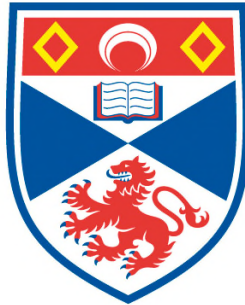


**PAUL THE SPIRITUAL GUIDE**  
**A SOCIAL IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL'S APOSTOLIC SELF-IDENTITY**

**Robert D. Keay, Jr.**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St Andrews**



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# **Paul the Spiritual Guide**

**A Social Identity Perspective on Paul's Apostolic Self-Identity**

**A thesis  
submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the PhD in New Testament  
St Mary's College  
University of St Andrews**

**By**

**Robert D. Keay Jr.**

**20 November 2003**



TL  
E662

## Abstract

Scholarly understanding of Paul's self-conception in his use of the title 'apostle' has remained minimal throughout the history of biblical scholarship. Few have ventured to describe Paul's understanding of his apostolic self-identity beyond the basic notion of his being 'sent' to preach the gospel. The most frequent suggestions are that Paul understood himself to be a prophet or a philosopher. But these suggestions are faulty because they emerge from hermeneutical methods that are unable to discern how self-identity is revealed in discourse. The purpose of this thesis is two-fold. First, I attempt to clarify Paul's understanding of his apostolic self-identity. My research reveals that when Paul identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ to the Thessalonians and Corinthians he conceived of that identity within the conceptual framework of a spiritual guide. Paul believed that God was calling him to be a spiritual guide to the followers of Jesus in those cities, leading them from an initial faith in Jesus as Lord to the consummation of that relationship on the day of Jesus' return, guiding them through all the twists and turns along the way. Second, in developing this argument, I attempt to clarify a method of reading ancient texts with insights from the social sciences. I demonstrate that it is not only possible, but that at times it is necessary to use the social sciences in order to further our hermeneutical abilities for understanding biblical texts.

- (i) I, Robert Keay, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 95,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date: 20/11/03. Signature of candidate \_\_\_\_\_

- (ii) I was admitted as a research student in September 1999 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in May 2000; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 1999 and 2003.

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- (iii) I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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## Acknowledgements

After four years of pregnancy, I have finally given birth—it's a thesis! Weighing approximately 95,000 words, I have named it 'Paul the Spiritual Guide.' Many people have assisted me in this pregnancy and birth, and it is a joy to acknowledge them.

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A thesis writer needs, in addition to a wise supervisor, a well-stocked library and helpful librarians. St Andrews is blessed to have not only a wealth of books, journals, and other assorted scholarship, but the friendliest and finest librarians. Always willing to find and secure obscure volumes and ever ready to brighten a dreich day, Colin Bovaird, Lynda Kinloch, and Lynda Innocent have been a constant supply of information and enjoyment throughout this journey. My office mate Paul Yokota has been a steady friend, always willing to listen to my spontaneous and opaque declamations about the apostle and always ready to offer insight into Matthew's gospel. Jeff McInnis, Ian Smith, and Pablo de Felipe have also shared their time, friendship, and wisdom.

Shortly into this project I joined the swimming club of Colin Bovaird, Ian Smith, and Jill Gamble. Little did I know then that in a few years time Jill would become my wife. She has been patient as I plodded slowly through these chapters, constantly providing encouragement and motivation to finish the course and daily renewing my vigor with her thoughtfulness, kindness, and love. Her generosity has been great and deserves not only recognition but also reward. Now that we have concluded this project I look forward to a lifetime of long walks, exotic holidays, quiet cafes, and everyday fun with Jill, even on Saturdays.

My parents, Robert and Sheila Keay, have been faithful in supporting me with their love, encouragement, and prayers throughout my life. Indeed, they have been my spiritual guides through the many twists and turns of life. This project, and all that has gone on before it, would never have been possible without their many sacrifices. I dedicate it to them.

Dedicated to

*Robert and Sheila Keay*

for their constant support and spiritual guidance  
through the many years of research and writing

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Part One  
The Question

Who did Paul think he was?

## Chapter One

### Who Did Paul Think He Was?

According to legend, at the first meeting of the newly established *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, a guest was scheduled to speak in the Pauline Studies group. A short, sturdy, balding man, with bow legs, a rather large and strangely hooked nose, and one long eyebrow extending straight across his forehead approached the podium. None of the distinguished members had seen him before, and he did not have the typical appearance of a scholar, but as he began to speak the audience was captured by his words—despite his meager command of the language—and looks of amazed recognition appeared on the faces of the stunned listeners. He spoke only briefly and concluded with a few questions. He asked, ‘who do people think I am?’ After some silence, a scholar in the front row offered a reply. ‘Many think you are the first and greatest Christian missionary.’ Quickly another voice rose from the back of the room, ‘but others think you created this new religion yourself.’ Others offered more popular views. Then the speaker interrupted and asked, ‘but who do you think I am?’ The chairman of the group then stood tall, cleared his throat, and began to speak. ‘Well, sir, we have diligently studied your letters for many years, and it is our opinion that you are a brilliant theologian, perhaps only Augustine, Aquinas, or Calvin rival your genius.’ The guest appeared to blanch at these words. He looked out over the group and warned them that they should not tell this to anyone. He then turned and left the meeting, never to be seen again.

The image of Paul as a theologian has dominated the fabric of modern European and American biblical scholarship. This is the legacy of traditional historical-critical approaches to biblical studies that approached early Christianity as an abstract world of conflicting ideas rather than a social world of flesh and bone persons relating to one another in real-world settings. Paul appears as a talking head, a mind without a body. He seems to have become the victim of his own words: 'So, from this time onward, we no longer know persons *κατὰ σάρκα*' (2 Cor. 5:16). However, during the past few decades, an increasing number of Pauline scholars have reacted against this 'Eurocentric' Paul and have challenged the academy to rethink their understanding of the Apostle.<sup>1</sup> In 1986 Albert Vanhoye issued an invitation to exegetes to reorient the focus of Pauline studies around the person of Paul rather than around the conceptual content of his letters:

Mais une autre orientation est également possible, et c'est celle-là que nous choisissons dans l'espoir de donner un élan nouveau à la recherche et un intérêt plus vivant à ce *Colloquium*. Au lieu d'étudier les écrits pauliniens du seul point de vue de leur contenu conceptuel, je voudrais inviter les exétes à les étudier aussi comme des manifestations d'une personne, la personne de l'apôtre Paul.

Several scholars have responded positively to this invitation, offering challenging new portraits of Paul, and it appears that the view of Paul as a theologian has finally been dethroned.<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, questions about methodology have been at the leading edge of this refreshing shift. Reorientation around the person of Paul has suggested to some that a

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Miller's 1987 study of the modern European intellectual argues that Europeans have typically valued system building and rational argumentation, developing a consistent and conceptual viewpoint, a holistic philosophy. Robert Jewett (1994) claims that this tendency has led European and American biblical scholars to find in Paul a systematic thinker, a theologian.

<sup>2</sup> This is not to suggest that Paul the theologian has left the academy altogether. Indeed, this Paul is still prominent in biblical scholarship, not least in the so-called 'New Perspective on Paul,' which might be styled a late twentieth century 'Eurocentric' Paul.

more appropriate methodology should include insight from the social sciences. Robin Scroggs has described use of the social sciences by biblical scholars as an effort to guard against ‘a limitation of the reality of Christianity to an inner-spiritual, or objective-cognitive system. In short, sociology of early Christianity wants to put body and soul together again.’<sup>3</sup> Such cross-disciplinary work is fraught with hazards, however, not the least of which is the demand that the biblical scholar become expert (to some degree) in a second academic field. More complicated is the question of the commensurability of the specific social discipline with biblical studies. The final quarter century of the twentieth century has witnessed a healthy debate about the problems and possibilities of wedding social studies and biblical studies.

This thesis is an attempt to further the progress of this new movement in Pauline studies, by answering the question, ‘who did Paul think he was?’<sup>4</sup> Or, to be more specific, when Paul identified himself as an ἀπόστολος, who did he think he was? In addition to arguing for a specific answer to this question, this thesis attempts to explain and demonstrate the proper social-scientific methodological approach to answering this question. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is two-fold: first, to argue for a new view of Paul’s apostolic self-identity, and second, to demonstrate the possibility of a social-scientific hermeneutic for biblical studies. Certain delimitations are necessary. I will not consider portraits of Paul by other writers, such as Luke’s portrait in Acts,<sup>5</sup> nor will I

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<sup>3</sup> Scroggs 1980: 166.

<sup>4</sup> Dunn 1999 appears to be the first to ask this specific question. He is not concerned to utilize the social sciences in his study, however, and the focus of his study (the ethnic identity of Paul) is different from this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> On Lucan portraits of Paul, among the many see Jervell 1972, Brawley 1988, Lentz 1993, Neyrey 1996, Bondi 1997, and Spencer 1998. On Paul’s portrait in the Pastoral Epistles see Collins 1975. On the very early development of a legend about Paul, established prior to any widespread knowledge of his letters, see H.-M. Schenke 1974-75,

consider Paul's ethnic self-identity.<sup>6</sup> Finally, it has not been possible to consider all of Paul's letters. I have confined myself to Paul's letters to Christ-followers in Thessalonica and Corinth.

The thesis is divided into four parts. Part one examines the state of the question; that is, what is now known about the self-identity of Paul. It is clear that Paul repeatedly identified himself as an ἀπόστολος. Chapter two examines this classic identification and seeks to discern what Paul understood by that term. Part two examines various attempts to further our knowledge about Paul's apostolic self-identity. Chapter three considers the claim that intertextual allusions reveal that Paul understood his apostleship as a call to be a prophet. Chapter four considers the various claims that a comparison with ancient philosophers reveals that Paul understood his apostleship within the conceptual framework of being a philosopher.<sup>7</sup> I argue that these claims are flawed because of

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who considers the images of Paul in Acts, Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastorals as examples of this developing legend. For more on these early portraits see de Boer 1980. For second century development, presenting Paul in various roles, such as miracle-worker, see Wiles 1967 and Babcock 1990. On Paul's portrait in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, see Grant 1982 and Bollok 1996.

<sup>6</sup>The amount of literature on Paul's ethnic identity is mounting rapidly. Although I consider this an important aspect of Paul's self-identity, deserving of rigorous treatment, I do not examine it in this work. Instead I have chosen to concentrate my attention on discerning Paul's understanding of the ministerial role he has been commissioned to undertake as an apostle of Jesus. For an introduction to the ethnic question, see S. E. Porter 2000. Important contributions include Dunn 1998 and 1999 and Barclay 1995. For a wide-ranging and provocative study of Paul as an internal critic of Jewish culture, see Boyarin 1994.

<sup>7</sup>I limit myself to well-developed studies that are directly related to Paul's self-identity. Therefore I do not consider the idiosyncratic thesis of Hyam Maccoby (1986 and 1991), who views Paul as the founder of Christianity, which he claims is a confusion of Gnostic ideas and the Mystery Religions. More relevant perhaps is Michael Newton's conception of 'Paul as priest to the Christian community' (1985: 60-70), but this idea remains undeveloped and lacks promise. More suggestive is David M. Stanley's study on Paul as the Isaianic Servant of Yahweh (1954: 415-20), but it too remains largely undeveloped, although see now J. Ross Wagner's helpful work in this area (1998 and 1999).

inherent methodological problems. These approaches work within the traditional stream of historical-critical biblical scholarship and fail to recognize the value of social scientific studies for the task. Missing from such studies is an understanding of how identity is related to oral and written discourse. They assume that intertextual allusions and extratextual comparisons revealed by traditional hermeneutical methods provide insight into Paul's self-identity. However, failing to understand how identity is crafted and revealed in texts, these interpreters unwittingly tend to eisegete identity into favorite texts. Part three examines the possibility of utilizing the social sciences in our approach to the question. Can the social sciences provide insight into Paul's self-identity? Chapter five describes the social identity perspective, a social scientific perspective on identity that seeks to clarify how persons reveal and craft their self-images through behavior and language. This perspective argues that persons seek to develop a positive self-identity and to overcome negative constructions and assessments of their identity through their behavior and discourse. An initial survey suggests that this method may be helpful in discerning how Paul reveals his self-identity in his letters. But problems are apparent and must be considered. Chapters six and seven consider these problems and demonstrate that the social identity perspective is applicable to ancient persons and ancient society. Chapter six considers several objections to using a modern social-psychological method to understand an ancient person. Chapter seven demonstrates the commensurability of the social identity perspective with ancient Mediterranean society. Having cleared a methodological pathway, part four applies the social identity perspective to three Pauline letters in order to discover what they reveal about Paul's self-identity. Chapter eight considers Paul's self-identity as it is revealed in 1 Thessalonians. Chapter nine considers

Paul's self-identity as it is revealed in his Corinthian correspondence. Both of these chapters reveal that Paul saw himself as a spiritual guide for the Christian community. I conclude that Paul understood his call to be an apostle—at least among the Thessalonians and Corinthians—within the conceptual framework of the spiritual guide. God sent Paul to guide the followers of Jesus in Thessalonica and Corinth through the trials and tribulations of life until Jesus returned for them.

## Chapter Two

### Paul the Apostle

#### The Exegetical Search for Paul's Self-Identity

##### Paul's Self Designation as an Apostle

Paul identified himself as an ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; cf. 1 Thess. 2:7). Sometimes he used the more basic title ἀπόστολος (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:1, cf. 1 Cor. 4:9; 9:1, 2, 5; 15:9; 2 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 1:17). At other times he offered a descriptive genitive and identified himself as an ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος (Rom. 11:13; cf. Rom. 1:5; Gal. 2:8). He regards this identity as an ἀπόστολος as one he 'acquired' from Jesus Christ (δι' οὗ ἔλαβον . . . ἀποστολὴν Rom. 1:5; cf. Gal. 1:15). It is an identity to which he was 'called' (κλητός Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; cf. 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1, 15) 'by the will of God' (διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1) when God revealed his Son in him (ὅτε δὲ εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς . . . ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν ἐν ἐμοί Gal. 1:15). Exegetical analysis of Paul's letters clearly affirms that Paul understood himself to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. However, Paul's readers were/are faced with a basic interpretive question: What did Paul mean when he identified himself as an ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ and an ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος? How did Paul understand his apostolic self-identity?

A brief review of the literary contexts in which Paul spoke of his apostolic identity reveals the diversity of its salience in his ministry. Paul did not identify himself as an ἀπόστολος in his correspondence with the Philippians or with Philemon. His identity as an apostle did, however, become salient in his correspondence with the



Romans (1:1, 5; 11:13), and it became a significant concern in his correspondence with the Galatians (Gal. 1:1; 2:8) and Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:1; 4:9; 9:1-23; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; 10-13), where he was zealous to explain and defend his apostolic self-identity against weighty challenges. Only in his correspondence with the Romans and Galatians did he describe this apostolic identity with the title ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:7-9). We must not, then, regard Paul's self-identity as an apostle as static and unchanging, as was typically assumed by older scholarship,<sup>1</sup> for, at the very least, the consciousness of his apostolic identity became salient or not according to specific social concerns. Furthermore, careful attention to Paul's literary construction of the category 'apostle' and its constituent membership reveals a change in Paul's definition of the category during the course of his ministry and, therefore, a change in Paul's understanding of his own apostolic self-identity. What did Paul mean when he identified himself as an ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ and an ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος?

### The Meaning of the Word 'Apostle'

The noun ἀπόστολος has an obscure and unimpressive history in Greek literature prior to its emergence as an important title for leaders in the early Jesus movement. A

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<sup>1</sup> The failure to consider Paul's self-identity in this more dynamic and critical fashion is blatant in H. A. A. Kennedy's (1915) treatment of the question when he writes 'all the letters of Paul begin with his claim to apostleship' and then, in a footnote, states that 'those to the Thessalonians and Philippians are not exceptions, although the term ἀπόστολος is not used in the address, for throughout the apostolic note sounds clearly (e.g., 1 Th 2:4, 6, 13; 4:1, 2; 5:27; 2 Th 2:14, 15; 3:6; Ph 1:7, 20, 24; 2:12, 16; 3:17.' (1915: 9 and fn. 1). Note that he ignores Philemon. Contrast Kennedy's view with Walter Schmithals (1969: 21), who writes, 'of the undoubtedly genuine Pauline letters, Romans, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon are hardly of any significance for our problem [the meaning of apostleship] which was still quite peripheral in such congregational or private letters.' Ernest Best (1986: 8) likewise points out that 'Paul

brief review of this history will serve to highlight the insular nature of its ecclesial usage.<sup>2</sup>

In secular contexts the term was connected with the world of seafaring, especially naval expeditions. Rengstorf reports that the word originally designated a freighter or transport ship (Plato *Epistulae* 7.346a; Ps-Herodotus *Vita Hom.* 19), and afterwards came to indicate the dispatch of a fleet on a military expedition (Lysias *Orations* 19.21; Demosthenes *Orations* 3.5; 18.80; 18.107). Later it was applied to persons, not only to military personnel such as the admiral of a naval expedition but also, as in Dionysius Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 9.59.2), to a group of colonists and their settlement. In these instances the word was typically used in a passive sense, indicating the fact of being sent, and there is no suggestion that the sent one possessed any derivative authority. Herodotus twice used the word to designate a messenger (1.21; 5.38), but here too his point was simply to indicate that one had been sent and there are no connotations of authority. Even in the papyri of the early Christian period the word appears unrelated to ecclesial usage. These contain examples of the term being used to refer to such items as passports or invoices of ship cargo. One might expect the Greek Old Testament to illuminate early ecclesial usage, but even here the noun is used only twice to designate a messenger. In Alexandrinus LXX 1 Kings 14:6 and Theodotion 1 Kings 14:6 the prophet Ahijah says to the Queen ἐγὼ εἰμὶ ἀπόστολος πρὸς σε σκληπός. The MT has the passive participle פִּרְשֵׁי which was translated as the noun ἀπόστολος in the Greek version. In Symmachus Isaiah 18:2 ἀπόστολος translated פִּרְשֵׁי. Instead of ἀπόστολος the Greek Old Testament generally

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only claims to be an apostle in Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians, four out of seven [letters].<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For helpful discussion see K. H. Rengstorf 1964, Agnew 1976, 1986, Barrett 1970, 1978, Barnett 1993, Best 1986, Betz 1992, Brown 1968, Kirk 1974-75, Schnackenburg 1970a, 1970b.

used the term ἄγγελος to indicate a divinely commissioned messenger. The ancient philosophers (Cynics, Stoics, Epicureans) also used this term (ἄγγελος ἀπὸ Διὸς ἀπέσταλται [Epictetus *Diss.* 3.22.23]), as well as others to designate a divinely sent messenger, but there is no evidence that they used the title ἀπόστολος. Epictetus described the philosopher as ἄγγελος καὶ κατὰσκοπος καὶ κήρυξ τῶν θεῶν (*Diss.* 3.22.69; cf. 4.8.31). Josephus used ἀπόστολος only one time in the sense of ambassadors when he referred to those sent to represent the nations before Varus: Οὐάρου τὸν ἀπόστολον αὐτῶν τῷ ἔθνει ἐπικεχωρηκός (*Antiquities* 17.11.1).

Since the noun ἀπόστολος is so rarely used outside Christian circles in any sense that suggests a relationship with the New Testament ecclesial leader, modern scholars have sought the origins of the Christian usage within the context of the early church. We have already seen that the Greek Old Testament, which would have been known and used by early Christian leaders, almost never used the noun ἀπόστολος; nevertheless, it did use the verbal form ἀποστέλλω frequently (c. 700 times). Some scholars believe that the origins of the Christian apostolate are rooted in this verbal form of the word.<sup>3</sup> It may be significant that in the New Testament an ἀπόστολος ‘probably always retains some sense of being sent, whether by an individual, a group such as a church, or by Christ or God.’<sup>4</sup> It is clear that the verbal idea is not far from the nominal use in the New Testament. The literary contexts of ἀποστέλλω in the Greek Old Testament typically portray an ancient Hebrew practice of sending a person with an authoritative commission, and this sending is expressed by the Πῶψ/ἀποστέλλειν language. For example, in 2 Chronicles 17:7-9

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<sup>3</sup> Käsemann 1980: 5 ‘It seems fairly certain that the Semitic idea of sending with an authoritative commission determined the NT understanding of apostle.’

<sup>4</sup> Best 1986: 5.

King Jehoshaphat ‘sends’ [Πῶς/ἀποστέλλειν] Princes, Levites, and Priests to teach the Book of the Law to people in towns throughout Judah. It has been noticed often that this same Greek verbal form ἀποστέλλω was used frequently by the New Testament authors in the context of sending ecclesial leaders to teach and preach the good news. For example, Paul declared ‘Christ sent me . . . to preach’ (ἀπέστειλέν με Χριστός . . . εὐαγγελίξασθαι. 1 Cor. 1:17); and he asked ‘But how will they preach, unless they are sent?’ (πῶς δὲ κηρύξουσιν ἐὰν μὴ ἀποσταλῶσι; Rom. 10:15; cf. Acts 19:22). Lucien Cerfaux believes this verbal form played a significant role in the emergence of the unique terminology of the early Christian apostolate. He suggested that the early Christians nominalized the verb in order to identify persons sent on the mission. They did so because the noun ἄγγελος, which might otherwise have served that purpose (cf. Luke 7:24; 9:52), had taken on a more specific and technical meaning in Christian contexts, designating heavenly beings.<sup>5</sup> Thus the noun ἀπόστολος was adopted by the Christian communities and was given a distinctively Christian referent in identifying those persons associated with the Christian mission. Munck, likewise, states, ‘The word *apostolos* has been determined by this steady sending forth—the mission, if one likes, so characteristic of Christianity.’<sup>6</sup> Schmithals writes, ‘The choice of words ἀπόστολος and ἀποστέλλειν adequately shows that the “sending forth,” the mission, was the special assignment of the

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<sup>5</sup> Cerfaux 1960 and 1967. He writes (1967: 120), ‘The noun *apostolos* comes naturally from the word *apostello*, which is used frequently, in its technical sense, in the New Testament, where we know of the great importance attached to missions. The word *aggelos*, which would normally have been used to denote someone sent, already had a specific and definite meaning, “angel.” Ordinary Greek rarely used the word *apostolos*, so that it was much easier to give it a technical connotation.’ Barrett (1978: 99 fn. 2) writes, ‘The avoidance of the term [ἄγγελος] is understandable in view of its appropriation in the Old Testament to heavenly beings; see however Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).’

apostle. . . . Apostles are indeed always missionaries, but not all missionaries are apostles.<sup>7</sup> Schnackenburg believes that this nominal usage was widespread among the Hellenistic Christian congregations involved in the early mission to the nations and that it may have originated in Antioch.<sup>8</sup>

Not everyone is persuaded by this explanation, however. C. K. Barrett, for example, rejects this solution and seeks to reclaim a connection with the Jewish  $\Pi\lambda\psi$ . He explains.

