transl.	= Translator
ZNW	= *Zeitscrift fur die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*