[The noun  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ ] was already current in some Hellenistic-Jewish circles as an established rendering of  $\Pi\lambda\psi$ . On the Hebrew side, both verb and noun were current in the technical sense; a Greek noun was needed and it must have been natural and almost inevitable to use  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ —or possibly indeed to coin it, in ignorance of the rare Greek uses of it.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, whereas Cerfaux claims the noun  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  was chosen by Christians because of its connection with the Christian mission and because of the lack of a more suitable noun, Barrett believes that the noun was already being used by Jews to designate a similar office and that the early Christ-followers simply adopted that usage. Barrett is forced to admit, however, that the evidence for this theory ‘is less complete than one could wish.’ He admits there are three problems with his theory: the lack of evidence for (1) the existence of such an office in the first century (‘The Jewish evidence for a  $\Pi\lambda\psi$  institution in the New Testament period is thus scanty’), (2) the claim that such persons were called  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\omicron\iota$  by Greek speakers (‘Wanting almost entirely is evidence that such  $\Pi\lambda\psi$ , if they existed, were in the Greek-speaking world called  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\omicron\iota$ ’), and (3) the

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<sup>6</sup> Munck 1949: 100.

<sup>7</sup> Schmithals 1969: 23.

<sup>8</sup> Schnackenburg 1970a: 294. Traditionally it was believed that Jesus called his disciples  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ , but most scholars now believe this is unlikely (Best 1986).

<sup>9</sup> Barrett 1978: 99-100.

belief that missionaries were ever called שליחיהם ('There is no evidence that Jewish missionaries were ever called שליחיהם').<sup>10</sup> Earlier scholars, beginning with J. B. Lightfoot and his 1865 essay 'The Name and Office of Apostle,'<sup>11</sup> noted parallels between the Rabbinic שליח and the Christian apostle, but were not always careful to distinguish the two offices and tended to read the later שליח into the earlier Christian apostolate. Gerhardsson has persuasively demonstrated, however, that the relationship between the שליח and the Apostle is not that one is derived from the other, but that both are rooted in the Old Testament sending convention and emerge separately and distinctly.<sup>12</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that most scholars now believe that the שליח institution developed in the second century and separately from the Christian apostolate. It is accepted that both institutions are rooted in the Old Testament sending convention, but it is believed by most that the שליח arose among the second century Rabbis as a legally commissioned agent sent to act in the name of a Rabbi. The Rabbi deputized this person to act on his behalf in legal matters, such as to effect a betrothal (m.Kid. 2.1; t.Kid. 4.2; t.Yebam. 4.4), deliver or receive divorce papers (Git. 3.6; 4.1) and lead cultic observance (y.Hag. 76d; m.Ber. 5.5). In such cases, it has been written, 'the agent [שליח] is like the

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<sup>10</sup> Barrett 1978: 94, 95, 96, 97.

<sup>11</sup> This essay appeared as an excursus in his Galatians commentary. Barrett 1978 offers a brief history of scholarship that connected the two offices. He points out that as early as 1675 J. Lightfoot had noted the connection. After J.B. Lightfoot's essay, in 1902 Adolph Harnack reviewed the patristic evidence (1902: 1.327-31). But it was Rengstorf in his 1964 article on *ἀπόστολος* in *TDNT* that fully developed the argument.

<sup>12</sup> B. Gerhardsson 1962: 109-110. F. H. Agnew, 1986: 96. Munck (1949: 100) writes, 'Far too much importance has for some time now been attached to these Jewish apostles. . . . The Christian apostles are part of something entirely new and dynamic in that the whole Christian religion is something to spread abroad.'

man himself' (m.Ber. 5.5). The  $\text{ἄποστολος}$  is distinctive to Rabbinic Judaism and the Christian  $\text{ἀπόστολος}$  is uniquely associated with the mission to preach Jesus Christ.

### Paul's Self-Identity as an Apostle

We can return now to Paul's use of the word to identify himself.<sup>13</sup> It is clear from the foregoing that Paul identified himself with the Christian mission when he identified himself as an apostle. The question now is, however, can we define or clarify his apostolic self-consciousness more specifically than that? We should first consider the question of the timing of his early consciousness of apostolic identity. It is not possible to determine when Paul began to conceive of himself as an apostle. Although he traces his apostolic call back to the Damascus Road epiphany (Gal. 1:15-16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8-9), it seems unlikely that he would have consciously identified himself as an apostle at that time; it seems more likely that later reflection on the incident, perhaps motivated by emerging social pressures, brought about such an interpretation.<sup>14</sup> One obvious suggestion for a definite starting point is the time the church at Antioch commissioned Paul and Barnabas for missionary work among the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-3).<sup>15</sup> Even Luke, who is clearly reluctant to include Paul among the Petrine category of apostles, used the title 'apostle' for Paul and Barnabas to designate them missionary leaders from the

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<sup>13</sup> Jurgen Becker (1993: 80) comments, 'When a term such as that of apostle has become only partially fixed in use—as is typical for a dynamic movement such as early Christianity—then a great deal depends on how someone like Paul himself understands his apostleship.'

<sup>14</sup> Best 1986: 5-6.

<sup>15</sup> Best 1986 fails to consider this as a possible origin of Paul's claim to be an apostle. Schnackenburg (1970a: 294) suggests that the use of the term apostle to designate a Christian missionary originated in the church at Antioch and that Paul simply adopted this concept of the apostle.

church in Antioch. (Acts 14:4, 14). The paucity of evidence does not allow us to probe further to consider whether or not Paul considered himself an apostle earlier than this time. Even after his consciousness of being an apostle, however, the title may have remained unimportant in his missionary service. Best claims that 'it is highly unlikely that when Paul arrived in a new mission area that he began by announcing that he was an apostle.' He suggestively points out that when writing to the Galatians Paul claimed that the Galatians received him *ὡς ἄγγελον θεοῦ*, not as an *ἀπόστολον θεοῦ*.<sup>16</sup>

Paul's first mention of the noun 'apostle' occurs in his earliest letter, 1 Thessalonians, where he used the word only once, but in an illuminating context (1 Thess. 2:7). In his later correspondence with other churches the title will become frequent and forced, declaring his apostolic identity to his readers in the epistolary prescript (Gal. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1) and against opposition (2 Cor. 10-13), but in 1 Thessalonians his single claim is uncontroversial. He categorized himself, Silvanus and Timothy as apostles to the Thessalonians, in much the same way that Paul and Barnabas had been designated apostles to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14:4, 14). Paul does not distinguish himself from his missionary companions, Silvanus and Timothy, but includes them in the same apostolic category. Later and elsewhere Paul named other persons in this same apostolic category, including Barnabas (1 Cor. 9:6), Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7), and possibly Apollos (1 Cor. 4:6-9).<sup>17</sup> It is unlikely that anyone would have

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<sup>16</sup> Best 1986: 6. Best does not think that Paul deliberately avoided use of the term *ἀπόστολος* in the letter; rather, 'he did not use it because it would not have reflected how the Galatians received him; in the beginning of his mission they did not think of him as an apostle.'

<sup>17</sup> The grammar of 1 Corinthians 4:6-9 is inconclusive. Best (1986: 22 fn.4) thinks Paul included Apollos among the apostles in 1 Corinthians 4:9, but Schmithals (1969: 67 fn.39) does not. Schmithals notes that 1 Clement 47:4 excludes Apollos from the apostles.



challenged Paul's claim to be an apostle in such a category. At this point the most that can be said is that Paul had been commissioned to preach the gospel, and it is clear that it was the church of Antioch that sent him out. This seems uncontroversial.

Nevertheless, Paul's apostolic claim was later scrutinized and challenged and he was moved to defend himself: ἡ ἐμὴ ἀπολογία τοῖς ἐμὲ ἀνακρίνουσιν ἐστὶν αὕτη (1 Cor. 9:3). He argues, 'Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, surely I am to you, for you are the proof of my apostleship in the Lord' (1 Cor. 9:1-2). Why this challenge? Paul's letters reveal that his apostolic claim had become more exclusive than his earlier claim in 1 Thessalonians. Hans Dieter Betz suggests that Paul's confrontation with Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14) stimulated a change in Paul's apostolic self-consciousness.<sup>18</sup> He points to Galatians 1:1, where Paul forcefully declared that his apostolic identity did not derive from any human commission: 'Paul, an apostle sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.' This statement may imply that the church at Antioch no longer regarded Paul as their apostle and that Paul could no longer claim an authoritative commission from them. Although it is not possible to confirm such an implication, one can conclude that from this time forward Paul designated himself an apostle commissioned by the Lord himself and not by any church or person. He routinely establishes his apostleship in the Damascus Road revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:15-16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8-9). He is a 'called' apostle, called 'by the will of God' (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1), and he did not need 'letters of recommendation' from a church (2 Cor. 3:1). Paul here claimed equal apostolic status with Peter and 'The Twelve' in being commissioned directly by Jesus Christ. From this time forward, then,

Paul distinguished his own apostolic status from his co-workers' status as servants of the Lord, no longer including them with himself in the same apostolic category. In 1 Corinthians 1:1 he identified himself as an apostle, but not his co-worker Sosthenes: 'Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes.' Again in 2 Corinthians 1:1: 'Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.' Timothy, who had earlier been included with Paul among the apostles (1 Thess. 2:7), is now designated 'our brother.' Further indication that Paul sought to differentiate his own apostolic identity from Timothy, Barnabas, and other missionaries is found in 1 Corinthians 15:5-11, where Paul again included himself among the category of apostles commissioned directly by the resurrected Jesus Christ, but this time he claims to be the last of such persons (ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων 15:8) included in this category, thereby closing the apostolate to that select group.<sup>19</sup> Paul recognized that there were apostles in this category before him chronologically (τοὺς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἀποστόλους Gal. 1:17), such as Peter and James the Lord's brother, but none after him. He is a member of an exclusive category of apostles. For Paul the distinguishing mark of membership in this apostolic group is a direct commission from the resurrected Lord (1 Cor. 15:5-8).<sup>20</sup> He acknowledges that he is the least worthy to hold such an office because he persecuted the church, but he cannot deny that God called him by grace to be an apostle (1 Cor. 15:9-10).

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<sup>18</sup> Betz 1992: 310.

<sup>19</sup> It may be possible that Barnabas belonged in the exclusive group, but the same cannot be said for Timothy.

<sup>20</sup> Schmithals (1969: 28) states the position clearly: 'This, then, distinguishes the apostle in every case from the other missionaries of primitive Christianity: The apostle is called to his missionary service by the exalted Lord through an ἀποκάλυψις.'



inclusive sense that Paul was commissioned with Barnabas by a church, the church at Antioch, (Acts 14:4, 14). Thus, Luke's conception of Paul's apostolic status differs sharply from Paul's later conception in the Corinthian correspondence. The Corinthians, too, may have established or inherited a different standard by which they assessed apostolicity: σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου (2 Cor. 12:12).<sup>25</sup> Schnackenburg believes the phrase σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου 'was probably a shibboleth of the opponents, who understood thereby "signs and wonders and mighty works," as can be seen by what follows.' Paul's response to this standard was to claim his own ministry evinced such power (1 Cor. 2:4-5; 2 Cor. 10:1-6), but more importantly to reveal that such a standard was misguided and that the true marks of an apostle are weakness and suffering (1 Cor. 4:9-13). The Corinthians may have established other criteria in addition to these charismatic signs,<sup>26</sup> but enough has been discussed to conclude that various views of apostolicity existed within the early churches and that these differing notions, without a widely recognized standard, may well have led some to dispute Paul's claim to be an apostle.

The genitive in Paul's claim to be an ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1) may highlight and distinguish two apostolic categories: apostles sent by Jesus Christ in contrast to apostles sent by churches. The latter category were designated ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν by Paul (2 Cor. 8:23). In that case the genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ did not only indicate possession by Jesus Christ, but probably also indicated agency,

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<sup>25</sup> Schnackenburg 1970a: 296-98; Schmithals 1969: 35-36.

<sup>26</sup> Schnackenburg (1970a: 298) states, 'Without going into the other possible claims of the opponents which marked their conception of an apostle, we can say that they considered a proclamation of Christ, produced by the Spirit and filled with power, as essential. Paul accepts this underlying conception of an apostle, but interprets the resulting image of an apostle in a very different manner. Christ himself must be proclaimed as crucified, and only in the second place as risen in the life of the one who

reflecting the verbal qualities of the noun, ‘one sent by Jesus Christ.’ Thus, when Paul designated himself an ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ he identified himself as an apostle commissioned by Jesus Christ himself. Thus he claimed to be an apostle in the same category as Peter, James, and the Twelve. It follows then that the genitive in Paul’s claim to be an ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολον (Rom. 11:13; cf. 1:5; Gal. 2:8) probably did not indicate agency (‘one sent by the Gentiles,’ or ‘one sent by a church among the nations’ i.e., the church at Antioch), because that would only obscure his emphasis on being sent by Jesus Christ. Instead the genitive probably suggests the place and people to whom he was sent (‘an apostle to the nations’).<sup>27</sup> The terminology τὰ ἔθνη was used by Greeks to indicate both the Roman provinces and the people of those provinces, both Greek and non-Greek, as is found in several inscriptions. For example, an inscription from Ephesus begins: Ἐφεσίων ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων Ἑλλήνων αἱ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ κατοικοῦσαι καὶ τὰ ἔθνη (*CIG* 2957). Several inscriptions begin: οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ δῆμοι καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ... (*OGIS* 438, 439, *et al*). Paul probably used the term in the same way, to designate the Roman provinces outside of Judea where Diaspora Judeans and non-Judeans lived under the jurisdiction of the Roman government. In the same way that Greek writers included other Greeks among τὰ ἔθνη (τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν τοῖς Ἑλληνικοῖς [*CIG* 2954]), Paul

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proclaims (cf. 13:3 f.); or better, Christ wants to show his power of life to those who receive the gospel, primarily through the weakness of the apostle.’

<sup>27</sup> Strelan (1996: 303-306) has a helpful discussion of this matter. He does, however, read too much into the phrase ‘apostle to the nations’ when he claims (p. 306) that ‘Paul’s aim then in going to the ἔθνη . . . was to proclaim to them the good news that they need no longer look to Jerusalem but they are called to join the community of those in-Christ; and more importantly, that observance of the Law (best observed in Israel) was not the decisive factor in belonging to the people of God.’ Chae 1997 seeks to explain how Paul’s consciousness of being ‘apostle to the gentiles’ influenced his theology and, in particular, his letter to the Romans. Strangely, however, Chae never attempts to explain how Paul used and understood the phrase ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος.

included Diaspora Judeans among τὰ ἔθνη in Romans 1:13 when he wrote καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν. We claim, then, that when Paul designated himself an apostle he identified himself as one commissioned by Jesus Christ to go to the nations with the message of the gospel.

We should briefly discuss one attempt to further clarify and define the specific claim of Paul when he designated himself ἑθνῶν ἀπόστολος. In Paul and the Salvation of Mankind Johannes Munck argued that Paul understood his call as ἑθνῶν ἀπόστολος to be imbued with a decisive eschatological conception. According to Munck Paul believed that the successful completion of his ministry to the Gentiles would usher in the consummation of *Heilsgeschichte*. He writes, ‘Thus Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, becomes the central figure in the story of salvation. . . . The fullness of the Gentiles, which is Paul’s aim, is the decisive turning-point in redemptive history. With that there begins the salvation of Israel and the coming of Antichrist, and through it the coming of Christ for judgment and salvation, and so the end of the world.’ In Munck’s estimation, the church in Jerusalem believed that after the conversion of the Judeans the righteous Gentiles would be converted, but Paul came to a different view, believing that God had revealed to him that the conversion of the Gentiles would result in the conversion of Israel and that God had called him to be *the* apostle to the Gentiles and thereby inaugurate the end of history and the return of Christ. Munck appeals to three major texts: 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7; Romans 9-11; and Romans 15:14. Leaving aside the difficult question of the authorship of 2 Thessalonians, Munck’s view that Paul identifies his preaching to the Gentiles as τὸ κατέχον and himself as ὁ κατέχον in 2:6-7 is

unjustified.<sup>28</sup> In his reading the end of the age cannot come until Paul concludes his ministry to the Gentiles. Paul is therefore 'the restrainer.' But only by presupposing Paul as the referent will one see Paul here. In Romans 9-11 Munck emphasizes the role of the Gentiles in provoking Israel to jealousy and thereby inciting the conversion of the Judeans. In Romans 15:14-29 Paul explains the geography of his mission throughout the Roman world. Munck boldly summarizes, 'The three texts we have dealt with hitherto narrate Paul's apostleship as a call to eschatological labours within God's plan of salvation. They resemble each other in being entirely uncontroversial. Paul stands as the apostle of the Gentiles alone among the Gentiles, and when his work is finished, all Israel will be saved, Antichrist will manifest himself and have the sovereignty till Christ comes for judgment and salvation.'<sup>29</sup> Munck's work has been criticized for its eisegetical tendencies and he has not won followers.<sup>30</sup> Finally, there is no justification for designating Paul as *the* apostle to the Gentiles. There is no definite article in the New Testament texts. Munck seems to have been unduly influenced by Luke's portrait of Paul in Acts in designating him in this manner. Morton Smith's evaluation is harsh but accurate: 'he [Munck] did not derive his theory from Paul's letters, but imposed it on them.'<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Munck is dependent on Oscar Cullmann's 1936 article, but, other than Munck, Cullmann has not won any followers.

<sup>29</sup> Munck 1959: 55.

<sup>30</sup> See the following responses to Munck's work: Morton Smith 1957; E. Best 1961; W.D. Davies 1962. See too Schmithals comments (1969: 44-46).

<sup>31</sup> Smith 1957: 125.

## Conclusion

Our claim, then, that when Paul designated himself an apostle he identified himself as one commissioned by Jesus Christ to go to the nations with the message of the gospel, has remained thus far unspecific as concerns any uniquely Pauline qualities and characteristics he brought to that role. Study of the terminology (ἀπόστολος, ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος) has not distinguished Paul's particular embodiment of that identity. The category 'apostle' was necessarily flexible or adaptable to any specific social location to which an apostle was called. The missionary was sent simply to carry out a task. Each apostle was required to, and undoubtedly attempted to, embody their apostolic identity in a manner appropriate to the social situations encountered. Just as Peter undoubtedly assumed a variety of socially responsible roles in the accomplishment of his apostleship, so too Paul undoubtedly sought to integrate his apostolic calling with his social locations by assuming specific roles that would enable him to fulfill his task. Exegetical analysis in the tradition of historical, critical, and grammatical studies can take us no further in our attempt to discern Paul's self-identity. It is clear that he saw himself as an apostle. It is not clear how he conceived this apostleship. What is needed is a method of reading Paul's letters that will enable the interpreter to discern literary indications of his self-identity in addition to these basic statements. Two methods have been popular. The first reads intertextual allusions to Old Testament prophets as suggestive of Paul's self-identity. The second finds comparisons with ancient philosophers to be promising. The following two chapters examine these methods.



Part Two  
Inadequate Answers

Prophet and Philosopher

## Chapter Three

### Paul as Prophet

#### Allusions and the Search for Paul's Apostolic Self-Identity

##### Introduction

Perhaps the most obvious and popular point of departure for clarifying Paul's self-identity as ἀπόστολος has been to classify him with the prophets, for, as Hans Windisch has written, 'Das "Senden" (ἀποστέλλειν LXX) ist das typische Wort für diese Ermächtigung und Beauftragung des Profeten.'<sup>1</sup> Similarly Karl Olav Sandnes has said it is 'a commonplace in Pauline scholarship that Paul's apostolate was more or less marked by prophetic features.' And later he writes, 'In a majority of Pauline studies it is mentioned that Paul conceived of his apostleship in prophetic terms.'<sup>1</sup>

It is well known that the Old Testament prophets were 'sent' (πῆψ/ἀποστέλλειν, cf. Isaiah 6:8; Jeremias 1:7; Ezekiel 2:3) and this linguistic connection between the sending of prophets and apostles is apparent in the New Testament as well: ἀποστελῶ εἰς αὐτοὺς προφήτας καὶ ἀποστόλους (Luke 11:49), ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω πρὸς ὑμᾶς προφήτας καὶ σοφοὺς καὶ γραμματεῖς (Matt. 23:34). Thus, David Aune claims, 'in many respects the NT apostle was the functional equivalent of the OT prophet.'<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the social practices of the early Christian communities highlight the role of prophets and the prominence of prophecy among Christ-followers (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1-2; 15:32; 21:9-11;

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<sup>1</sup> Windisch 1934: 152. Sandnes 1991: 2, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Aune 1983: 202.

Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 11:4-5; 12:10, 28-29; Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; Rev. 10:7; 11:18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 22:9). Finally, Luke probably included Paul among the προφῆται καὶ διδάσκαλοι in the church at Antioch in Acts 13:1. At first glance, then, the category 'prophet' seems to offer promise in helping to discern Paul's apostolic self-identity.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter we will examine two attempts to defend the proposition that Paul thought of himself as a prophet. The first attempt, that of M. Eugene Boring in his 1991 book The Continuing Voice of Jesus: Christian Prophecy and the Gospel Tradition, is based on a traditional historical critical method of studying biblical texts.<sup>4</sup> Boring's argument is well-presented, thorough, and representative of biblical scholarship. The second attempt, that of Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey in their 1996 study Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality, draws from the social sciences, especially cultural anthropology. Their case is also well-presented, thorough, and suggestive for the future of biblical scholarship. This chapter will demonstrate that although both methods shine some light on relevant texts, both are limited in their ability to discern the more subtle nuances in the discursive presentation of Paul's self-identity. In the final analysis both arguments fail to persuade, but it is highly instructive to understand why that is the case. Both demonstrate the need for a methodology that is more suitably adapted to the goal of discovering Paul's self-identity in his letters.

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<sup>3</sup> It is surprising that no one had offered a book length study of Paul's prophetic self-identity until Karl Olav Sandnes' 1991 monograph. He wrote at that time (p. 4), 'These observations are not revolutionary innovations in Pauline scholarship. To our knowledge, however, no one has taken these observations as a starting point for a monographic investigation of Paul's apostolic self-consciousness. It is therefore high time that this is done.'

<sup>4</sup> Boring's 1991 volume is a thorough revision of his 1982 Cambridge University Press monograph Sayings of the Risen Jesus.

A Historical Critical Argument for Paul as Prophet: M. Eugene Boring

Paul never explicitly identified himself as a prophet. There are, however, indications that he was recognized as a prophet by others (Acts 13:1; Hippolytus *Ref.* 8.20.1).<sup>5</sup> To clarify Paul's own self-understanding it will be helpful to begin with a definition of the term. 'The early Christian prophet was an immediately inspired spokesperson for the risen Lord Jesus, who received intelligible messages that he or she felt impelled to deliver to the Christian community or, as a representative of the community, to the general public.'<sup>6</sup> M. Eugene Boring believes, 'If prophesy is defined functionally as above, then Paul is a prophet, for he is an immediately inspired spokesman for the risen Lord, who receives revelations that he is impelled to deliver to the Christian community (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 2:13; 5:3-4; 7:40; 14:6, 37; 2 Cor. 2:17; 12:1-9, 19; 13:3; Gal. 1:12; 2:2; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:1-2, 15-17).'<sup>7</sup> For Boring it is not important that Paul did not identify himself as a prophet by specific use of the term; what is important is that Paul functioned as a prophet.<sup>8</sup> His prophetic behaviour was recognized by others and can still be discerned in his letters. Boring describes three principal ways in which Paul's

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<sup>5</sup> Sandnes may overstate the case when he claims (1991: 3), in regard to Acts 13:1, 'it is impossible to group the names, some as prophets and others are teachers,' but his position is probably correct. He also notes that in Acts 21:38 Paul is confused with a well known Egyptian prophet (cf. *Jos. Ant.* 20.169-172; *Wars* 2.262-263). Aune 1983: 269-70 defines Paul's speech in Acts 13:9-11 as a 'prophetic speech.'

<sup>6</sup> Boring 1991: 38. Friedrich 1968: 848 offers a similar definition: 'primitive Christian prophecy is the inspired speech of charismatic preachers through whom God's plan of salvation for the world and the community and His will for the life of the individual Christian was made known.'

<sup>7</sup> Boring 1991: 61.

<sup>8</sup> He states (1991:61), 'To be sure, Paul never calls himself "prophet," nor is he called such by others. However, it is function, not label, that is important. The absence of the title in Paul's case is accounted for by his insistence that he is an "apostle." But the figure of the apostle in the early church, and especially in Paul, is modeled largely on the role of the prophet in Israel as God's representative, who has been called and commissioned by God himself.'

prophetic self-consciousness left its imprint on his letters.<sup>9</sup> First, there are incidental remarks that reveal his prophetic identity. Second, there are literary forms and formulae associated with the prophetic vocation. Third, there are instances of inspired prophecy contained in Paul's letters. We will consider each of these briefly in turn.

Boring discusses several passages whose incidental remarks suggest Paul's prophetic self-consciousness. Galatians 1:15-16 is perhaps the most frequently cited reference in this category. Boring claims this passage 'is replete with prophetic allusions and shows that he understands himself in the succession of the prophets.'<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 is 'the capital illustration of this kind of material' because the 'subject and background is the prophetic revelation that lives in Paul's mission.'<sup>11</sup> Romans 10:17-18 contains four signs of Paul's prophetic self-consciousness: (1) the use of ἀκοή as a synonym for κήρυγμα (cf. Gal. 3:2, 5), (2) the idea that the message is heard διὰ ῥήματος Χριστοῦ, (3) the prophetic connotations of the word φθόγγος, and (4) 'the general thrust of the passage to the effect that people do not take the preaching task on themselves but are *sent*.'<sup>12</sup> In 1 Corinthians 4:1, when he described himself as one among 'the servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God,' Paul incidentally described himself in the same terms as the Christian prophets. Finally, 1 Thessalonians 4:7-9 has several words and ideas associated with the prophetic ministry: (1) the idea of a divine calling, (2) the notion that a rejection of the message is a rejection of God, (3) the claim that they are taught by God, and (4) the reference to the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>9</sup> Boring 1991: 62.

<sup>10</sup> Boring 1991: 61.

<sup>11</sup> Boring 1991: 63.

<sup>12</sup> Boring 1991: 63. Italics in original.

Second, Boring claims that prophetic speech makes use of specific literary forms and formulae and those same devices are frequently found in Paul's letters. Here Boring is dependent on the work of Ulrich Müller, who has defined several criteria for discovering such prophetic devices in Paul's letters. Boring lists the following criteria: (1) introductory and legitimation formulae, (2) function and content, that is, the content is presented as the word of God delivered to the recipients, (3) traditional speech forms of Old Testament, Jewish, or Christian prophets, (4) congruency between the text and early Christian prophecy, (5) congruency between the text and oral speech patterns, and (6) a sudden change in literary style.<sup>13</sup> Finally, Boring identifies many passages that contain inspired revelations, perhaps from Paul himself (Romans 8:19-22; 11:25-26, 31-32; 13:11-14; 16:17-20; 1 Cor. 3:17; 7:10, 29-31; 11:23-25; 12:3; 13:13; 14:38; 15:20-29, 51-52; 16:22; 2 Cor. 5:20-21; 11:13-15; 12:9; Gal. 1:9-10; 5:21b; Phil. 2:6-11; 3:17-4:1; 1 Thess. 2:15-16; 3:4; 4:2-6, 15-17; 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 2:3-12; 3:6, 10, 12). He notes that three are repeatedly cited as prophetic oracles by their form, style and content: Romans 11:25-26, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, and 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.

#### Boring's Method and Argument Examined

It is helpful to begin by comparing Boring's work with Karl Olav Sandnes' monograph Paul—One of the Prophets? Both were published in 1991 and both are based on a historical critical methodology. In contrast to Boring, however, Sandnes' answer to his question is neither a clear 'yes' nor a clear 'no.' Instead, he believes that Paul found himself in similar social situations to many of the Old Testament prophets—often reviled, challenged, and in need of legitimation—and, therefore, utilized literary allusions to

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<sup>13</sup> Müller 1975: 43-46.

prophetic legitimation texts in order to legitimize his own apostolic calling. Therefore, in the end, Sandnes prefers to speak of 'Paul's prophet-like apostolate.'<sup>14</sup> His conclusion is worth quoting more fully.<sup>15</sup>

Paul's status as an apostle was in constant need of defence and legitimation. In the OT, the prophetic commission played an important role in legitimising the mission and message of prophets who functioned largely, if not entirely, outside the boundaries of the religious establishment. Paul found himself in a corresponding situation, and used these biblical traditions in order to establish his legitimacy as the ambassador of Christ.

The comparison of Boring with Sandnes highlights a significant methodological weakness in Boring's work. Both Sandnes and Boring recognize allusions to the prophets in Paul's writings, but they diverge in their understanding of the relevance of those literary allusions for discerning Paul's presentation of self-identity. Boring believes that prophetic allusions points to prophetic identity, but Sandnes believes that a prophetic allusion points instead to apostolic legitimation. Who is correct? Ultimately the method cannot adjudicate between the two views because the question is not 'which man has more accurately applied the method?' The historical critical method can tell us that Paul alluded to the prophets, but only rarely can it tell us why he did so. Both men attempt to explain why Paul did so and thereby move into different and new spheres: Sandness moves toward social legitimation concerns, whereas Boring transfers into the realm of personal identity formation. This movement becomes problematic because while Boring has shifted into a different realm of reading and interpreting texts, he is not aware of the hermeneutical significance of that shift and, therefore, has not adopted an appropriate method of reading and interpreting texts in the sphere of discursive identity formation.

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<sup>14</sup> Sandnes 1991: 244. Consider his statement on page 243: 'The very consciousness of preaching the eschatological comfort-gospel seems to have been an important reason for Paul to present his apostolate as prophet-like.'

Although Boring may believe that his conclusion (Paul identifies himself with the prophets) is built on the solid ground of biblical hermeneutical methods developed within the guild over the past two hundred years, in fact he has moved beyond that methodological ground and is making interpretive statements without a sufficient methodological foundation or guide.

In order to assess Boring's argument, it will be helpful to begin by clarifying the social situation in the early Christian communities by distinguishing the Christian prophets from their Old Testament counterparts. Friedrich points out that the presence of a prophet and the prophetic gift in the early Christian community was not an anomaly, but was more the norm, for 'all are filled with the prophetic spirit.'<sup>16</sup> This situation suggests some differences between the prophet in the early Christian community and the older, pre-Christian, situation in Israel when the prophetic gift was less widely experienced (cf. Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:16-18). Two related features in particular differentiate the two types of prophets: calling and authority.<sup>17</sup> Friedrich points out that, in contrast to the Old Testament prophet, the Christian prophet was neither called to the office nor endowed with a unique authority over the community. Whereas the Old Testament prophet received a life-long commission as God's spokesman; the Christian prophet received immediate revelation for specific situations, rather than a vocational calling. The Christian community was responsible, therefore, to test the words of the Christian prophet (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:19-22; cf 2 Thess. 2:1-2; 1 Cor. 2:2-16; 12:1-3; 14:37-38; Rom 12:6; 1 Jn 4:1; Rev. 2:2). The presence of false prophecy made this test crucial for the health of the community. Thus, the Christian prophet 'does

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<sup>15</sup> Sandnes 1991: 242.

<sup>16</sup> Friedrich 1968: 849.



not stand above the community; like all the rest he [*sic*] is a member of it.’<sup>18</sup> Given this basic description of the social situation in early Christian communities, we are better able to evaluate Boring’s first claim concerning the significance of Paul’s allusions. We cannot consider every passage offered by Boring, but will restrict the discussion to Galatians 1:15-16 as representative of the group.

The logic of Boring’s claim that Galatians 1:15-16 is ‘replete with prophetic allusions and shows that he understands himself in the succession of the prophets’ is faulty. The existence of prophetic allusions in this passage and in the other passages does not demonstrate that Paul possessed a prophetic self-understanding or self-consciousness. Consider Paul’s use of priestly allusions in Romans 15:16. He wrote that God chose him to be λειτουργὸν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἱερουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα γένηται ἡ προσφορά τῶν ἔθνων εὐπρόσδεκτος ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ. The priestly allusions in this passage surpass in number and clarity the prophetic allusions in Galatians 1:15-16, yet few interpreters have concluded that Paul thought of himself as a priest.<sup>19</sup> Instead, most read Paul’s allusion as metaphorical.<sup>20</sup> This example simply shows

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<sup>17</sup> Three other differences are discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>18</sup> Friedrich 1968: 849. Sandnes 1991: 15 concurs, writing, ‘The early Christian prophets are, generally speaking, depicted as prophesying in a particular situation. Their activity was not directed by a call, but by ever new revelations to particular individuals and groups.’ My use of *sic* reflects the fact that there were women prophets in early Christianity. When I quote an author who uses non-inclusive terminology I will do so without acknowledgment.

<sup>19</sup> Schreiner (1998: 766) notes ‘the piling up of cultic terms,’ but reads them as metaphors. The interpreter who comes closest to seeing Paul as priest is Michael Newton (1985: 61-62), who writes, ‘Paul’s self description, then, as λειτουργός has unquestionable cultic connotations. Paul sees his mission to the Gentiles as a priestly one. The priests who once served God in the Temple are now replaced by those who are ministers of Christ Jesus in proclaiming the Gospel. . . . Paul, by using the participle of the verb ἱερουργέω, emphasizes this priestly role which he now firmly believes he is carrying out.’

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Schreiner 1988: 766; Jervis 1991: 121; Dunn 1988: 859-60.

the faulty logic in Boring's claim. The purpose of Paul's allusion in Galatians 1:15-16 (ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἀφορίσματος με ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς μου καὶ καλέσας) is not to reveal or suggest his identity as a prophet, as Boring and others claim; in fact, it is more likely the opposite. By alluding to the call (καλέω) of the Old Testament prophets in his own call by God, Paul sought to legitimize his claim to be an apostle sent not by men but by Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:1). Sandnes explains:

In this situation Paul legitimises his call and apostolic task by referring to the biblical prophets as models. For the biblical tradition on the prophets witnesses to revelations and visions as God's way of assigning a prophet in his task. . . . It is by recalling the tradition of the biblical prophets that Paul is able to lay a legitimate foundation for his apostolate.<sup>21</sup>

Paul thereby distinguished himself from the early Christian prophets, who were not called and therefore did not possess the distinctive authority of an ancient prophet or Paul. By emphasizing that he was called, Paul distinguished his apostolic identity (Gal. 1:1) from the Christian prophets and highlighted his authority over the Christian community, subverting notions that his message (the gospel) should be tested or could be found wanting (Gal. 1:11-12; 2:6-10, 11-14). Karl Sandnes summarizes this point nicely:<sup>22</sup>

The early Christian prophets did not, as far as we are informed, rely upon a 'once-for-all call', but on the continuous reception of revelations. They were in need of ever-new revelations (cf. 1 Cor 14:29-30). Paul's ἀποκάλυψις, by which he was commissioned to preach the gospel to the nations, therefore, constituted the fundamental and never-changing mystery. It moved beyond the many prophetic mysteries which were accordingly more topical than fundamental in character. The gospel was therefore not open to testing by men, as were prophetic utterances in the community. That is, as an apostle Paul would not allow his message to be treated as simply that of another pneumatic or prophet.

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<sup>21</sup> Sandnes 1991: 242.

<sup>22</sup> Sandnes 1991: 245. Recall Paul's use of the term 'called' in reference to his apostleship (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1).

Sandnes states the point clearly: the early Christian prophets 'never appear to be decisive for how Paul thought about himself.'<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Boring's claim cannot be rehabilitated by switching the focus to the Old Testament prophet and claiming that Paul sought to identify himself with that category (rather than the category of the early Christian prophet). In the prophetic office of the Old Testament Paul found a model of 'one called' and that calling is the extent of the point of similarity for him in this passage.<sup>24</sup> 'Paul legitimises his call and apostolic task by referring to the biblical prophets as models. . . . It is by recalling the tradition of the biblical prophets that Paul is able to lay a legitimate foundation for his apostolate.'<sup>25</sup> Sandnes draws attention to three critical differences between Paul and the Old Testament prophets that prevent the interpreter from assuming that Paul saw further similarities.<sup>26</sup> First, in regard to his time in the history of salvation, Paul saw himself as proclaiming the fulfillment of God's plan in Jesus, whereas the prophets belonged in a different epoch predicting that future fulfillment (Rom. 1:2). Second, Paul's calling had a christological basis. Whereas the former prophets spoke for God, Paul spoke for Jesus Christ; that is, Jesus himself addressed the audience through Paul (Rom. 10:17b). Third, the purpose of the former prophets' ministry was to preserve the covenant faith within Israel, whereas Paul's purpose was to proclaim the new covenant faith to the nations (Gal. 1:16a). Thus, Sandnes

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<sup>23</sup> Sandnes 1991: 14.

<sup>24</sup> This is not meant to imply that Paul did not find other points of comparison with Old Testament prophets in other passages. For example, it has been pointed out that when Paul discussed his compulsion to preach ('necessity is placed on me; indeed, woe is unto me, if I do not preach the gospel' 1 Cor. 9:16) he alluded to the same compulsion as expressed by the Old Testament prophets (Jer. 20:9; 4:19; Isa. 21:3; Amos 3:8; Micah 3:8). See Hafemann 1990: 139-40.

<sup>25</sup> Sandnes 1991: 242.

describes Paul's apostleship as 'something radically new compared to OT prophets.'<sup>27</sup> It is unlikely, then, that Paul would have desired to identify himself closely with either the Old Testament prophets or with the early Christian prophets.

Boring's second point concerns literary forms and formulae in Paul's letters and is dependent on Ulrich Müller's 1975 study Prophetie und Predigt im Neuen Testament: Formgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur urchristlichen Prophetie. Müller's case is not as sturdy as Boring suggests, however. Müller argues that the Pauline introductory formulae λέγω δε ὑμῖν (Gal. 5:2, 16) and τοῦτο δέ φημι (1 Cor. 7:29; 15:50) and the Pauline paraenetic formula παρακαλῶ δια τοῦ κυρίου ἡνῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom. 15:30; 1 Cor. 1:10) are the functional equivalent of the prophetic messenger formulae (i.e., 'this is what the Lord says,' 'the word of the Lord came to me,') which legitimate the Old Testament prophet and introduce prophetic speech.<sup>28</sup> One immediate and obvious problem with Müller's approach is his assimilation of paraenetic speech into prophetic speech. In essence Müller transmutes paraenesis into prophecy without adequate justification.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore Müller himself acknowledges two weaknesses in his thesis.<sup>30</sup> He admits, first, that Paul's forms and formulae are not the linguistic equivalent of those found in the Old Testament prophetic texts. 'Es fehlt deshalb bei ihm die Form Botenformel.'<sup>31</sup> In fact they are very different (λέγει κύριος [LXX] versus λέγω [Paul]) and this poses a significant problem for Müller's case. He offers two responses that seek to alleviate the

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<sup>26</sup> Compare with Ellis 2000: 204: 'Early Christian prophecy displays its distinctive character in its christological model, in its role vis-à-vis false prophecy and in its rather unusual manifestation as a gift of strange tongues.'

<sup>27</sup> Sandnes 1991: 7; cf. pp. 17-18.

<sup>28</sup> Müller 1975: 117-40.

<sup>29</sup> Sandnes 1991: 10.

<sup>30</sup> Aune 1983: 262.

<sup>31</sup> Müller 1975: 128.

difficulty, but they serve more to highlight the depth of the problem than to rectify it. His first response is to say that Paul is more than a prophet ('Paulus mehr als ein Bote ist.');

hence, he can speak in his own name. But this response only weakens his case further. His second response is more interesting. He claims that Paul could not use the same prophetic literary forms lest they be misunderstood in terms of a Hellenistic spirit-inspired speaker.<sup>32</sup>

Wir nehmen also an, daß Paulus die Botenformel in der Gestalt „dies sagt der heilige Geist bzw. der Christus“ schon deswegen nicht benutzen konnte, weil sie damals hellenistisch interpretiert wurde und einem theologisch fragwürdigen Verständnis seines Amtes Vorschub leisten mußte.

This explanation is more ambitious than the first, but it too ultimately fails. Granting Müller's claim that the standard formulae were misunderstood in Corinth, this explanation is still insufficient to explain Paul's non-use of those forms for two reasons. First, Paul could have attempted to explain their proper use and meaning without giving up the forms. If those forms did function as standard legitimation formulae, as Müller says, then it seems unlikely that Paul would have jettisoned them in Corinth, where he needs just that—legitimation. It seems more likely that he would have fought for their proper use and meaning in the same way he fought for the proper use and meaning of the title apostle. The fact that he did not suggests that Paul was not concerned to appear as a prophet. Second, these standard forms were used by other early Christian prophets in Hellenistic settings, such as by Agabus in Caesarea (Acts 21:11), as Müller notes,<sup>33</sup> without any apparent problem. Thus, the fact that Paul did not use the standard prophetic formulae seriously weakens Müller's case and he has not offered a plausible explanation.

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<sup>32</sup> Müller 1975: 129.

<sup>33</sup> Müller 1975: 128.

He further weakens his case when he admits that Paul's introductory legitimation formulae are not followed by prophetic speech and that prophetic sections are not introduced by introductory legitimation formulae. 'Legitimationsformel . . . normalerweise gar nicht zu Beginn der jeweiligen prophetischen Abschnitte des Paulus steht.'<sup>34</sup> Again, however, his two responses to this problem fail to satisfy. He says that prophets did not need to use legitimation formulae. 'Ferner ist zu bedenken, daß ein Prophetenwort nicht unbedingt eine Legitimationsformel enthalten mußte, die Autorisierung des Propheten konnte von vornherein klar sein.'<sup>35</sup> He responds further by stating that the prophetic sections in Paul's letters did not need additional formulaic legitimation because such formulae in the introduction to the letter and in the introduction to the paraenetic section legitimized the whole letter.<sup>36</sup>

Der Grund dafür läßt sich schnell entdecken; er liegt in der Tatsache, daß die prophetisch strukturierten Abschnitte immer im Ganzen der Briefe begegnen. Die besondere Autorisation erfolgt aber jeweils zu Beginn des ganzen Briefes bzw. zu Beginn des paränetischen Briefteils (Rom 12,1; 1 Kor 1,10; 2 Kor 10,1; (Gal 1,1); 1 Thess 4,1). Es war also gar nicht nötig, sie zu Beginn des prophetischen Abschnittes zu wiederholen; denn der ganze Brief war bereits autorisiert.

These responses do nothing to alleviate the problem that Paul's so-called introductory formulae simply do not introduce prophetic speech. We conclude that Müller's form critical approach to identifying Paul as a prophet is unpersuasive. In light of these two weaknesses Müller himself shifts his focus away from formal criteria and argues that Paul's prophetic speech can be recognized by function and content.<sup>37</sup> In particular prophetic speech can be recognized by its paraenetic function and by three standard motifs: the imminence of the eschaton (Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 7:29-31),

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<sup>34</sup> Müller 1975: 138.

<sup>35</sup> Müller 1975: 138.

<sup>36</sup> Müller 1975: 138.

proclamations of judgment (1 Cor. 5:3-5; Rom. 16:17-20; Phil. 3:17-4:1; Gal. 1:6-9), proclamations of salvation (1 Thess. 4:15-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Rom. 11:25-26). The inherent weakness in this argument is the unargued assumption that paraenesis and prophetic speech are so related.

Finally, we must consider Boring's third argument. Paul's letters contain inspired revelations. It is true that Paul's letters contain revelatory phenomena (1 Cor. 2:13; 12:1-10; 14:6, 18; 2 Cor. 13:3; Gal. 2:2). They may even contain examples of inspired utterances.<sup>38</sup> Paul was undoubtedly gifted in several ways and it is likely that he practiced the charisma of prophesy (1 Cor. 14:18-19). This is perhaps the strongest argument for Boring's case. Nevertheless it is also deeply flawed and reveals most clearly the inadequacies of his methodology. Boring states bluntly, 'To be sure, Paul never calls himself "prophet," nor is he called such by others. However, *it is function, not label, that is important.*'<sup>39</sup> Boring here equates function with personal identity. But a basic question must be asked: On what social-psychological or literary theory of identity presentation and construction is this opinion based? It is, of course, clear that his biblical hermeneutic in no way demands or even suggests such an interpretive leap; hence, he cannot claim his statement is based on an established biblical methodology. On what basis is the claim made? We are left to wonder, then, if Boring's claim is based on nothing more than an unexamined and perhaps unconscious assumption of social identity formation. If it is based on a recognized and tested social identity theory, Boring has not informed us of the fact. Why should we believe that because Paul alluded to functioning as a prophet that he would have identified himself as a prophet? Many Christians possessed charismatic gifts,

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<sup>37</sup> Müller 1975: 139.

<sup>38</sup> For a general survey see Aune 1983: 202-3, 248-49.

including apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, those who speak in tongues (1 Cor. 12:28-30), and any one of these persons might have prophesied. In this sense, then, an outsider might say that Paul was a prophet or perhaps more accurately that Paul acted as a prophet. But that designation may not accurately reflect Paul's self-understanding, because function need not infer, and certainly does not determine, identity. Just as an out-of-work actor working in a restaurant might deny the suggestion that because he waits on tables he is a waiter, so Paul might well reject the title prophet on the simplistic inference that he does prophesy. Many other factors, social and personal, will influence one's self-identity. The titles and categories of one's self-identity do far more than indicate one's functions; at the very least they reveal or make claims to honour. If Paul deemed the title prophet to be in any sense a lesser honour than he properly deserved, then he would probably purposely avoid identifying himself as a prophet.

These questions and concerns demand that the interpreter utilize a methodology that recognizes how writers create identity categories and place themselves and others into those categories, how those categories relate to one another on a scale of inclusion and exclusion, and the relative values of each category within the writer's specific honour system. Boring's methodology, which highlights function, and does not recognize basic personal and social dimensions of self-identity is inadequate for the task of discerning the more subtle aspects of a literary presentation of self-identity.

#### A Social Scientific Argument for Paul as Prophet: Malina and Neyrey

Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey attempt to situate Paul explicitly within the social world of the ancient Mediterranean and discover his self-identity within that

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<sup>39</sup> Boring 1991: 61. Emphasis added.



context. They proceed in a two-step method: first, by listening to ‘native informants’ speak about or describe persons in three types of ancient speeches or texts (*encomia* or praise speeches, forensic speeches, and physiognomic texts) and, second, by applying insights from contemporary Mediterranean cultural anthropology as a general hermeneutical guide to those ancient informants. They conclude, ‘Paul insisted that he was an apostle, an apostle with the added credentials of a prophet.’<sup>40</sup>

Ancient rhetorical handbooks (progymnasmata) contained instructions and exercises for describing a person’s character in speeches. When praising a person, the speaker was taught to discuss the subject’s origin and birth, education, training, accomplishments, deeds of the body, deeds of the soul, and deeds of fortune; comparison with another person was recommended as a helpful means of displaying the subject’s superior honor.<sup>41</sup> When defending a person, the speaker was taught to portray the subject as honorable by highlighting his or her quality of character. Nine such qualities are discussed by Malina and Neyrey, following Cicero and Quintilian: name, nature, manner of life, fortune, habit, feeling, interests, purposes, and achievements.<sup>42</sup> Physiognomic texts taught ancient persons how to discern another person’s character on the basis of physical indicators. Aulus Gellius explains the meaning of physiognomy: ‘that word means to inquire into the character and dispositions of men by an inference drawn from their facial appearance and expression, and from the form and bearing of their whole body.’<sup>43</sup> Malina and Neyrey regard such ‘native informants’ as ‘eminently qualified to be our reliable guides to how Mediterraneans understood and assessed each other, for their

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<sup>40</sup> Malina and Neyrey 1996: 202.

<sup>41</sup> Malina and Neyrey 1996: 23-33.

<sup>42</sup> Malina and Neyrey 1996: 69-75.

<sup>43</sup> *Attic Nights* 1.9.2. Quoted Malina and Neyrey 1996: 108.

writings were considered normative in their own cultures.<sup>44</sup> These native informants enable the interpreter to avoid the twin problems of anachronistic and ethnocentric interpretation.

Information gathered from these native informants is then read in light of insights garnered from contemporary Mediterranean anthropologists.<sup>45</sup> Malina and Neyrey examine, for example, how identity is shaped by embeddedness within a family, fictive family, faction or coalition, work-group, collegium, synagogue, or polis. They consider how persons assimilate customs and traditions governing their behavior and informing their roles. They discuss the importance of duties, piety, and virtues as sanctions protecting society against deviance. Further, they study the way in which a social system based on honor and shame influences identity formation. This information provides a more detailed picture of a group-oriented society and how persons view themselves in such a society. Throughout this study Malina and Neyrey emphasize the themes of gender, generation, and geography as playing a critical and controlling role in the formation of identity within a group-oriented society.

In the final chapter of their book, 'Paul: Apostle and Prophet,' Malina and Neyrey utilize this information gathered from native informants and enlightened by contemporary Cultural Anthropologists to present a portrait of Paul. Malina and Neyrey state,<sup>46</sup>

Paul presented himself as the quintessential group-oriented person, controlled by forces greater than he: God ascribes his role, status, and honor at birth. Paul is duly group affiliated, a Pharisee, a member of a specific group. He insists that he learned nothing on his own but received everything from God. He is totally

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<sup>44</sup> Malina and Neyrey 1996: 5.

<sup>45</sup> They are especially influenced by Harry Triandis, who is actually a Social Psychologist, not a Cultural Anthropologist.

<sup>46</sup> Malina and Neyrey 1996: 203.

group-oriented: loyal, faithful and obedient, seeking God's honor and group benefits. And finally, he is ever sensitive to the opinion of others: his detractors, his Galatian audience, or the Jerusalem "pillars." For this group-oriented person, the acknowledgement by the Jerusalem "pillars" was a matter of the highest significance.

This emphasis on Paul as a group-oriented person rather than an individualist recurs throughout the chapter and throughout their descriptions of Paul. Using clues assembled from ancient encomia and forensic speeches about specific traits that characterize and identify a person, they search Paul's letters for specific indications of his self-identity. They note Paul's claim to be 'of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews' (Phil. 3:5), a "descendant of Abraham' (2 Cor. 11:22), and his education, training and accomplishments as a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5f., Gal. 2:14). They note that in regard to 'deeds of the body' Paul presented himself as weak (1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 11:29f.), despite knowing that this would be regarded negatively; nevertheless, he attempted to overcome that assessment and transform his bodily weakness into an honorable attribute (2 Cor. 12:5, 9-10). In regard to 'deeds of the soul' they note that Paul's letters are sprinkled with claims to the four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude). In regard to 'deeds of fortune' they note that Paul typically relates instead deeds of ill-fortune, such as his afflictions and persecution. 'Thus Paul is singularly lacking in the honorable marks of divine favor, as they were conventionally understood.'<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless Paul claims God's favor in overcoming these difficulties and thereby seeks to overturn a negative assessment of his fortunes. They conclude this chapter, writing,

For all of the "independence" claimed for Paul by modern Western readers, he presents himself as utterly dependent on group expectations and the controlling hand of forces greater than he: ancestors, groups, God. He was a typically group-

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<sup>47</sup> Malina and Neyrey 1996: 211.

oriented person. In fact “independence” of any group authorization would have been a major liability to him. From the viewpoint of modern biography, we must admit that we know nothing of his character, personality, idiosyncrasies, likes and dislikes, and other vast dimensions of his life. The most we can say is that he was a group-oriented person, not at all an individualist. But in terms of ancient Mediterranean concerns, we do not need to know any more than we do, for from what he tells us, we can fill in all that is necessary to know the man in his society.

### Malina and Neyrey’s Method and Argument Examined

Malina and Neyrey are to be applauded for recognizing the inadequacy of traditional, historical-critical methods and for exploring the use of more relevant hermeneutical tools for discerning Paul’s literary presentation of self-identity.<sup>48</sup> Their advocacy of cultural anthropology is a welcome innovation. However, I do not believe they have successfully discerned Paul’s self-identity and I believe that this failure is rooted in their methodology. Despite all their pronouncements on the importance of recognizing that Paul lived in a group-oriented society and that attention to this group-orientation in Paul’s identity formation is crucial, they never actually get to the point of defining and discussing the specific groups that most significantly informed Paul’s self-identity. In one sense Malina and Neyrey have been led astray by their ‘native informants’ because they have allowed the native informants to have a greater role in defining Paul’s identity than Paul himself. Such informants are, of course, helpful for discerning the typical patterns and structures informing ancient identity, but they cannot provide sufficient information for discerning the specific identity of any one person in

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<sup>48</sup> See, for another example, Malina’s iconoclastic paper ‘The Received View and What It Cannot Do,’ which was originally a lecture delivered on 7 March 1984 at San Francisco Theological Seminary and later revised and published in Semeia 35 (1986) 171-189. It is now included in his work The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels (London: Routledge, 1996), 217-240.

that ancient society. It is not surprising that Paul turns out to be so typical in their portrait; he is almost never heard.

Malina and Neyrey are sometimes blinded by their native informants' stereotypical portrait of conformist group-oriented behavior and they fail to see that Paul occasionally challenged the group, its norms and leaders. It is unlikely that many of the Christ-followers in Galatia or Corinth would agree with Malina and Neyrey's statement that<sup>49</sup>

Paul is essentially obedient to group norms and group-sanctioned persons. He accepts the directives given to him, and thus manifests himself once more as a group-oriented person, a loyal "party member." . . . Basically, then, Paul's style is to concur with the decisions of others, either Pharisees (against the Way) or God (on behalf of the Way).

Paul's letters reveal that at times he was compelled to resist stereotypical group-oriented behavior. The following description of typical group oriented behavior is in striking contrast with Paul's behavior in Galatia.<sup>50</sup>

In collectivist cultures, individuals are enculturated not to express what they personally think but to say what their conversation partner or audience needs or wants to hear from their in-group. . . . For the most part, harmony or getting along with in-group neighbors is valued above all sorts of other concerns. Saying the right thing to maintain harmony is far more important than telling what seems to be the truth to the private self. . . . Collectivist persons are not expected to have personal opinions, much less to voice their own opinions. It is sufficient and required to hold only those opinions that derive from social consensus.

Paul himself offers a rather different picture of his group-oriented behavior. He writes (Gal. 2:11, 13-14),

When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was in the wrong. . . . The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, . . .

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<sup>49</sup> Malina and Neyrey 1996: 206.

<sup>50</sup> Malina and Neyrey 1996: 214.

The stereotypical portrait of conformist group-oriented behaviour does not fit Paul in Corinth either, for there he refused to conform to popular notions of powerful leadership and, instead, sought to reshape the portrait of Christian leadership against prevailing norms (2 Cor. 10-13).<sup>51</sup>

Malina and Neyrey have not given enough attention to Paul's voice and to the specific groups he indicated were most relevant in the formation of his identity. For example, Paul highlighted a new and decisive identity category with his repeated emphasis on belonging to the 'in-Christ' group, yet Malina and Neyrey, perhaps led astray by their native informants who know nothing of such a group, fail to recognize the importance of this group in the reformation of Paul's self-identity. They also fail to consider the specific local ecclesial ingroup influences in Paul's identity formation; that is, his place and role among the Corinthians, Thessalonians, Galatians, and others, is not explored sufficiently. Oddly, they never actually attempt to defend their claim that Paul thought of himself as a prophet. In an interesting twist, if they had focused more on that claim, they might have been led to reconsider their view of Paul as a stereotypically obedient ingroup conformist. Elsewhere they have described the fact that prophets do not follow the stereotype of ingroup behaviour. In their earlier (1988) book Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew they wrote,<sup>52</sup>

It was a characteristic trait of genuine prophets to be rejected! John the baptizer, for example, was but the most recent example of this (1:7-10, 18; 14:5); he followed in the tradition of "prophets, scribes, and wise men, some of whom you will kill and crucify and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town" (23:34). In fact, as typical as it was of prophets to suffer and

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<sup>51</sup> See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's 2000 review of Malina and Neyrey. He writes (p. 296), 'If Paul knew the rules (as he did) but deliberately broke them, this is a distinctive individual trait, whose importance for understanding the Apostle's personality must be recognized.'

<sup>52</sup> Malina and Neyrey 1988: 114.

be rejected, it was likewise characteristic of “Jerusalem” to be the agent of their persecution (23:37).

This is a very suggestive description of prophets and one might wish that they had capitalized on its clues in regard to their claim that Paul was a prophet. It might have made for a more interesting and accurate portrait than is offered in Portraits of Paul. Paul was in fact aware of this tradition about the rejection of prophets (Rom. 11:3; 1 Thess. 2:15), but it is not clear how this awareness might have influenced his self-description. Is Paul’s allusion to the prophets in Galatians 1:15-16 a subtle taunt in this direction? Is he suggesting, perhaps, that Jerusalem is once again rejecting and persecuting God’s prophet? It is an interesting question and one that Malina and Neyrey might have considered and developed.

We conclude that Paul did not in any significant way identify himself as a prophet, either in the contemporary Christian sense or the historic Old Testament sense, although at times (e.g., Gal. 1:15-16) it was helpful to compare himself with the Old Testament prophets because of their analogous authority. It is important to recognize that the existence of similarities does not in itself constitute sufficient reason to identify Paul with the prophets, for dissimilarities also exist, which sufficiently distance Paul from a prophetic identity. This significance of this methodological point will be explored more deeply in the next section. At this point it will suffice to say that this comparative methodology does not adequately engage with Paul’s own discursive construction of his self-identity. The concept of ‘prophet’ directs us down the wrong road in the search to discover Paul’s self-identity.

## Chapter Four

### Paul as Philosopher

#### Comparison and the Search for Paul's Apostolic Self-Identity

##### Introduction

Paul never identified himself as a philosopher; neither did he offer literary allusions in order to suggest such an identity. Nevertheless many scholars have claimed for Paul the identity of philosopher. The basis for this claim is typically found in a comparison of Pauline 'paraenesis' and the ancient philosophers' teaching about εὐδαιμονία. Ancient philosophy was concerned primarily with enabling people to live the good life; hence, certain scholars believe that Paul's instructions and exhortations on proper living provide a relevant body of comparative material. According to this method a significant number of striking similarities between the two is sufficient to reveal Paul's identity as a philosopher. Some scholars have been so impressed with specific similarities between Paul and one philosophy in particular that they have identified Paul with that philosophy. Other scholars have preferred to identify Paul with the general practice of philosophy rather than with any one specific school of thought.

The link between apostolic identity and the ancient philosophers is found in the use of the term ἀποστέλλω for both. It is frequently pointed out by advocates of this comparison that there is a linguistic similarity between the 'sending' of the philosophers as messengers of a god and the 'sending' of Paul as an apostle of Christ. Epictetus provides many examples of this linguistic parallel in his *Dissertations*. He explained that



the ancient philosopher was a κατάσκοπος καὶ ἄγγελος . . . ἀπο τοῦ Διὸς ἀπέσταλται πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους (*Diss.* 3.22.23; cf. 3.1.37; 3.22.56; 1.24.6; 4.8.31). In his role as ἄγγελος the philosopher was designated a κῆρυξ (*Diss.* 3.21.13; 3.22.69), proclaiming freedom and peace (*Diss.* 3.13.12; 4.5.24; 4.6.23). In his role as κατάσκοπος he was a father to all and all were his children, whether Athenian, Corinthian, or Roman (*Diss.* 3.22.81-84). Schmithals provides a compact summary of the similarities typically adduced between apostle and philosopher:<sup>1</sup>

Both are religious figures; both are sent from God (Gal. 1:1); both stand in unconditional service to man (Rom. 1:14); both are to teach by their example (1 Cor. 1:16) and to avoid every offense (2 Cor. 6:3); for both suffering belongs to their calling and serves to make effective their witness (2 Cor. 4:10); both have a message to proclaim that comes from God (2 Cor. 4:5); both must be found ἱκανός by God and must have been called by God himself (2 Cor. 3:5); both are free (1 Cor. 9:1) and wish to make others free (Gal. 5:13); both speak with great candor (2 Cor. 3:12-13) and conceal nothing (2 Cor. 4:1-2); both are called “father” of other men (1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19); both make no distinction among men (Gal. 3:28); both are God’s servants (2 Cor. 11:23); both voluntarily obey their Lord (1 Cor. 9:16ff.); both speak nothing of themselves (Rom. 15:18); and so on.

The guiding methodology, then, of such studies is comparison. The comparative method may be defined as follows.<sup>2</sup>

*Comparative method* is a general term denoting the procedures which, by clarifying the resemblances and differences displayed by phenomena (or classes of phenomena) deemed, on various criteria, to be ‘comparable’, aim at eliciting and classifying (a) causal factors in the emergence and development of such phenomena (or classes); (b) patterns of interrelation both within and between such phenomena (or classes).

It should be pointed out that Hellenistic Judaism in Paul’s era and earlier was described on occasion as a philosophy. Philosophy and philosophers were pervasive in the ancient Mediterranean world and provided ready analogies for Judaism and

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<sup>1</sup> Schmithals 1969: 113.

<sup>2</sup> Gould 1964: 116.

Christianity.<sup>3</sup> The *Letter of Aristeas* describes a symposium in Alexandria, Egypt, in the second century B.C.E. in which Alexandrian philosophers and Jewish ambassadors discussed the merits of Jewish Law and Jewish wisdom (*Aristeas* 187-300); the philosophers deemed the sacred books of the Judeans as valuable philosophical literature, therefore, they agreed that those books should be translated and a copy deposited in the library at Alexandria (*Aristeas* 301-322). Hellenistic Judeans likewise occasionally described their life-style as a philosophy. In 4 Maccabees, against the reproaches of Antiochus, Judeans defended the Law, calling it ἡμῶν ἡ φιλοσοφία, because it teaches self-control, self-mastery, courage in the face of suffering, justice, and piety (5:22-24). In the first century C.E. Josephus described the Essenes, Sadducees, Pharisees, and Zealots as sects of the Jewish philosophy (φιλοσοφία, *Antiquities* 18.1). The New Testament used the term φιλοσοφία only once, in Colossians 2:8, and in a negative way.<sup>4</sup> However, Luke, describing an encounter between Paul, Epicureans and Stoics, indicates that the philosophers described Paul with the term σπερμιολόγος (Acts 17:18), which, in the mouth of ancient philosophers, probably has the sense of ‘pseudo-philosopher’ (cf. Dio Chrysostom *Orations* 32.9; Dionysius Halicarnassus *Antiquities of Rome* 19.4; 5.2).<sup>5</sup> Luke’s Paul then proclaims a philosophical speech to the gathering on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22-31), even quoting a line (in verse 28) from Aratus of Soli (*Aratus Phaen.* 5), who

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<sup>3</sup> On the pervasive presence of philosophy in our era see especially Malherbe 1992 and Stirling 1997. For the interaction between Hellenistic philosophy and Rabbinic Judaism see Fischel 1973.

<sup>4</sup> It is sometimes pointed out (Stirling 1997: 313) that the philosophers in Acts 17:18 charged Paul with the same crime as Socrates, advocating strange gods (*Xenophon Mem.* 1.1.1). However, if the statement is authentic and accurate, it makes no sense that the philosophers would intentionally compare Paul with Socrates. Later Christians, however, did capitalize on the parallel (Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 5:3; *2 Apology* 10:5).

studied with Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, thereby suggesting that Christianity was the logical conclusion to Greek philosophy. Furthermore, second century Christianity was described as a philosophy by both outsiders (Galen) and insiders (Athenagoras and Justin).<sup>6</sup> For example, Melito of Sardis wrote a defense of Christianity to the Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, claiming, 'Our philosophy first grew up among the barbarians, but its full flower came among your nations during the glorious reign of your ancestor Augustus; it became a good omen for your empire since from that time the power of Rome has grown mighty and magnificent' (*H.E.* 4.26.7). It is not impossible, then, that Paul might compare himself with ancient philosophers and suggest an identity with them. We proceed now to survey several studies that claim Paul did just that.

#### Paul the Epicurean: DeWitt and Glad

##### Norman W. DeWitt

In 1954 Norman W. DeWitt published St. Paul and Epicurus, arguing that Paul quietly adopted and adapted Epicurean philosophy as he reformulated his beliefs and practices.

The merit of this ethic was so superior and so widely acknowledged that Paul had no alternative but to adopt it and bless it with the new sanction of religion, though to admit his indebtedness to the alleged atheist and sensualist was inconceivable. Epicurus was consequently consigned to anonymity.

When once this screen of anonymity has been penetrated, we shall find that the most beloved devotional readings in the Epistles of Paul exhibit the greatest influence of the friendly Epicurus. . . .

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<sup>5</sup> Michel 1974: 187. S.C. Winter 1997 argues that Luke portrayed early Christianity as a philosophical community and Paul is portrayed as one of its leading philosophers.

<sup>6</sup> See Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 1.5.28) and Justin Martyr (*1 Apology* 5.3). Tertullian famously repudiated such a view, however, in his often quoted line 'What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem' (*Praes.* 7.9).

The ability to follow the trail of these hidden parallelisms and to spot the unacknowledged adaptations of Epicurean teachings in the writings of Paul is the sole advantage to be claimed by the author of this study over other scholars. The process of detection, when once the clues have been identified, will not be difficult; one discovery will ease the way to another and in the end the total number of appropriated teachings may prove to be astonishing.<sup>7</sup>

The 'process of detection' is actually a practice of comparing Paul and Epicurus and listing similarities between the two. DeWitt begins his comparison by pointing out that (1) Epicurus 'set the fashion for expounding doctrine in the form of an epistle' and that (2) Epicureans established home-based private communities to perpetuate the memory of their founder and savior, who had embodied truth for them.<sup>8</sup> He suggestively states that Epicurus' letter *To the Friends in Asia* 'was in circulation for three centuries before Paul composed his Epistle with the inscription *To the Saints Which Are in Ephesus*.' And he adds, 'Long before the congregations organized by Paul began to assemble in private houses to perpetuate the memory of Jesus the Christ, innumerable colonies of the disciples of Epicurus had been accustomed to meet in private houses to perpetuate the memory of their founder, whom they revered as the discoverer of truth and a savior.'<sup>9</sup> The comparison that follows concentrates on key words, phrases and ideas common to both Paul and Epicurus.

DeWitt believes it is likely that Paul's Christian communities included converts from Epicurean communities. These converts would have recognized the 'hidden parallelisms' and 'unacknowledged adaptations of Epicurean teachings,' whereas modern

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<sup>7</sup> DeWitt 1954: v, vi.

<sup>8</sup> DeWitt 1954: vi.

<sup>9</sup> DeWitt 1954: vi. Later (p. 44) DeWitt explains that the title 'friends' was important as a badge of identity among Epicureans; therefore, Paul chose to avoid that term when writing to his converts, using other terms, such as 'saints.' Thus, Paul both repudiated and imitated Epicurus.

readers miss them.<sup>10</sup> They would have recognized that although Paul sometimes adopted Epicurean ideals himself, at other times he corrected Epicurean tendencies and ideas still lingering among them. For example, in 1 Thessalonians Paul described himself and his companions as those who ‘spoke with frankness’ (ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα, 2:2). Such frank speech was highly esteemed as a virtue in the Epicurean communities and Paul here claims to possess this virtue. Later in this same letter Paul mocked unbelievers who claimed to find ‘peace and security’ (εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια, 5:3) outside Christ. This claim to enjoy εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια was popular among those quietly nestled in an Epicurean community, but Paul explained that only God gives such peace (5:23). He thus adopts the Epicurean ideal of frank speech, and corrects the false notion of peace. Another clue discovered in this letter concerns Paul’s contrast of those who believe in the resurrection with ‘those who have no hope.’ While the former category clearly refers to Christians, DeWitt thinks the latter category best applies to Epicureans because of their denial of divine providence.<sup>11</sup>

DeWitt finds clear parallels between Paul and Epicurus in all of Paul’s letters except Romans. He claims that Paul’s letter to the Philippians reveals that he was opposed there by two groups: Judeans and Epicureans, ‘whose identity was as plainly manifest to the ancient reader as was that of the Jewish fundamentalists, though to the modern reader the symbols of identification have long since become meaningless.’<sup>12</sup> He finds that in the last two chapters of Galatians Paul thinks like an Epicurean. In regard to

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<sup>10</sup> DeWitt finds Epicurean influence (ideas and terminology) in all of Paul’s letters except Romans. The exception is interesting since Epicureanism itself was not prominent in Rome, having been discouraged from the time of Augustus (Ferguson 1990: 2275).

<sup>11</sup> DeWitt 1954: 54-57.

<sup>12</sup> DeWitt 1954: 21. The comparison between Paul and Epicurus in the letter to the Philippians is found on pages 21-37.

Galatians 4:10 ('You observe days and months and seasons and years'), he writes, 'a more illuminating reference to Epicureanism could not be desired.'<sup>13</sup> Such examples are sufficient to demonstrate DeWitt's comparative methodology.<sup>14</sup> However, DeWitt never offers a methodological justification for his move from similarity to identity; his working assumption seems to be that the quality and quantity of the data adduced is sufficiently persuasive for such a shift.

Before leaving DeWitt it is important to note that he strongly opposes any attempt to compare Paul favorably with other philosophers. For example, he believes that Paul is to be strongly distinguished from Cynics and Stoics. 'Paul seems to display far too much affinity with the cheerful and friendly Epicureans to have ever been enamored of the censorious Stoics, who revered as their founder "the sour and scowling Zeno."' <sup>15</sup> He differentiates the Epicurean-like Paul from 'the snarling Cynic philosophers, who went about insulting all and sundry and scorning the decencies of life; and not less from the Stoics, a censorious sect who condemned all pleasure and made a virtue of being disagreeable.'<sup>16</sup> Concerning Paul's statement, 'I have learned to be "self-sufficient" in whatsoever state I am' (Phil. 4:11), DeWitt claims that Paul, like the Epicureans, understood self-sufficiency to signify independence from all changes of fortune, such as from riches to poverty or freedom to slavery, in contrast to the Cynic Diogenes, who understood self-sufficiency to signify independence from all amenities of life, including

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<sup>13</sup> DeWitt 1954: 66.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to Thessalonians, Philippians, and Galatians, DeWitt has chapters on Colossians, Ephesians, and 1 Corinthians.

<sup>15</sup> DeWitt 1954: 37. In further this distinction between Paul and the Stoics, DeWitt claims on page 44 that 'the Stoics feared the emotions and cultivated indifference.'

<sup>16</sup> DeWitt 1954: 43

shelter and clothing.<sup>17</sup> Thus, it is evident that DeWitt recognizes words and phrases that suggest comparison with other philosophies and philosophers, but he allows a positive comparison with only Epicureans.

### Clarence Glad

In his 1995 tome Paul and Philodemus Clarence Glad also claims there are close similarities between Paul and the Epicureans, especially as concerns community standards and lifestyle. His work is more carefully nuanced and constructed than DeWitt's, however. He states that within the psychagogic tradition of ancient philosophy, 'it is in the practices of the Epicureans in Athens, Naples, and Herculaneum less than a century before Paul that we find the closest comparison to Paul's psychagogic nurture of the proto-Christian communities.'<sup>18</sup> He finds 'a basic congruity between the Pauline communities and the Epicureans as it relates to the communal pattern of mutual participation by community members in exhortation, edification, and correction.'<sup>19</sup> Whereas DeWitt believes that Paul studied Epicureanism and knew the writings of Epicurus,<sup>20</sup> Glad nowhere attempts to explain the exact relationship between Paul and the Epicureans that allowed for such parallels. At one point, however, he suggests that such congruity might simply be 'fortuitous,' without any direct influence or borrowing, while at another point he states that 'it is not intrinsically unlikely that Paul was acquainted

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<sup>17</sup> DeWitt 1954: 35.

<sup>18</sup> Glad 1995: 4. Glad describes DeWitt's comparison as 'overzealous and uncritical' (p. 8 fn. 14).

<sup>19</sup> Glad 1995: 8.

<sup>20</sup> DeWitt 1954: 167-84; this chapter is titled 'Paul's Knowledge of Epicureanism.'

with Epicurean practice,' citing Acts 17:18 and 26:22.<sup>21</sup> Glad emphasizes that the individual members of the Pauline communities function in psychagogic roles similar to members of Epicurean communities; that is, the more mature members act as moral and spiritual guides for the less mature members (Romans 14-15). Nevertheless, he does not want to push the comparison too far and posit a specific identity for Paul as a 'psychagogue,' leader of souls. He states, 'it is not important that we be able to classify Paul as a "psychagogue" but rather that we recognize his participation in a widespread "psychagogic" activity.'<sup>22</sup> At this point, then, Glad's purpose does not include discerning Paul's self-identity, but only his function. Nevertheless, he does not always maintain this cautious stance, sometimes declaring more boldly that Paul did present himself as a psychagogue. 'The combination of gentle and stringent guidance is inherent in the patriarchal paradigm and integral to Paul's self-presentation as a guide.'<sup>23</sup> Thus, Glad finds Paul's leadership style to be comparable to the Epicurean spiritual guide: he is adaptable, able to offer gentle or harsh guidance as the situation demands (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

#### Paul the Cynic: F. Gerald Downing

In recent years several scholars have drawn a portrait of Jesus as a Cynic,<sup>24</sup> but only one has enthusiastically advocated the same thesis for Paul.<sup>25</sup> In 1998 F. Gerald

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<sup>21</sup> Glad 1995: 9, 185, fn.1.

<sup>22</sup> Glad 1995: 186.

<sup>23</sup> Glad 1995: 326.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Burton Mack, John Dominic Crossan, Leif Vaage, and John Kloppenborg-Verbin have each defended this thesis in various works.

<sup>25</sup> Abraham Malherbe does not go as far as Downing. For Malherbe Paul 'is one who was thoroughly familiar with the traditions used by his philosophic contemporaries,' which includes, 'Platonists, Peripatetics, Cynics, Stoics, Epicureans, and Pythagoreans.'



Downing published Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches, the first full-scale argument dedicated to the proposition that Paul purposely portrayed himself as a Cynic. Six years earlier in Cynics and Christian Origins Downing had suggested that ‘Cynic traces in Paul were interesting but scattered and occasional.’<sup>26</sup> At that time he believed that those traces had already been explored fully by others (primarily by Malherbe) and that further research was not necessary. However, unexpected discoveries during the next few years caused him to reexamine the possibility of a more pervasive Cynic presence in the letters of Paul.<sup>27</sup> In 1996 he argued more aggressively that Paul deliberately chose the Cynic-sounding phrase ‘neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female’ because it expressed well his own unconventional views. He further claimed that Paul, the critic of the Mosaic Law, had found in Cynicism ‘a tradition of articulating, enjoying and encouraging just such a critical response to accepted norms.’<sup>28</sup> By 1998 his more extensive thesis was complete. He argued (1) ‘it is very likely that Paul would have been seen and heard by Hellenistic gentiles as some sort of Cynic’; (2) ‘the Cynic strands in Paul’s ascetic praxis and in his verbal articulation of it are so strong and so pervasive that it seems very unlikely that Paul could have been left unaware that it was in this light that people were seeing and hearing him’; (3) therefore, this must have been deliberate—‘it seems we must also accept that for Paul this Cynic-looking praxis and these Cynic-sounding ways of saying things . . . must have seemed at the start best suited to evince

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Malherbe 1989: 8, 5. While Malherbe treats Cynicism at greater length than other philosophies in this book, he states clearly, ‘Paul, however, was no Cynic’ (1989: 8).

<sup>26</sup> The quote is from his 1996 article (p. 457). See especially 1992: 61-63, 153.

<sup>27</sup> Two works in particular were influential for his reassessment: Plunkett 1988 and Ebner 1991.

<sup>28</sup> Downing 1996: 457.

and articulate and communicate what he intended.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the statement in Galatians 3:28 already mentioned, Paul's crude language (e.g., Gal. 5:12; Phil. 3:8), non-conformist life-style and ideas, penchant for scolding others, ascetic attitude toward hardships, and disdain for strict rhetorical convention would have been seen as marks of a Cynic, according to Downing.<sup>30</sup> Paul's statements about law 'look very like attitudes characteristically – and often distinctively – enunciated and put into practice by Cynics: law in enacted codes has no direct divine origin, law enslaves, law is ineffective, law makes no one righteous, law merely condemns, law encourages wickedness, or is at best a harsh discipline to be abandoned as soon as possible.'<sup>31</sup>

In view of DeWitt's use of letter writing as evidence for an Epicurean Paul it is interesting that Downing offers Paul's letter writing as an example of his Cynicism. Downing explains that letter writing was an important 'means of disseminating popular Cynicism in our period.'<sup>32</sup> It is evident that he is as eager to differentiate Paul from Epicureanism as DeWitt is to distinguish Paul from Cynicism. Downing states that 'the break from conventional public civic behaviour demanded of Christians would clearly distinguish them from Epicureans and align them much more with Cynics.'<sup>33</sup> He acknowledges that there are 'alleged similarities in ethos between Paul and Epicureans,' but he believes that they are 'far fewer and much weaker' than Cynic parallels and that 'there would seem no real likelihood at all of his being taken for an Epicurean.'<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Downing 1998: 307-9.

<sup>30</sup> Downing 1998: 41-2, 44-5.

<sup>31</sup> Downing 1998: 84.

<sup>32</sup> Downing 1998: 39.

<sup>33</sup> Downing 1998: 284.

<sup>34</sup> Downing 1998: 39-40.

### Paul the Ideal Philosopher: Abraham Malherbe

Abraham Malherbe rejects the attempt to identify Paul exclusively with any one philosophical tradition. He prefers instead to identify Paul generally with the moral philosophers. In a recent lecture series he summarized his views.<sup>35</sup>

According to the information available to us, Paul had no counterpart in either Judaism or Graeco-Roman practice for his activity as a missionary and pastor who nourished the communities he had founded. . . . The closest parallels to Paul are to be found among certain Greek philosophers, who also felt compelled to give themselves to the reformation of the people. . . . These moral philosophers also developed methods or techniques which they used in the moral and spiritual formation of the people with whom they worked. These techniques of what we would call pastoral care but they called psychagogy were used by all groups regardless of their philosophical slant.

Malherbe concentrates his comparison on linguistic and behavioral parallels between Paul and the moral philosophers. At the same time he emphasizes Paul's own unique perspective on such matters. He cites, for example, Paul's use of the word 'turn' or 'convert' (ἐπιστρέφω). 'The term was used in Paul's day, especially by philosophers who called upon people to assume a new direction in their lives.'<sup>36</sup> He then goes on to show how Paul fills the term with Christian content. Later he discusses the social and psychological difficulties confronting the convert and Paul's pastoral response to such troubles, noting that Paul's pastoral care was focused on behavioral and communal concerns similar to problems often found in philosophical schools. One of the methods by which Paul led his converts was by example (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17). This too parallels the moral philosophers. For example, Seneca, writing to Lucilius quotes with approval the advice of Epicurus: 'Cherish some man of high character and keep him ever before

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<sup>35</sup> Malherbe 1999: 104-5.

<sup>36</sup> Malherbe 1999: 108. There is a fuller discussion of this point in his 1987: 21-33, explaining in greater detail the philosophers' call to conversion and also the significant differences in Paul's explication of conversion.

your eyes, living as if he were watching you, and ordering all your actions as he beheld them.<sup>37</sup> Again, Malherbe points out that Paul differs slightly from Seneca here in providing himself as the example to follow. Malherbe has written profusely on Paul's letters to the Thessalonians and it is in this body of work that one finds his most detailed comparison between Paul and the moral philosophers. He has made the point in several works that in 1 Thessalonians 2 Paul presents himself as the ideal philosopher, repeatedly adopting and adapting ideas from the hellenistic moral philosophers. We will examine those details in the upcoming chapter on 1 Thessalonians.

#### An Evaluation of Comparative Methods for Discerning Paul's Identity

The obvious question facing the authors of the above studies concerns their ability to bridge the gap between their exegesis of ancient texts and their claim to an identity between those texts; that is, having discovered textual similarities between Pauline texts and texts from the ancient philosophers, does the interpreter provide a method of demonstrating that those similarities unerringly point to a particular identity for the writers of those texts? Not only do the authors not provide such a methodology, they rarely address the problems inherent in comparative analysis. Before examining those problems, it is important to consider the material being compared.

We began this chapter by noting that interpreters find comparative material in Pauline 'paraenesis' and Hellenistic εὐδαμονία. However, the specific nature of those literary categories is rarely examined. Hans Dieter Betz has helpfully provided a hierarchy of categories for considering ancient ethical teaching. He demonstrates that the

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<sup>37</sup> Seneca *Epistle* 11:8. Malherbe 1999: 117. These ideas are explained in detail in his 1987: 34-60.

literature reveals a variegated complexity that can be categorized into several levels of ethical teaching.<sup>38</sup> At the highest level of complexity are the theoretical systems of ethics, based on metaphysics and the analysis of the earlier classical philosophers. At the next level are the practical and systematic therapeutic systems of philosophy that offer 'care of the soul.' At a lower level is 'popular morality,' which is unsystematic and semi-philosophical, sometimes mixing philosophical ideas with folk-wisdom. At a different level are ethical teachings based on 'social customs and religious rituals.' Finally, he points out that social groups possess an 'ethos,' 'a distinguishable but implicit life-style based upon cultural values and represented mostly by attitudes and symbols.' Betz points out that early Christian paraenesis is an attempt to make explicit the Christian 'ethos' and that this paraenesis was in the process of formation. This hierarchy of categories calls into question the possibility of easily comparing Paul and the philosophers and indicates that far more care is necessary to distinguish the comparative levels of teaching. The classicist Kenneth Dover has likewise pointed out the importance of clearly distinguishing 'popular morality' from the ethical systems of the philosophers in the ancient world.<sup>39</sup> The interpreters we have considered simply assume that comparison between Paul and the philosophers is possible, but Betz' hierarchy indicates that such assumptions need to be examined. We can now consider problems with the method of comparison.

In his 1961 Society of Biblical Literature presidential address Samuel Sandmel charged biblical scholars with too frequently making extravagant interpretive claims

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<sup>38</sup> Betz 1978: 1-3.

<sup>39</sup> Dover 1974: 1.

about biblical texts on the basis of comparative analysis. He described this tendency as 'parallelomania,' which he defined as<sup>40</sup>

that extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction.

The authors surveyed above exemplify this failure of scholarship.

Jonathan Z. Smith exposes the basic error in this methodology when he writes, 'It is axiomatic that comparison is never a matter of identity.'<sup>41</sup> In 1987 he pointed out the inherent importance of difference in comparison.<sup>42</sup>

Comparison requires the acceptance of difference as the grounds of its being interesting, and a methodological manipulation of that difference to achieve some stated cognitive end. The questions of comparison are questions of judgment with respect to difference: What differences are to be maintained in the interests of comparative inquiry. What differences can be defensibly relaxed and relativized in light of the intellectual tasks at hand?

A few years later, in 1990, Smith lamented the state of affairs,<sup>43</sup>

That this is *not* the working assumption of many scholars in the field may be seen by noting the poverty of conception that usually characterizes their comparative endeavors, frequently due, as has already been suggested, to apologetic reasons. It is as if the only choices the comparativist has are to assert either identity or uniqueness, and that the only possibilities for utilizing comparisons are to make assertions regarding dependence.

In order to understand Smith's perspective on comparison it is important to consider it within his wider methodological perspective. His overall working procedure may be summarized by four elements in cyclical relation: description, comparison, re-description,

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<sup>40</sup> Sandmel 1962: 1. Other important studies of the problems of the comparative method include Talmon 1977, Alexander 1984, Malul 1990, and Smith 1990.

<sup>41</sup> Smith 1987: 13.

<sup>42</sup> Smith 1987: 14. See also his aptly titled essay 'What A Difference A Difference Makes,' Smith 1985.

<sup>43</sup> Smith 1990: 47.

and rectification of categories.<sup>44</sup> Description and re-description refer to the isolation of characteristic identifying marks of an individual or group (badges of identity) in distinction from another individual or group; it is the recognition of 'fences and neighbors.'<sup>45</sup> Comparison is intrinsic to this cyclical process of description and re-description. To illustrate this relation he borrows a story from Claude Lévi-Strauss, who recalled meditating on a dandelion:

In order to 'see' the dandelion, Lévi-Strauss discovered, one must, at the same time, 'see' the other plants which differ from it. The dandelion cannot be 'intelligible' by itself, but only as 'much more,' as constituted by the totality of relations of similarities and differences that allow one to 'isolate' it.

He describes the comparative aspect of his method as a highly imaginative enterprise that must not be reduced to the simple explanation that similarities and differences point either to analogy or to genealogy, either to uniqueness or to identity. Smith makes use of a thesaurus to reveal the richness of the vocabulary available to the comparativist who is willing to acknowledge the wide variety of possible relationships. He finds that, in addition to the words 'analogy,' 'identity,' 'difference,' and the other standard words, there are terms such as 'affinity,' 'homology,' 'divergent,' 'transformation,' 'inversion,' 'reversal,' 'opposition,' 'contrast,' 'correspondence,' 'congruence,' 'isomorphic,' 'conjunction,' 'disjunction,' and phrases such as 'family resemblance,' 'connotative features,' 'fuzzy sets,' 'cluster concepts,' and others. In order to recognize the wealth of possible relations in comparative analysis Smith recommends use of resemblance theory, which offers the guiding statement 'x resembles y more than z with respect to . . . ' or the

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<sup>44</sup> Smith 1982: 3-18; 2000; Mack 2000: 294.

<sup>45</sup> 'Fences and Neighbors' is the title of his essay, Smith 1982: 3-18.

statement 'x resembles y more than w resembles z with respect to . . .'<sup>46</sup> With these guidelines the scholar is able to view and re-view the phenomena from various perspectives and to negotiate and re-negotiate the comparison for different purposes and in light of changing interests. 'Comparison, as seen from such a view, is an active, at times even a playful, enterprise of deconstruction and reconstitution which, kaleidoscope-like, gives the scholar a shifting set of characteristics with which to negotiate the relations between his or her theoretical interests and the data stipulated as exemplary.' He concludes, 'comparison does not tell us how things "are" . . . ; like models and metaphors, comparison tells us how things might be conceived, how they might be "re-described," in Max Black's useful term. . . . Comparison provides the means by which we "re-vision" phenomena as *our* data in order to solve *our* theoretical problems.'<sup>47</sup>

In light of Smith's work, the comparative methodology of the authors surveyed above is found wanting in four related areas. First, they have failed to accurately describe and re-describe the apposite groups, revealing or isolating the distinctive features that mark identity in that group. Second, they have not clarified the differences between Paul and the philosophers in their comparative work. Third, they have reduced the rich variety of possible relations between Paul and the philosophers to simplistic notions of identity. Finally, they tend to assume a direct genealogy between Paul and the philosophers. If one were to follow Smith's comparative method one might make statements like, Paul resembles Epicureanism more than Stoicism with respect to the value of community life, or Paul resembles Stoicism more than Epicureanism with respect to the value of suffering. It is clear that one cannot make claims of identity on the basis of comparative

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<sup>46</sup> Smith 1990: 51. On resemblance theory Smith cites O'Connor 1945-46 and Butchvarov 1966.



analysis. Nevertheless, one can determine important resemblances,<sup>48</sup> and these resemblances can contribute to a properly conceived study of discursive identity formation.

DeWitt, Glad, and Downing attempt to identify Paul with one specific philosophical school, whereas Malherbe merely seeks to identify Paul with philosophy in general. It is especially important that DeWitt, Glad, and Downing isolate characteristics that are distinctive to their one philosophical school and that, therefore, serve as identity markers. They do not accomplish this, however. Although they sometimes refer to 'technical terms' and other specific features of those groups, they provide no rigorous description and re-description of Paulinism and Epicureanism or Cynicism. It is instructive to consider that any real parallel between Paul and a philosophical school necessarily contains within it the potential to contradict a claim to distinctiveness and to point, instead, to the possibility that the parallel belongs to the common stock of cultural ideas. The difficulties of defining distinctiveness in the comparative method are heightened by the fact that during the first century C.E. an eclectic approach to philosophical ideas prevailed. It is clear that Paul participated to some degree in that eclecticism, borrowing from the common stock of terms and concepts without identifying himself with any one philosophy.<sup>49</sup> Conzelmann was correct when he pointed out that 'the points of agreement do not go beyond the terms and ideas of popular philosophy

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<sup>47</sup> Smith 1990: 53, 52.

<sup>48</sup> The recent work of Stanley Stowers moves this type of comparative work in the right direction. Consider his use of the term 'resemble' in his article 'Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?' (Stowers 2001).

<sup>49</sup> On eclecticism in ancient philosophy see John M. Dillon and A. A. Long 1988.

with which it was possible for any and everyone to be acquainted.<sup>50</sup> It is necessary to point out, however, that eclecticism does not mean that Hellenistic philosophy had melded into an undifferentiated conglomerate in which the variously named schools could not be clearly distinguished. It means, rather, that there were several common terms and concepts utilized by all philosophical groups. Therefore, the interpreter must carefully distinguish between features that are distinctive to one group and features that are common to several groups. For example, before the time of Paul, the psychagogic methods first developed in the Epicurean communities had become widespread among various groups throughout the Eastern Mediterranean region; hence, the claim that Paul is directly linked with the Epicureans on the basis of psychagogic method cannot be sustained.<sup>51</sup> It is obvious too that DeWitt and Downing cannot both be right when they claim that Paul's letter writing is evidence for their claim. E. A. Judge has rightly cautioned against this approach, writing,<sup>52</sup>

One can make absurd mistakes by going through St Paul's work and showing that he belongs to this or that philosophical school or has been influenced in this or that way by them. People have tried all kinds of exercises of this type to their great frustration; and the reason surely is that in a vital and mixed society of that kind one simply picks up and uses the vocabulary and technical ideas and fashionable notions of the time wherever they come from.

Furthermore, the comparative method as practiced by these scholars often incorrectly assumes a direct relationship existed between Paul and any particular philosophy.

However, Paul's knowledge of philosophy was probably mediated through several

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<sup>50</sup> Conzelmann 1975: 10. He also correctly notes that it is not possible to know where Paul learned these ideas. It is possible that he learned them as they had been taken over and adapted in Hellenistic Judaism.

<sup>51</sup> On Hellenistic philosophy in general see the following excellent works: Rabbow 1954, Ilsetraut Hadot 1969, Annas 1993, Nussbaum 1994, and Pierre Hadot 1995.

<sup>52</sup> Judge 1973: 110.

transformations and adaptations in Hellenistic Judaism and through several layers of teachers. It is unlikely he had access to the primary sources used by scholars today.

Another problem concerns the importance of differences between Paul and the suggested philosophical traditions. None of the authors surveyed above make sufficient effort to consider and explain differences between Paul and the particular philosophy. Dissimilarities between Paul and the philosophers are either ignored or used as evidence against a competing theory. So, for example, Downing, arguing for a Cynic Paul, points out the dissimilarities between Paul and Epicureans and Stoics, while DeWitt, arguing for an Epicurean Paul, points out the differences between Paul and the Cynics. It is hard to avoid the impression that competing views ultimately cancel each other out in the details of their argument. But this does not get to the heart of the problem. More importantly, dissimilarities often function within social systems as identity markers, defining an outgroup. Indeed, identity within the philosophical schools was marked by clear and definite boundaries.<sup>53</sup> Dissimilarity with these identity markers must not be slighted, for they functioned to mark off persons as outsiders. Our inability to recognize the striking quality of these dissimilarities between Paul and the philosophers is partly due to our distance from Paul, but also, more importantly, to the failure to interpret those dissimilarities within their social context as functional boundary markers of identity. If similarities and dissimilarities are to have any significance in helping us to discern Paul's identity, we must consider how they functioned in relationship to identity categories.

Fernanda Decleva Caizza has pointed out that 'the philosopher clearly appears as somebody different from other people in his external features and, what is more

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<sup>53</sup> E. A. Judge 1973: 109 correctly notes that 'even the most drastic of Cynics . . . belonged to a schooled and stereotyped tradition.'

interesting, as somebody whose external features and behavior are related to the contents of his philosophical thought.<sup>54</sup> She demonstrates that appearance and deportment were essential markers for the philosopher, for the profession demanded that he stand out above the crowd. They sought visibility by their appearance and behavior. Long ago in his well-known work The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church Edwin Hatch pointed out that the garb of a stranger entering a city identified him as a philosopher long before he opened his mouth to speak.<sup>55</sup>

When a stranger appeared who was known by his professional dress, and whose reputation had preceded him, the people clustered round him – like iron filings sticking to a magnet, says Themistius.

It was necessary that those who professed philosophy should be marked out from the perverted and degenerate world around them in their outer as well as their inner life. ‘The life of one who practices philosophy,’ says Dio Chrysostom, ‘is different from that of the mass of men: the very dress of such a one is different from that of ordinary men, and his bed and exercises and bath and all the rest of living.’ . . . ‘Whenever,’ says Dio Chrysostom, ‘people see one in a philosopher’s dress, they consider that he is thus equipped not as a sailor or a shepherd, but with a view to men, to warn them and rebuke them . . .’

A striking physical presence was critical, but could be dangerous too, as Dio makes clear, especially in his 72<sup>nd</sup> Oration ‘*On Deportment*’ (περὶ σχήματος), where he complains that people routinely mock and insult ‘someone in a cloak but no tunic, with flowing hair and beard. . . . and they do this although they know that the clothes he wears are customary with the so-called philosophers and display a way of life’ (cf. *Orations* 12.15; 35.2; 70.7-9; 72.16).<sup>56</sup> The two most basic identity markers were the philosopher’s

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<sup>54</sup> Caizza 1993: 304.

<sup>55</sup> Hatch 1890: 92, 151.

<sup>56</sup> Bruce Winter (1994: 28-9) has said that it was expected that ‘an orator would have a charismatic presence, including a striking physique, a well-resonated voice, an impressive wardrobe, and a commanding presence. At times orators even used pitch plasters to remove bodily hair from their legs and arms, for they aimed to present a godlike figure when they rose up to speak.’

distinctive toga and hairstyle (Quintilian 12.10.47; 12.3.12). They may also have typically carried a staff (Horace *Satires* 1.3.124-136). Such features were captured by artists in pictures and busts, and had become common knowledge, as Julian points out in his *Orations* (6.190D) when he refers to the stereotypical philosopher ‘with a staff and long hair, as in the pictures of such men.’<sup>57</sup> In one of his *Letters* (3.19) Alciphron offers a humorous description of the ancient Athenian philosophers invited to a birthday party:

Among the foremost present was our friend Eteocles the Stoic, the elderly man with a beard that needed trimming, the dirty one, the one with his head unkempt, his brow more wrinkled than his leather purse. Present also was Themistagoras of the Peripatetic school, a man whose appearance did not lack charm and who prided himself on his curly whiskers. And there too was the Epicurean Zenocrates, not careless of his curls and also proud of his full beard, and Archibius the Pythagorean, ‘the famed in song’ (for so everyone called him), his face overcast with a deep pallor, his hair falling from the top of his head right down to his chest, his beard pointed and very long, his nose hooked, his lips drawn in and by their very compression and tightness hinting at the Pythagorean silence. All of a sudden Pancrates too, the Cynic, thrusting the crowd aside, burst in with a rush; he was supporting himself on a club of oak—his stick was studded with some brass nails where the thick knots were, and his wallet was empty and hung handily for the scraps. Now the other guests, from the beginning of the party to the end, kept to a similar or identical etiquette, but the philosophers, as the drinking progressed and the loving-cup kept going its rounds, exhibited, each in turn, his brand of tricks.

The philosophers (Cynics, Stoics, and Epicureans) were distinguished from the elite sophists, the professional rhetoricians who sought to popularize the classical writers and educate the elites.<sup>58</sup> Whereas the Cynic, the most public of the philosophers, wore a long unkempt beard in protest against personal attention and a coarse blanket in protest against luxury, the sophist’s hair and beard were cut in the most fashionable manner and

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<sup>57</sup> R. MacMullen 1967: 321, n.17.

<sup>58</sup> The boundary between philosopher and sophists is not impermeable, however, and the some of the proponents manifest characteristics of each practice; hence, this grey area has been called *halbphilosophen* by some, beginning with Von Arnim. See Anderson 1993: 133-43.

his toga was expensive and beautiful.<sup>59</sup> Likewise Zeno's teaching on the unimportance of wealth led him to stress the appearance of poverty. When a wealthy boy wanted to attend Zeno's lectures, Diogenes Laertius (7.22) tells us, 'First of all Zeno made him sit on the dusty benches, so that he might dirty his cloak; then he put him in a place where the beggars sat, so he would rub up against their rags.' An appearance at one of these extremes identified the person as either a philosopher or sophist. Philostratus described the conversion of Aristocles from being a 'squalid and unkempt and ill-clothed' peripatetic philosopher to enjoying the wealth and luxury of the sophist.<sup>60</sup> Photius described Dio Chrysostom's appearance, indicating that he wore his hair long in the style of the philosophers and that he wore lion's skin clothing, imitating the Stoic ideal of Heracles.<sup>61</sup> The sophists exemplified the life of wealth, luxury and prestige. They were the media darlings of the day. In addition to their hair and clothing, their cultured manner of speech was distinctive, advertising the advantages of their education. Thus, when they did open their mouths to speak, they spoke with eloquence and wisdom on any subject their audience requested. Their declamations were typically given in a style that imitated the classical Attic orators of Greece's glory days (5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE) when the sophists dominated the culture. This classicising movement looked back to the past masters—Socrates, Plato, and others—for inspiration and wisdom, and therefore became known as the 'Second Sophistic.' They were preparing their students to assume responsibilities as politicians and leaders and therefore trained only elites. Their purpose was to restore the glorious heritage of Greece and reaffirm the positive qualities of Greek identity, especially against the efforts of the Romans to ridicule the contemporary

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<sup>59</sup> Philostratus *Lives of the Sophists* 2.10.587; Epictetus *Dissertations* 3.1.1.

<sup>60</sup> Philostratus *Lives of the Sophists* 2.2.568

generation of Greeks as morally corrupt and infinitely inferior to their classical ancestors.<sup>62</sup>

Those who actually saw and heard Paul would have easily and immediately recognized by his appearance whether or not he identified himself with either the travelling philosophers or the sophistic rhetoricians. We find no indication in the New Testament that Paul was so recognized. We do not know what Paul looked like, but it is unlikely that he wore a uniform identifying him with the philosophers and their culture-rejecting rough beard and coarse cloak or with the sophists and their stylish coiffure and culture-making fashions. We learn from the Corinthian correspondence that Paul's appearance did not make such an impression (2 Cor. 10:10). The only physical description of Paul in literary sources is in the late second century narrative *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, where Onesiphorus described Paul as

Ἄνδρα μικρὸν τῷ μεγέθει, ψιλὸν τῇ κεφαλῇ, ἀγκύλον ταῖς κνήμαις, εὐεκτικόν, σύνοφρον, μικρῶς, ἐπίρρινον, χάριτος πλήρη ποτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἐφαίνετο ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ποτὲ δὲ ἀγγέλου πρόσωπον εἶχεν.

a man small of stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness; for at one time he appeared like a man, and at another he had the face of an angel.

There is no attempt here to portray Paul as a philosopher or sophist. If these physical features are interpreted in light of ancient physiognomy, the description appears negative and somewhat contradictory. For example, μικρὸν τῷ μεγέθει ('a man small of stature') typically suggested one who was weak or unimportant (Ps-Aristotle *Physiognomonica* 13-14 [807ab]; cf. Anonymous Latin writer, *De Physiognomia* 88). Likewise, ἀγκύλον ταῖς κνήμαις ('crooked legs') indicated that one was weak, cowardly, immoral, and

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<sup>61</sup> G. Mussies 1972: xii.

enslaved to evil desires (Polemon *Physiognomia* 7[27v]; cf. Anonymous Latin writer, *De Physiognomia* 86). To be εὐεκτικόν is to have a well-rounded body, that is, plump, and also suggested that one was lazy or foolish (Ps-Aristotle *Physiognomica* 9 [806b]). ‘Meeting eyebrows,’ σύνοφρυον, revealed a person to be irascible, crude, an imbecile, lacking intelligence (Ps-Aristotle *Physiognomica* 69 [812b]; cf. Anonymous Latin writer, *De Physiognomia* 18). On the other hand ψιλὸν τῆ κεφαλῆ (‘bald head’) suggested either intelligence or sensuality. And the final comment, that Paul appeared as an angel, is clearly positive.<sup>63</sup>

Not only did Paul’s physical appearance serve to differentiate him from the philosophers and sophists, but his daily behavior and location also classed him as an outsider. The fact that Paul worked in manual labor (‘day and night,’ ‘exhausting toil’ 1 Thess. 2:9; cf. 1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Cor. 11:27; Acts 18:3) would have prevented his contemporaries from thinking of Paul as a sophist, for such did not in any way suggest the wealth, luxury, or education, that were critical elements of the sophist’s reputation.<sup>64</sup> Geoghegan claims that ‘the group that was most hostile to manual labor was that of the philosophers.’<sup>65</sup> The only philosophers found in workshops were Cynics, and these were

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<sup>62</sup> See Swain 2001 for an excellent study of the importance of reaffirming Greek identity.

<sup>63</sup> We must therefore disagree with Malherbe’s (1986) positive interpretation of this physical description, as well as R. M. Grant 1982. Helpful is Bollók 1996.

<sup>64</sup> Ronald F. Hock 1978 and 1980 reveal the significance of Paul’s manual labor for his social class. Hock summarizes the prevailing attitude among the elites toward the artisans (1980: 36): ‘Stigmatized as slavish, uneducated, and often useless, artisans, to judge from scattered references, were frequently reviled or abused, often victimized, seldom if ever invited to dinner, never accorded status, and even excluded from one Stoic utopia.’ Paul’s own testimony supports this view. He notes that by taking up work he enslaves (1 Cor. 9:19) and humiliates himself (2 Cor. 11:7). It may partially be the cause of his being regarded as not honorable and his being reviled (2 Cor. 4:10, 12).

<sup>65</sup> Geoghegan 1945: 13. When artisans took up philosophy they typically left their trade. See Diogenes Laertius 6.82; Lucian *Icar.* 30-31; *Fug.* 12-13, 28, 33; *Bis acc.* 6.



few and atypical.<sup>66</sup> Paul's location also differentiated him. Stanley Stowers has shown that it is highly unlikely that Paul spoke in the same public arena as the sophists and prominent philosophers, typically the gymnasium, since an invitation to speak in such a venue required a well-established reputation. He writes,<sup>67</sup>

Public speaking and often the use of public buildings required status, reputation, and recognized roles which Paul did not have. Public speaking, on the one hand, often necessitated some type of legitimation or invitation or, on the other hand, demanded that a speaker somehow force himself on his audience. Whereas Paul does not fit easily into these typical situations, the private home provided him with a platform where an audience could be obtained and taught without the problems of presenting oneself to be judged by the criteria of public speaking. . . . We may conclude that the widespread picture of Paul the public orator, sophist or street corner preacher is a false one.

E. A. Judge has also pointed out that Paul's intimate manner with people 'marks Paul off from those who worked professionally in the Greek philosophical tradition. . . . Certainly most philosophers were men of means and detachment, withdrawn to a large degree from ordinary life and its pressures, which they contemplated from the security of their conceptual system.'<sup>68</sup> We should also consider Paul's style and content of his speech. Although we cannot hear Paul speak, we have no evidence that he spoke in the cultured manner of the *pepaideumenos*, with their Attic phrases and vocabulary.<sup>69</sup> His letters

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<sup>66</sup> Hock 1980: 37-41 correctly notes that a few texts indicate that some Cynic philosophers remained in the workshop, but he leaps well beyond the evidence of these texts when he claims, on the basis of those texts, that 'we can affirm that the workshop, including that of the shoemaker or leatherworker, was recognized as a conventional social setting for intellectual discourse, a setting, though, that was used primarily by Cynic philosophers.' The few Cynics that remained in the workshop hardly warrant calling it a 'conventional social setting for intellectual discourse.' If Paul did engage in intellectual discussion in the workshop, and it is not clear that he did, such activity would have been regarded as unusual.

<sup>67</sup> Stowers 1984: 81.

<sup>68</sup> Judge 1973: 109.

<sup>69</sup> For Attic inscriptions from the first century, contemporary with Paul, which serve to differentiate Paul from the Attic trend, see Louis Robert 1940 (see especially inscription number 152). Judge 1974:191 states that although Paul's Greek clearly

display no Attic influence. His rhetoric is Spirit-inspired, not an imitation of the classical orators. Judge explains all of this succinctly,<sup>70</sup>

The slow revival of Greek life that began with Augustus was carried forward under a new but archaizing banner, as the Greeks too began to canonise their past. The literary success of the Atticism promoted by Dionysius of Halicarnassus inspired cultivated people to resist the free development of the common language, and its flourishing rhetoric. By the second century, from which we again have a substantial body of extant Greek literature, the classicising movement had prevailed. The barriers of taste, fatal to the comprehension of St Paul, have now been fixed. He is clearly an example of what the new cultivation had not been prepared to tolerate, surviving only thanks to an operation of non-literary interests.

Contrary to the sophists Paul did not look back to the famous philosophers of classical Greece for wisdom, insight, and inspiration. Neither did he speak extemporaneously on all manner of subjects, taking requests from listeners; he limits himself to one subject: the good news of Jesus Christ.<sup>71</sup> Paul was not seeking to revive the greatness of ancient Greek culture, as were the sophists; but neither was he an iconoclast in the style of the Cynics. Interestingly, Bruce Winter has claimed that Paul *purposely* acted in an anti-sophistic manner: 'When he came to Corinth, Paul's policy was anti-sophist and his ministry was deliberately conducted in sharp contrast to theirs.' He further argues that among the Thessalonians, 'Paul has been driven to take particular stances in order to distance himself from them in every possible way for the sake of his message and the

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revealed him to be educated, 'he certainly did not affect the consciously archaic manner and conventional themes of the literary in-group of the times.'

<sup>70</sup> 1972: 21. Judge goes on (p. 22) to point out that by the time of the fourth century C.E. Christian writers had become 'leaders in sustaining the classicising rules, and thus imposing a barrier to their own understanding of Paul.' It should be pointed out that this marks a correction from an earlier position when Judge had favorably compared Paul with the sophists (1960: 125ff.).

<sup>71</sup> E. A. Judge 1970: 55 is entirely correct when he states, 'Yet St. Paul was surely not likely to be taken for a philosopher. . . . Paul's own training was almost certainly not in philosophy, and the whole basis and tone of his arguments, in spite of their general subject-field, disassociates him from that enterprise.'

reception and perception of his ministry by the Christian community.<sup>72</sup> On the basis of the above evidence, however, Paul would not have needed to take purposeful and deliberate measures to differentiate himself from the sophists. The divide between Paul and the philosophers and sophists was clearly known by immediately obvious identity markers so that Paul's contemporaries would never have mistaken him for a philosopher or sophist. It is the inability to regard similarities and dissimilarities within their social context as marking identity categories that causes some to identify Paul as a philosopher or sophist.

It is important to point out that even when comparative analysis recognizes and considers the importance of differences, as in much of Malherbe's work, such studies do not allow the interpreter to make identity statements concerning Paul. Comparative studies cannot reveal identity only resemblances, because they have no means of discerning how those similarities and differences relate to identity categories, that is, ingroups and outgroups. It is necessary to complement such comparative work with a method that enables one to recognize how similarities and differences function as definite boundary markers, indicating ingroup or outgroup status. When such a method is applied the perceived similarities will be categorized as either non-defining elements of society at large or definite boundary marker for ingroup identity.

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<sup>72</sup> Winter 1994: 30, 31-2. Although I agree with Winter that Paul did not appear as a sophist, I think Winter goes too far when he suggests that Paul needed to take purposeful and deliberate measures to insure such a contrast. Paul need only be himself to be seen in sharp contrast with the sophists. When, according to Winter's argument, Paul discussed the contrast between himself and the sophists in the antithetical parallelism of 1 Thessalonians 2 his point was not to prevent the Thessalonians from seeing him as a sophist, but to demonstrate his superiority to the sophists. See chapter eight of this thesis for my response to this error.

### Paul the Stoic: Troels Engberg-Pedersen

We must now consider a slightly different attempt to define Paul's identity as a philosopher. In 2000 Troels Engberg-Pedersen published Paul and the Stoics, defending the thesis that 'Paul *was* a "Stoic."<sup>73</sup> Engberg-Pedersen is uniquely positioned to offer such a study, with expertise in both Stoicism and Paul and with a particular interest in moral theory and identity formation. He has earned doctorates in both philosophy and biblical studies and has published significant studies in both fields. Prior to his work on Paul and the Stoics (2000), for example, he published major monographs on Aristotle's Theory of Moral Development (1983) and The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis: Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy (1990). In addition to writing several journal articles on Pauline themes he has also edited the collected essays on Paul in His Hellenistic Context (1995), in which he published 'Stoicism in Philippians,' and Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide (2001). His interest in identity formation is seen in his 1995 article 'Galatians in Romans 5-8 and Paul's Construction of the Identity of Christ Believers.'<sup>74</sup>

Engberg-Pedersen's comparative methodology is more elaborate and more original than those previously surveyed, necessitating separate analysis. Rather than offering a simple comparison of isolated words, phrases, and ideas common to both Stoicism and Paul, Engberg-Pedersen controversially compares both Paul and Stoicism

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<sup>73</sup> The quote (italics are Engberg-Pedersen) is taken from his 2002a response to several reviews of the book. The quote is best read in its fuller context: 'Let me summarize the whole picture by giving a sort of inverted sorites: Paul was an apostle of Christ (as he insists) and *a fortiori* a Christ-believer (and fervently so). Paul was also an apocalypticist (as he would himself have been most willing to accept had he known the word). And Paul was a Jew (and proud to be so). Paul was also a Greco-Roman (though not so proud of being so). And Paul *was* a "Stoic." That last thing, however, he would probably have been loath to admit.'

with an abstract anthropological and ethical model that he has created through a synthesis of both. This hybrid model is at the heart of Engberg-Pedersen's thesis. He describes it as follows:

It is important to realize from the start the heuristic character of the model. It is an abstraction, drawn from the particularities of Paul's thought in three of his letters [Romans, Galatians, Philippians] and from Stoicism in the many forms in which we know it. It is identical with neither. . . .

The model has no *independent* value. In particular, it should not be considered on its own as stating what amounts to a shorthand reduction of either Pauline or Stoic thought. Rather it functions as a map of reading the two bodies of thought in their *own* particularity. It should not be understood as directing attention away from the text itself, but rather towards it. Thus its immediate value lies in its ability to bring a sufficient amount of order to the complexities of each body of thought taken in its entirety and on its own.<sup>75</sup>

For Engberg-Pedersen, in contrast to the authors surveyed above, it is not simply the accumulation of similarities and differences between Paul and philosophers that is decisive; rather, it is the heuristic power of his model to explain Pauline texts that will reveal Paul's Stoicism. If the model 'helps to produce readings of Paul . . . that will command agreement among scholars . . . then we may also claim that the model does highlight a basic similarity between Paul and the Stoics.'<sup>76</sup>

The model describes the transformation of identity that occurs when a person shifts from a personal and individual orientation to a social and group orientation. It indicates that one's identity is perceived as both normative (good or bad) and dynamic (transformed). 'An earlier, bad state of an individual is exchanged for a new and good one.'<sup>77</sup> The cause of transformation is referred to as the conversion factor. Hence, the model, in a simplified form, is written as **I->X->S** where **I** represents that original stage

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<sup>74</sup> See the bibliography for a more complete listing of his publications.

<sup>75</sup> Engberg-Pedersen 2000: 33.

<sup>76</sup> Engberg-Pedersen 2000: 34.

<sup>77</sup> Engberg-Pedersen 2000: 35.

in which the person is oriented by personal and individual desires, **X** represents the conversion factor, and **S** represents the transformed stage in which the person is oriented by social and group concerns. Engberg-Pedersen defines **I**, the self-oriented individual, as one who ‘perceives him- or herself as an embodied individual . . . [who is] merely concerned about fulfilling the desires of that individual’; and he defines **S**, the socially-oriented individual, the transformed individual, as one who ‘still perceives him- or herself as an embodied individual, but now also as one of the others so that the person may now include him- or herself in a social “We.”’ He further explains, ‘the person will now be concerned about fulfilling the desires of that “We.”’ Engberg-Pedersen’s point is not that Paul himself is converted to Stoicism; he clearly emphasizes that for Paul Christ, not reason, is the converting factor (**X**) and that Christ-likeness among the community of Christ-believers is the ultimate transformative goal for self-identity. Rather, he claims that Paul adopted the Stoic instantiation of the model of identity transformation and utilized it to describe the transformation of a Christ-follower. It is in this sense, then, that ‘Paul was a Stoic.’

#### The Failure of Troels Engberg-Pedersen’s Model

Engberg-Pedersen’s model is problematic, however, because it is not thoroughly based in the social reality of the ancient Eastern Mediterranean. It must be questioned, first, whether the self-oriented adult person Engberg-Pedersen’s model describes actually existed in the ancient world and therefore, second, whether the transformation process was so conceived and realized. He anticipates the criticism that his model is too individualistic for Paul’s social world, recognizing that many have argued that

individualism, the concern for an individual's soul, and the introspective conscience are features of the modern world and not Paul's. He replies, however, that these points 'do not touch the present project.' He offers three reasons why they do not: (1) Foucault has shown that 'something like the idea of a *care of the self* was in fact being developed in Hellenistic thought'; (2) 'the late Epicurean material on *psychagogy*' focused on the individual; (3) 'ancient Greek ethics since Socrates took its formal or logical starting point from the question of the good life *as pertaining to the individual person*.' He concludes,<sup>78</sup>

Thus there is no getting around the fact that even centuries before Paul there was quite enough awareness and conceptualization of the individual for thought like that depicted in the **I**->**X**->**S** model to fit smoothly into that context.

The reply is insufficient, however. It is true that ancient persons were concerned with the individual self and could contemplate it's welfare and mastery of the desired virtues, as these examples demonstrate, but it is not clear that such concern for and contemplation of the self was practiced in a manner that isolated the self from social concern, as Engberg-Pedersen's model demands. In fact, the care of the self as discussed by Foucault, ancient Epicurean psychagogy, and ancient Greek ethics all emphasize that the individuals under discussion were embedded in social groups. The transformation sought in these practices was from one kind of socially embedded being to another—better—kind of socially embedded being. There are, then, two related problems with Engberg-Pedersen's conception of the individual in his model. The first problem concerns the unreal quality of the self-oriented individual (**I**) and the second concerns the wrongly conceived nature of transformation in the transformed individual (**S**).

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<sup>78</sup> Engberg-Pedersen 2000: 41.

We do not doubt the existence of self-concern among the ancients as described by Foucault and others, nor the reality of psychagogic therapy in the tradition of Epicureanism, nor the orientation of the individual in Greek philosophy; nevertheless, it is not true that the self-oriented, non-social individual adult Engberg-Pedersen describes existed, except perhaps in abstract and theoretical discourse. Indeed, there is no reason to think that an adult person beginning the philosophical life in the Hellenistic world was not already thoroughly embedded in the social order and was not keenly aware of his or her social identity. Foucault himself questions whether such a form of individualism as Engberg-Pedersen posits ever existed: 'we may wonder about the reality of that individualistic upsurge and the social and political process that would have detached individuals from their traditional affiliations.' Foucault corrects this misunderstanding, writing, 'they were also societies in which everyone was situated within strong systems of local relationships, family ties, economic dependencies, and relations of patronage and friendship.'<sup>79</sup> Engberg-Pedersen attempts to counter this objection, however, claiming,<sup>80</sup>

The I of the model may very well be seen as a member of this or the other group and hence not just as an individual. *What happens when he or she is seen in the light of the model is only that the person is now claimed to be normatively concerned only with him- or herself and not, or at least only derivatively, with the other members of the group.* Now such an attitude of egoistic and prudential self-concern is not a particularly modern form of 'individualism'. It is the central target of all ancient ethics since Socrates and his rejection (in Plato) of the ethics of the Sophists. Paul belongs squarely within this tradition and it is this particular reading of the I state that is reflected in this model.

But it is this very claim of egoism (the person is . . . normatively concerned only with him- or herself and not . . . with the other members of the group) that is disputed and, therefore, it will take more than merely reiterating the point to establish it. Who is this

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<sup>79</sup> Foucault 1984: 40-41.

<sup>80</sup> Engberg-Pedersen 2000: 42. My italics.



'person' that Engberg-Pedersen's model describes? Is it a real self-conscious thinking adult person? That is unlikely. Is it, rather, one theoretical aspect of a person (his or her individual orientation) abstracted from reality (his or her social orientation) by the constraints of the model, which is then accorded actual status as a person? This may be more likely. But there is another possibility. Engberg-Pedersen is most likely referring to the person described in his account of Stoic *oikeiōsis* theory.<sup>81</sup>

*Oikeiōsis* theory is concerned with the process of self formation from birth to death, particularly as the person develops from a purely subjective self-conscious infant concerned only with itself to an objective awareness that the person also regards others, family, kin, citizens, even the gods within his or her identity. Within this process the mature person comes to realize the value of virtue and so acts not merely to succor the self and its impulses but to become 'good.' Algra has defined *oikeiōsis* as a process that 'involves treating other things or persons as *oikeîa*, i.e., as belonging to the sphere of the "self."<sup>82</sup> The second century text *Elements of Ethics* by Hierocles, which 'is the closest thing we have to an uncontaminated text-book or series of lectures on mainstream Stoicism by a Stoic philosopher,' provides helpful orientation to the concept of *oikeiōsis* in Stoic philosophy.<sup>83</sup> Using an illustration of concentric circles Hierocles describes

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<sup>81</sup> He has written a full study of the idea in *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiōsis* 1990. See Teun Tielman's 1995 review of this book.

<sup>82</sup> Algra 1997: 143, n.6. The term *oikeiōsis* is notoriously difficult to define, but Algra's definition is sufficient for our purposes. For a full discussion see S.G. Pembroke 1971: 114-16 and G.B. Kerferd 1972: 180-85; very helpful on the whole subject is J. Annas 1993: 262-76.

<sup>83</sup> A.A. Long 1986: 252. Long goes on to say that *Elements of Ethics* 'is unique in its length, manner and direct witness to a Stoic professional at work.'

*oikeiōsis* as the process by which a person progressively includes others within his or her own sphere of identity.<sup>84</sup> He writes,

In general each of us is as it were circumscribed by many circles, some smaller, others larger, some enclosing and others enclosed, depending on their differing and unequal relations to one another. The first and nearest circle is the one which a person has drawn around his own mind as around a centre; in this circle is included the body and things got for the body's sake. This circle is the smallest and all but touches its centre. Second, further from the centre and enclosing the first one, is the one in which are placed parents, siblings, wife and children. Third is the one in which are uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, siblings' children and also cousins. Next the circle including other relatives. And next the one including fellow-demesmen; then the one of fellow-tribesmen; then the one of fellow-citizens and then in the same way the circle of people from towns nearby and the circle of people of the same ethnic group. The furthest and largest, which includes all the circles, is that of the whole human race.

When this has been considered, it is for the person striving for the proper use of each thing to draw the circles somehow towards the centre and to make efforts to move people from the including circles to the included ones. It is for someone with familial love to [treat] parents and siblings, [wife and children. Like oneself; grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles and aunts like parents, siblings's children like one's own, cousins like siblings] and so by the same analogy treat older relatives, male and female, like grandfathers or uncles and aunts; those of one's own age like cousins, and the younger ones like cousins' children.

Engberg-Pedersen concentrates his attention on the earliest stage of *oikeiōsis* and is therefore able to emphasize the most self-oriented stage of human existence, the stage of the pre-rational impulse. He quotes Cicero's account of *oikeiōsis* in *De Finibus* 3.16.<sup>85</sup>

It is the view of those whose system I adopt [the Stoic one] that immediately upon birth (for that is the proper point to start from) a living creature feels an attachment for itself, and a commendation towards preserving itself and loving its own constitution and those things which tend to preserve that constitution; while on the other hand it perceives an antipathy to destruction and to those things which appear to threaten destruction. In proof of this they urge that infants desire things conducive to their health and reject things that are the opposite before they

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<sup>84</sup> The translation is from Julia Annas 1993: 267. The text is found in Hans von Arnim 1906. For a fuller discussion of the text see B. Inwood 1984 and J. Brunschwig 1986.

<sup>85</sup> It would have been helpful for Engberg-Pedersen to consider Cicero's 'Four-personae' theory in any attempt to discern his notion of the person. We will discuss this theory in detail in a later chapter and show that our proposed model for understanding ancient persons more closely fits Cicero's account of persons.

have ever felt pleasure or pain; this would not be the case, unless they felt love for their own constitution and were afraid of destruction. But it would be impossible that they should feel desire at all unless they possessed awareness of self and as a result of this loved themselves. This leads to the conclusion that it is love of self which supplies the starting point.

Engberg-Pedersen then claims, 'This passage describes a number of aspects of what it is like to find oneself at the **I** pole of the **I->X->S** model on its Stoic interpretation.'<sup>86</sup> But this is true only if Engberg-Pedersen is concerned about infants at the **I** pole. One can certainly dispute Engberg-Pedersen's claim that this passage is 'highly relevant to the Paul who wrote Gal 2:19-20.'<sup>87</sup> This earliest stage, concerned with the birth and infancy of a person, does not continue into adulthood, as Engberg-Pedersen's model demands; indeed, it is so basic that the theory posits the same self-perception among animals. Cicero indicates that this stage develops quickly and ends with the emergence of intelligence or rationality (*De Finibus* 3.21).

For man's first attachment is to the things in accordance with nature. But as soon as he acquires understanding [*intellegentia*] or rather, perhaps, the capacity to form concepts [*notio*], i.e., what the Stoics call *ennoia*, and sees the order and so to speak harmony of acts, he values this far more highly than all those earlier objects of his love, and he concludes by rational argument that in this lies that something which is praiseworthy and choiceworthy for its own sake—the good for man.

At this stage the person is clearly looking outward and defining him- or herself in relation to those things. Engberg-Pedersen defines this as the transition to **X**, but it is clear that this transition occurs naturally, although certainly not perfectly or thoroughly, in all persons without the aid of philosophy, at an early stage in their physical development.<sup>88</sup> It

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<sup>86</sup> Engberg-Pedersen 2000: 54.

<sup>87</sup> Engberg-Pedersen 2000: 55.

<sup>88</sup> So K. Algra (1997: 143) has written, 'The idea that there are certain forms of community which emerge spontaneously or naturally and which are not, or at least not directly, based on self-interest occurs prominently in Aristotelian ethics (most notably in the theory of friendship) and it is arguably at the core of the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis*.'

is not clear how long it takes for rationality to arise in persons to the point at which it regulates the natural impulses and turns the self outward, but S.G. Pembroke notes that this is ‘a process for whose completion a period of time variously put at seven and fourteen years is required.’<sup>89</sup> This is not to suggest that the typical adult has achieved perfection in *oikeiōsis* and therefore has no need of philosophy. Indeed, the process by which the person identifies with even more distant circles continues throughout life, and was aided by philosophical exercises, for we never are able to come to the same degree of sympathy with humanity as with our closest kin, spouse, and friends. Therefore, on the basis of the *oikeiōsis* doctrine, one would not expect to find many (if any) adult persons at the I pole, which directly contradicts Engberg-Pedersen’s model; rather, we expect that persons will be found at various points on a long continuum, all having made some progress.<sup>90</sup>

The second problem with this model concerns the transformation of the person. Although Hellenistic moral philosophy was clearly concerned about transforming the

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<sup>89</sup> Pembroke 1971: 117, citing the following ancient texts: Aetius, *Plac.* IV 11; V 23, 1; *Diog. Laert.*, 7.52; Plato, *Alc.* I, 121E.

<sup>90</sup> It can be noted that in an earlier paper (1990) Engberg-Pedersen clearly recognized that an adult person is not the self-absorbed non-social individual he posits in his model, for he describes an adult as having an ‘intermediate status.’ ‘The Stoic conception of a man is therefore that of a being who is, so to speak, intermediate between being merely individual (a “thing”) and no longer individual (God). His intermediate status is bound up with his sentience, for sentience already marks a step from the object-like status of pure individuality, and yet his continuing sentience marks his continuing status as an individual. What defines the middle ground is an unbreakable, logical connection of individuality and rationality.’ Engberg-Pedersen 1990: 125. Interestingly, this paper is not included in the bibliography of his *Paul and the Stoics*. The interested reader is also directed to consider the Epicurean variation of the *oikeiōsis* doctrine as described by Lucretius in *de Rerum Natura* V.925-1457, which equates the first or primitive stage of human existence (925-1010) with egoism and solitariness, and the second stage (1011-1104) with the emergence of rudimentary social structures (families defined, houses built, neighbor relations), and the third stage with institutionalized social

self, the transformation it urges is not what Engberg-Pedersen describes. Hellenistic moral philosophy did not focus on transforming self-oriented individuals into socially-oriented individuals. The goal of transformation was 'eudaimonism' or the good life, however the person or the philosophy defined it. Usually this transformation involved the person becoming more keenly aware of his or her individual self than prior to conversion to the philosophical life, for according to the spiritual exercises there could be no progress without self-examination. Indeed, this was the point of philosophical 'care of the self,' as Foucault has amply demonstrated. The person became more conscious of his or her possession of the values and virtues that constituted the good life. But Foucault also emphasized that while there is an inward reflexive turn to evaluate the self, 'a retreat within oneself,' there is at the same time an outward turn toward others for help in perfecting the virtues desired: 'Here we touch on one of the most important aspects of this activity devoted to oneself: it constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice. . . . It often took from within more or less institutionalized structures.'<sup>91</sup> The Epicurean psychagogic communities exemplify such institutions. Therefore, a more accurate model of personal transformation as sought within the Hellenistic philosophical tradition would regard the person as a social being both before and after transformation; the transformation would concern the person's mastery of the desired values and virtues, not his or her social orientation. In view of these two problems we must reject Engberg-Pedersen's model, which is the basis for his claim that 'Paul was a Stoic.' His model is not sufficient to describe either the Stoics or Paul, being deficient in its description of the

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life (laws, magistrates). K. Algra 1997 provides helpful insight on the Epicurean version of *oikeiōsis*.

individual and the nature of transformation sought. Nevertheless we do appreciate that Engberg-Pedersen has recognized the dynamic nature of identity and sought to account for that with his model.<sup>92</sup>

### Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that a comparative analysis of Paul and ancient philosophers cannot provide the interpreter with sufficient information to make a statement regarding Paul's self-identity. The comparative method can reveal how Paul resembles certain philosophers, but it cannot provide identity categories and define Paul within one of those groups. Interpreters have neglected important differences between Paul and the philosophers, especially differences that serve to identify the category, such as clothing, hair style, and lifestyle (manual labour). When these differences are noted they serve to distinguish Paul from the category of philosopher, regardless of the existence of non-defining functional similarities, such as letter writing, frank speech, and moral instruction.

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<sup>91</sup> Foucault 1984: 51. Julia Annas 1993: 127 also points out that 'an ethics of virtue is therefore at most formally self-centred or egoistic; its *content* can be fully as other-regarding as that of other systems of ethics.'

<sup>92</sup> For critical reviews of Engberg-Pedersen's Paul and the Stoics, see Barclay 2001, Downing 2001, Martyn 2002, and Philip Esler 2004.

Part Three  
Toward a Better Answer  
Social Identity Perspective

## Chapter Five

### Social Psychology and the Social Identity Perspective

#### The Rhetoric of Self-Identity

##### Social Identity Perspective

The 'social identity perspective' is a recent development within the discipline of social psychology. This perspective includes 'social identity theory,' 'self-categorization theory,' and 'social change theory.' Social identity theory was born in the work of Henri Tajfel in the 1960s and 1970s at the University of Bristol. According to Tajfel the formation of self-identity is rooted in the desire for positive distinctiveness. He showed that comparison with others leads to either a positive or a negative self-image. When self-image is negative, a person will seek to overcome this image and create a more positive image through various strategies of change. In the 1980s John C. Turner, one of Tajfel's students, introduced self-categorization theory as an attempt to clarify certain aspects of social identity theory, especially the psychological processes involved in the formation of the self. From the 1990s to the present time another of Tajfel's students, Stephen Reicher, along with other colleagues, has sought to clarify and develop social identity theory to more accurately reflect the reality of social change and the rhetorical framework of the social context. Reicher names his work 'social change theory.' These three theories represent the 'social identity perspective.' We will survey the development of this perspective in these three theories.



### Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory regards identity as constructed by the desire for positive distinctiveness in the light of intergroup comparison. The theory emerged when Henri Tajfel applied his new metatheory of social psychology to the interpretation of a series of 'minimal group experiments' designed to understand the basis for discrimination and bias. He believed that these experiments suggested a sequence of psychological processes that led a person toward a positive self-identity or 'positive distinctiveness.' Developing this suggestion led Tajfel to describe the process by which humans create social categories. Categorization occurs when humans exaggerate some similarities and differences between two persons or groups and when they minimize other similarities and differences. When any category includes the self, self-identity became salient, and this self-identity possesses the characteristics of the category, whether positive or negative. If the characteristics are negative, the person can seek to leave the category or to change the characteristics of the category and thereby achieve a more positive self-identity.

### A New Metatheoretical Perspective on Social Psychology

The emergence of the new discipline of modern experimental psychology in the laboratory of Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) made possible important advances in the scientific understanding of the psychological processes associated with individual human consciousness and experience. At the same time, the slightly older discipline of sociology continued on its quest to understand social interaction among individuals and groups. At the turn of the twentieth century attempts were made to marry the two disciplines and create a new discipline of 'social psychology' which would help to explain the

individual-group dynamic in the psychology of human social interaction. The marriage has proved to be a difficult one, however, with each partner vying for supremacy.<sup>1</sup> The famous 'group mind' debate in the 1920s between William McDougall and Floyd Allport typifies the strained relationship. McDougall argued for the existence of a 'group mind,' claiming that 'society has a mental life which is more than the mere sum of the mental lives of its units; and a complete knowledge of the units, if and in so far as they could be known as isolated units, would not enable us to deduce the nature of the life of the whole.' Allport claimed, however, that only individuals possess minds and that groups or social institutions were 'sets of ideals, thoughts, and habits represented in each individual mind, and existing only in those minds.'<sup>2</sup> Allport's individualistic perspective dominated the discipline until mid-century when the 'interactionist perspective,' led by Kurt Lewin, Muzafer Sherif, and Solomon Asch, demonstrated that groups were able to influence individual members as much as individuals were able to influence the group. This led to the general acceptance that a group was not merely the sum of its individual members but a distinct sociological phenomenon resulting from interpersonal relations. Nevertheless, even within the 'interactionist perspective,' the group did not possess a distinct psychological functioning different from the psychology of the individual members. This was the situation when Henri Tajfel began work in social psychology.

During the 1960s Tajfel sought to overcome this reductionistic individualism that was preventing a real integration of sociology and psychology in the new discipline. He

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<sup>1</sup> Farr 1986 illustrates this failure to integrate the two disciplines by noting that the two major textbooks on 'social psychology' published in the early days of the discipline (1908) were actually nothing more than textbooks for one or the other discipline. The text written by McDougall was essentially a psychology textbook and the one written by Ross was essentially a sociology textbook. Neither could be said to be social-psychology.

<sup>2</sup> McDougall 1920: 7; Allport 1924: 9.

described this impasse as ‘the major problem for social psychology.’<sup>3</sup> He recognized that an overemphasis toward the psychological would result in ‘a bland and dull generality of “laws” largely insensitive to the richness and complexity of the social settings of behavior’ and that an overemphasis toward the sociological ‘presents the danger of reducing the subject to little more than a collection of detailed descriptions of unique cases.’<sup>4</sup> For Tajfel finding the proper line between the two extremes was a difficult but worthwhile goal. ‘In its search for a level of inquiry, neither too general nor too specific, social psychology must be concerned with understanding social behavior both through “basic” psychological processes and through the social systems within which this behavior is manifested.’<sup>5</sup> In order to achieve this goal Tajfel determined that it was necessary to re-examine the place of the new discipline within the larger spectrum of academic disciplines concerned with the study of human behavior. In his view, biology should answer questions about the genetic and physiological aspects of human behavior (e.g., evolutionary development), psychology should answer questions about the mental processes and characteristics of human behavior (e.g., perception, motivation), and sociology should answer questions about the socio-cultural influences on human behavior (e.g., economic and political forces).<sup>6</sup> Social psychology fitted into this scheme by seeking to answer questions that connected the psychological and the sociological fields, such as, is group behavior fundamentally different from individual behavior? Do groups possess a psychological reality distinct from the sum of its members? What are the relations between social and psychological processes in groups? How does the group

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<sup>3</sup> Tajfel and Fraser 1978: 27.

<sup>4</sup> Tajfel and Fraser 1978: 27.

<sup>5</sup> Tajfel and Fraser 1978: 31.

<sup>6</sup> Tajfel 1972a: 86-88.

become installed in the mind of the individual? And, of course, social psychology should seek to answer 'the master problem of social psychology,' and 'the central controversy of the new field,' that is, what is the relationship between the individual and the group?<sup>7</sup> These were not new questions, but they did clarify the unique role social psychology might play in the academic disciplines.

These questions led Tajfel to a new metatheoretical perspective that emphasized the social contextualization of psychological processes. This metatheory was first explored in his 1972 essay 'Experiments in a Vacuum' and most fully explained in his last major work Human Groups and Social Categories (1981). The key to Tajfel's thought is the 'integration of the psychological functioning of individuals within the social setting, small and large, in which this functioning takes place.'<sup>8</sup> For Tajfel all human interaction takes place within a socially shared environment and with socially shared psychological regularities of perception and behavior.<sup>9</sup> Although Tajfel was committed to the experimental method, he was concerned that this method had failed to realize an authentic social context in which psychological processes could be explored. He emphasized that experimental methods must be practiced in such a way as to maintain

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<sup>7</sup> The two quotations are from Allport 1924: 7 and Turner 1987: 4.

<sup>8</sup> Tajfel and Fraser 1978: 17. Tajfel acknowledged in his 1972a essay 'Experiments in a Vacuum' that most textbooks on social psychology contained an appropriate definition of the discipline, relating the social and the psychological dimensions in theory. But, he complained, that was as far as they went with integration. The definition has no impact on their practice of the discipline as explained in the remainder of the textbook. For example, Tajfel notes with appreciation that one textbook properly states, 'Hence the understanding of the psychological events that occur in human interactions *requires comprehension of the interplay of these events with the social context in which they occur.*' 'But,' Tajfel laments, 'reading those chapters in the book which are devoted to social psychological theories tested in experimental settings, one must search in vain for further references to the "interplay with social context." . . . This is the beginning and end of it; how then is this a *social* psychological theory?' (Tajfel 1972a: 71-72; italics are his).

contact with real social contexts.<sup>10</sup> Tajfel constructed his metatheory within a conflict-structuralist-functionalist perspective. According to structuralism 'society comprises social categories which stand in power and status relations to one another.' Conflict-structuralists, in contrast to consensus-structuralists, view order and stability in society as transient and weak, because of the deep divisions within society, the diversity of beliefs and values among groups, and the ongoing struggle for power and status. In this perspective social identity is functionalist because it views social groups as fulfilling a function in society, serving individual and societal needs for order, simplification, and predictability, that is, 'to impose order upon the potential chaos.'<sup>11</sup> This metatheory inaugurated a new movement in European social psychology, offering for the first time both a trenchant critique of the dominant reductionistic and individualistic American approach to the discipline and a thorough and practicable method of integrating the disciplines. The application of this metatheory to the problem of intergroup bias demonstrated its capacity to avoid the extremes of sociological specificity or psychological generalities and to offer a genuinely social psychological perspective on human interaction.

### Minimal Group Experiments

In the 1960s Muzafer Sherif, working from the 'interactionist perspective,' sought to explore the problem of intergroup discrimination through a series of experiments. He interpreted his results to indicate that discrimination resulted from a conflict of

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<sup>9</sup> Turner 1996: 19.

<sup>10</sup> Tajfel 1972a.

interests.<sup>12</sup> However, several other studies immediately cast doubt on Sherif's 'conflict of interest' theory by demonstrating that discrimination occurs without the existence of conflict.<sup>13</sup> Tajfel noted this problem and asked the question: if conflict was not necessary for discrimination to occur, what was its minimal cause? Turner explains, 'Tajfel and his colleagues decided to see just how little it took to create discrimination between groups.'<sup>14</sup> They organized a series of 'minimal group experiments.' The groups were 'minimal' because the members of each group did not interact with one another, had no knowledge of the other members in the group, held no group interests or goals, and held no hostility toward other groups. Each participant was simply instructed that he or she was a member of a particular group. There was only this cognitive perception that one belonged to one group and not to another. These were groups without any real social context. Tajfel and Turner later explained, 'Thus, these groups are purely cognitive, and can be referred to as "minimal."' They expected that intergroup discrimination would not occur in these minimal groups. The minimal groups were expected to function as control or base groups, revealing conditions where no discrimination or bias occurs. Further experiments would add situational variables to determine the necessary preconditions for the emergence of discrimination. But the expectations were wrong. Participants revealed a definite bias against out-group members in their decision making. No variables beyond basic cognitive perception were necessary to motivate intergroup discrimination. The

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<sup>11</sup> See Hogg and Abrams 1988 for further development of Tajfel's conflict-structuralist-functionalist perspective. The two quotations from this paragraph are from Hogg and Abrams 1988: 14, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Sherif explains these experiments and his 'conflict of interest' theory in his 1966 and 1967 studies.

<sup>13</sup> Ferguson and Kelly 1964, Rabbie and Horowitz 1969, and Rabbie and Wilkens 1971.

<sup>14</sup> Turner 1996: 15. See Tajfel 1970 for his description of the experiments.

experiment was repeated several times, producing the same result each time.<sup>15</sup> This unexpected result demanded an explanation. Why did people discriminate on the basis of perceived group membership alone?

Tajfel's earliest interpretation (1970) of the minimal group experiments reveals a consistent application of his metatheoretical perspective. He contrasts his social psychological method with two other approaches to the problem, a sociological approach and a psychological approach. He notes that while each of these other methods have some analytical value, they are insufficient to explain the result, because the situations 'reflect an intricate interdependence of social and psychological causation. . . . There is a dialectical relation between the objective and subjective determinants . . . . Once the process is set in motion they reinforce each other in a relentless spiral . . . .' This causative convergence and mutual reinforcement occur 'because of the psychological effects on an individual of his sociocultural milieu.'<sup>16</sup> On the basis of his metatheoretical perspective Tajfel interprets the results by claiming that humans order society into categories (structuralism), reducing the complexity of situations to ingroup and outgroup or 'we' and 'they' (functionalism). At the same time, through a diversity of experiences in situations where 'we' and 'they' identities are salient, humans internalize generic norms of behavior and attitudes toward outgroups, such as prejudice, discrimination, and hostility (conflict-structuralism). Therefore, whenever a person is confronted with a social situation in which 'we' and 'they' identities become salient, the psychologically

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<sup>15</sup> Billig 1973, Billig and Tajfel 1973, Locksley, Ortiz, and Hepburn 1980.

<sup>16</sup> Tajfel 1970: 96.

based generic norms of behavior and attitudes associated with those identities also become salient.<sup>17</sup>

### Social Identity Theory

Shortly after publishing his 'generic norms' interpretation of the minimal group experiments in 1970 and 1971, Tajfel reconsidered his explanation and, in late 1971, offered a slightly different and more succinct interpretation. 'The simplest explanation was to assume that the subjects attempted to achieve positive differentiation in favour of the ingroup.'<sup>18</sup> The desire for positive distinctiveness was the motivation for discrimination and bias. This revised interpretation did not contradict the earlier one, but re-viewed human behavior and perception from a different and more encompassing perspective. Tajfel described this discovery of the importance of positive distinctiveness as his second great idea.<sup>19</sup> The greatness of this idea is not as much its simplicity as its heuristic potency. It suggested a causal psychological sequence beginning with social categorization, which was followed by social identity and social comparison, which led ultimately to the goal of positive distinctiveness. This sequence is the heart of social identity theory. Tajfel introduced his new theory in a short article in 1972, 'La catégorisation social.'<sup>20</sup> He summarized the theory, stating, 'The notion of social identity

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<sup>17</sup> This 'generic norms' interpretation was first published in Tajfel 1970 (see especially pp. 98-99) and then in more detail in Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, and Flament 1971.

<sup>18</sup> Tajfel 1981: 271.

<sup>19</sup> As reported by Turner 1996: 16, recalling a personal conversation with Tajfel in 1971.

<sup>20</sup> Tajfel 1972b.



is based on the simple motivational assumption that individuals (at least in our culture) prefer a positive to a negative self-image.<sup>21</sup>

In his 1972 article Tajfel defined social identity as 'the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of group membership.'<sup>22</sup> This definition reveals three interrelated dimensions of social identity: (1) a cognitive dimension ('knowledge that he belongs') that involves social categorization, (2) an evaluative dimension ('value significance') that involves social comparison, and (3) an emotional dimension ('emotional . . . significance') that seeks positive distinctiveness.<sup>23</sup> Tajfel continued developing these ideas, finally describing social identity theory as a 'conceptual tripod.' The three concepts in this tripod are (1) the psychological sequence, (2) the psychological processes involved in the sequence, and (3) the contextualization of the sequence and the processes in a social context. We will describe these three concepts in some detail.

The psychological sequence begins with social categorization, which leads to social identity and social comparison, and concludes with positive distinctiveness. Social categorization occurs when a person cognitively partitions the social environment into distinct and meaningful units. Social identity occurs when that person orients him/her self by those categories. Two psychological processes are inherent in this initial sequence from social categorization to social identity. Both are comparative. They are accentuation and attenuation. When categorizing social stimuli into distinct units a person exaggerates perceived differences between categories and perceived similarities within categories

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<sup>21</sup> Tajfel 1979: 185; cf. Tajfel and Turner 1986: 16.

<sup>22</sup> This English translation of the original French text is from Hogg and Abrams 1988: 7. See too Tajfel 1981: 255.

<sup>23</sup> These interrelated dimensions are described further in Tajfel 1978: 28.

(‘accentuation’) and minimizes similarities between categories and differences within categories (‘attenuation’). Social identity emerges when one or more of these categories includes the self. These self-inclusive categories not only define identity but also guide perception and behavior. For Tajfel this emergence of social identity was not as much a matter of self-awareness as it was a matter of guidance and direction. Social identity functioned as a ‘guide to action,’ revealing appropriate behavior in social situations.<sup>24</sup> Such guidance is necessary in view of the desire for positive distinctiveness.

Three psychological processes direct the sequence from social comparison to positive distinctiveness. Tajfel identifies these processes involving social mobility and social change as (1) individual mobility, (2) social creativity, and (3) social competition.<sup>25</sup> Intergroup comparison always reveals differences between groups and, therefore, in view of the specific values comprising the evaluative dimension, produces either a positive identity or a negative identity for group members. In accordance with the conflict-structuralist perspective, social identity theory views each group as competing for status, prestige, resources, and power. A group that has low-status, low-prestige, a lack of resources, or a lack of power in comparison with another group will also have a negative identity in comparison with that outgroup’s more positive identity. When social comparison results in a positive group identity, the group will seek to maintain the status quo. The members of a group with a negative identity will seek strategies to overcome and improve their social identity. Those strategies will be based on beliefs about social mobility and social change. The ‘individual mobility’ strategy is possible when an individual perceives group boundaries to be permeable, allowing a person to exit the

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<sup>24</sup> Tajfel 1972b: 298, as cited by Reicher 1996: 318.

<sup>25</sup> Tajfel and Turner 1979: 43-44.

negatively qualified group and enter the positively qualified group. Group status remains the same, only the status of the individual changes. The 'rags to riches' American parable is an example of individual mobility: a poverty stricken individual begins working in the mail room, but slowly rises through the institutional hierarchy eventually to become the president. However, if a person perceives group boundaries to be impermeable (e.g., groups based on gender or ethnicity), other strategies are necessary. The strategy of 'social creativity' involves seeking creative means of improving intergroup comparison. One may seek a more favorable comparison by changing the elements compared.<sup>26</sup> A sports team with a history of losing may seek to shift comparison away from their dismal record and claim instead that they have greater team unity and spirit than all the other teams. Alternatively one may seek a more favorable comparison by changing the values assigned to the elements compared, so that 'comparisons which were previously negative are now perceived as positive.'<sup>27</sup> Tajfel offers as a 'classic example' the emergence of the saying 'black is beautiful' in 1960s America to overcome racial prejudice. Another creative strategy involves 'changing the out-group . . . with which the in-group is compared.'<sup>28</sup> The 'social competition' strategy involves challenging the outgroup to compete for honor in a different contest, one in which the ingroup has a greater chance of success. Thus far we have described the first two legs of the tripod, the psychological sequence and the accompanying psychological processes. We need only remind the reader of the third leg, the social contextualization of the sequence and its processes. Tajfel's metatheoretical perspective emphasizes that psychological processes occur only within specific social settings. These contexts provide the relevant social phenomena, as

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<sup>26</sup> Tajfel and Turner 1979: 43.

<sup>27</sup> Tajfel and Turner 1979: 43.

well as various views on social categories and social values that suggest and constrain other potential interpretations.<sup>29</sup> Tajfel never abandoned the experimental method, but he sought to re-introduce the importance of social context to the experiment.

The identity of the individual in social identity theory ranges along a continuum between personal identity and social identity. At the personal end there is 'interaction between two or more individuals that is fully determined by their interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics, and not at all affected by various social groups or categories to which they respectively belong.' At this extreme we find unique characteristics and idiosyncrasies that differentiate one individual from another. At the social end there are 'interactions between two or more individuals (or groups of individuals) that are fully determined by their respective memberships in various social groups or categories, and not at all affected by the interindividual personal relationships between the people involved.'<sup>30</sup> At this extreme we find characteristics and habits that identify one with a group. Both of these extreme ends of the continuum are 'pure' forms and may not ever actually occur in social situations. Humans typically find themselves somewhere between these extremes. Specific identities become salient in apposite social settings. When an identity becomes salient the characteristic values, attitudes, and behaviors of that category also become salient. When the identity category that becomes salient is toward the social end of the continuum, the individual's characteristic values, attitudes, and behavior will merge with the group's characteristics; however, when the identity category is toward the personal end, the individual's characteristic values,

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<sup>28</sup> Tajfel and Turner 1979: 43.

<sup>29</sup> Turner 1996: 18.

<sup>30</sup> Both quotations are from Tajfel and Turner 1979: 34.

attitudes, and behavior will appear more idiosyncratic. Tajfel describes this as 'acting in terms of the group' and 'acting in terms of self.'<sup>31</sup>

### Self-Categorization Theory

John C. Turner, one of Tajfel's more prolific students, clarified and developed Tajfel's work with his own 'self-categorization theory.' He describes his theory as 'the social identity theory of the group.'<sup>32</sup> Turner's theory also emerged from a reconsideration of metatheoretical perspectives. Turner posited a 'cognitive mechanism' that translates environmental data into identity categories through a comparative process. He further sought to understand how groups could maintain unity in the face of intragroup diversity.

### The Metatheoretical Perspective Clarified

Turner returns to the metatheoretical questions, not because he rejects Tajfel's perspective, but in order to clarify and elaborate that perspective. The heart of his clarification is the claim that 'the idea of social psychological interaction . . . provides the metatheoretical solution to the problem of the relationship of the individual to the group.'<sup>33</sup> For Turner 'social psychological interaction' is interaction in which individuals are related to society in such a way that it is impossible to separate the individual and society. The individual cannot stand in isolation from or opposition to society, but must always stand inside society as a group member. He writes, 'Individuals are society and society is the natural form of being human individuals.' There are no purely biological,

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<sup>31</sup> Tajfel 1974: 87-89.

<sup>32</sup> Turner 1987: 42.

asocial, isolated individuals, 'except as an analytic, fictional abstraction.'<sup>34</sup> Social psychological interaction is reciprocal, functional, and creative. Social activity alters the individual's cognitive processes and, likewise, the individual's cognitive processes alter social activity. This reciprocal interaction functions in a creative way so that one can say that the individual is a social construction and that society is construction of the individual, a representation in the mind. The result of this creative, functional, and reciprocal interaction is the perception of a socially shared objective cognition of the world.<sup>35</sup>

Turner's metatheory rejects the 'group mind' hypothesis as the basis for stereotypical group behavior and group perception. He emphasizes that psychological processes belong only to individuals. Social psychological interaction differentiates the psychological processes involved when an individual interacts as a member of a specific group and when he or she interacts on an interpersonal level. Turner states, 'group behavior is psychologically different from and irreducible to interpersonal relationships.' For Turner, then, the group does have a psychological reality, but this psychological reality is found only in the mind of the individual. He rejects the older notion that group behavior is more irrational, primitive, and regressive than individual behavior, as described, for example, in Gustave LeBon's classic work The Crowd (1960). Instead, Turner claims, 'It is assumed that acting solely in terms of one's personal uniqueness is not an unalloyed good, and that the psychological group is precisely the adaptive mechanism that frees human beings from the restrictions of and allows them to be more than just individual persons.'

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<sup>33</sup> Turner 1987: 204.

<sup>34</sup> Turner 1987: 204, 205.

### The Process of Self-Categorization

Self-categorization theory is an elaboration of social identity theory primarily in the areas of group formation and the self-concept. Whereas social identity theory highlights positive distinctiveness as a primary goal and motivation for intergroup perception and behavior, self-categorization theory highlights the formation of group perceptions in the self-concept of the individual, clarifying further elements in the continuum between personal and social identity. Self-categorization theory posits a cognitive mechanism (the self-concept) that guides the psychological sequence from social stimuli to self-image. The cognitive mechanism receives input from the environment (social stimuli) and produces output in the form of perception and behavior (self-image). The environment offers a continual supply of social stimuli in the form of persons, events, institutions, and so on. These stimuli 'switch on' or 'activate' the cognitive mechanism, which seeks to categorize the stimuli on the basis of their fit within a hierarchical classification system.

Turner's theory of the self attempts to explain a confused area of research. Current research on the concept of the self reveals confusion regarding the stability and consistency of the self.<sup>35</sup> On the one hand, research indicates that a person's self-description remains fairly stable, maintaining consistency and continuity through time and throughout various contexts. On the other hand, a person's subjective experience of the self varies according to time and social context, revealing multiform, transient, situation-specific characteristics. There is a continuing debate among scholars concerning

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<sup>35</sup> Turner 1987: 206.

<sup>36</sup> See Mischel 1976: 486 for a fuller explanation.

these conflicting views of the self.<sup>37</sup> Turner's contribution to the debate is to propose a distinction between self-concept and self-image.<sup>38</sup> The self-concept is a 'hypothetical cognitive structure which cannot be observed directly.' It is a cognitive control mechanism that possesses consistency and unity in its functioning. Self-images are subjective experiences of the self produced by the cognitive structure and vary according to the particular environmental stimuli entering the cognitive mechanism. Turner names this self-concept the cognitive mechanism.

### The Cognitive Mechanism

The cognitive mechanism or self-concept is related to Tajfel's personal-social continuum of identity and posits a hierarchical system of categories ranging from highly exclusive to highly inclusive self categories. Turner's basic hierarchy defines three levels of abstraction: subordinate, intermediate, and superordinate. The subordinate is the most exclusive level and concerns personal identity; the superordinate is the most inclusive level and concerns identity in the human species; the intermediate is the most wide-ranging level and includes a variety of abstractions.

This hierarchical system includes cognitive representations of the self, that is, self-categorizations. Self-categorizations are cognitive classifications of one's self as the same as some class of stimuli and different from another class of stimuli. In Self-categorization theory the self can exist at every level of abstraction and is never limited to any one level, for example, with the lowest level of abstraction (the personal self), as in other theories. Turner states, 'the self-concept in social psychology is usually equated

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<sup>37</sup> See Gergen 1971 for details.

<sup>38</sup> Turner 1982: 18-19; Turner 1987: 44.



with the personal self, but it is fundamental to our assumption that this is incorrect and that the personal self reflects only one level of abstraction of self-categorization, of which more inclusive levels are just as valid and in some conditions more important.<sup>39</sup>

### Environmental Stimuli

The environment (i.e., persons, events, institutions, etc.) provides input for the cognitive mechanism. The salience of any self-image is determined by this specific input. The cognitive mechanism identifies stimuli as belonging to specific categories within the hierarchical system of abstractions. It does so through a psychological process involving the evaluation of accessibility and fitness. 'Accessibility' refers to the relative ease with which the cognitive mechanism identifies stimuli with a specific category. This 'ease' is determined by 'past experience, present expectations and current motives.'<sup>40</sup>

Accessibility will be high if one has in the past and with some frequency associated a specific stimuli with a specific category, or if one expects to or is motivated to associate a specific stimuli with a specific category. Turner illustrates this idea by noting that a person 'would be more ready to perceive somebody as "French" if they were in Paris (learned expectations about the environment) and were looking for a French person (current motives).'<sup>41</sup> 'Fit' refers to the degree of correspondence between stimuli and existing categories. There are two types of fit that help to decide the closest categorical correspondence. 'Comparative fit' is based on the principle of metacontrast: differences *within* a category are perceived as less than the differences *between* categories. For example, differences among Democrats are perceived as less striking than differences

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<sup>39</sup> Turner 1986: 46.

<sup>40</sup> Turner, Oakes, Haslam, and McGarty 1994: 455.

between Democrats and Republicans. 'Normative fit' is based on the principle of stereotypes: stereotypes exemplify categories. For example, Republicans believe in small government and Democrats believe in big government. In order for a person to 'fit' into the category 'Republican' he/she would have to differ less with Republicans than Democrats (comparative fit) and manifest certain stereotypically Republican attitudes and behaviors, such as believing that a smaller government is a better government (normative fit). Comparative fit and normative fit are inseparable because intergroup differences (comparative fit) must also correspond to relevant stereotypes (normative fit). When accessibility is low, that is, when the correspondence between stimuli and category is unexpected or unusual, fitness will not be recognized until a sufficient mass of similar stimuli are processed. The cognitive mechanism discerns the category that maximizes accessibility and fitness. When that category is self-inclusive the self becomes salient and one's self-identity is revealed. 'Salience refers to the conditions under which some specific group membership becomes cognitively prepotent in self-perception to act as the immediate influence on perception and behavior.'<sup>42</sup>

#### Perception, Behavior and Self-Image

The cognitive mechanism receives input in the form of environmental stimuli and produces output in the form of perceptions, behavior and self-image. Perception and behavior are stimulated when a self-category becomes salient. Category salience involves two effects as concerns the self-image of a person. The first effect concerns the variability and fluidity of the salient category. Salient categories are not rigid and static,

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<sup>41</sup> Turner 1987: 55.

<sup>42</sup> Turner 1987: 54.

but manifest inner levels of variety and diversity in terms of their meaning or structure. The value or meaning of a category can vary depending on social context; likewise the perceptions and behavior motivated by a category can differ as the result of diverse environmental stimuli. For example, the category 'homosexual' will motivate different values and meaning and different perceptions and behavior when the context shifts from a liberal political gathering to a conservative religious gathering. The internal structure of a category may vary depending on social context too. For example, in comparison with a Japanese man a person may be stereotypically 'American,' but in comparison with another American, this same person may be marginally 'American.' Thus, because of the variability and fluidity of categories, a salient category may produce varying self-images.

The second effect category salience has on a person's self-image concerns the process of stereotyping a person, or, what Turner calls, 'depersonalization.' Depersonalization is one of the most distinctive features of Turner's theory, and one of the easiest to misconstrue. It is important to avoid the assumption that depersonalization is a negative effect. Depersonalization has important social benefits, such as cooperation, cohesion and unity. It is also important to avoid confusing depersonalization with deindividuation. Deindividuation refers to the loss of the sense of self or personal responsibility, and is often accompanied by destructive behavior. Depersonalization, on the other hand, does not involve the loss of the sense of self, only the shift toward a more socially embedded and stereotyped self. It is helpful to recall that in self-categorization theory the self is vital at all levels of abstraction, not only the ones at the more exclusive level of the hierarchy. Turner explains that depersonalization occurs when category salience motivates group members 'to perceive themselves more as the interchangeable

exemplars of a social category than as unique personalities defined by their individual differences from others.<sup>43</sup> Elsewhere it has been described similarly: 'Individuals tend to see themselves less as differing individual people and more as the interchangeable representatives of some shared social category membership.'<sup>44</sup> This perception is the result of the psychological process of accentuation discussed earlier. When the environment stimulates a more inclusive category to become salient, the psychological process of accentuation functions to exaggerate intragroup similarities and intergroup differences. The result is a clear and strong sense of 'we' (in contrast to 'I') and 'them.' The individual's perceptions and behavior become stereotypical.

The stereotypic effect can be induced as well as deduced. That is, in the deductive process, an individual is described on the basis of group characteristics. In the inductive process, however, the group is described on the basis of an exemplary individual. Thus, when such a category becomes salient, a person will perceive him/her self as typical of the group, but this salience may also motivate him/her to perceive other members as exemplars of the category.<sup>45</sup> Turner describes the effect: 'Intragroup relations tend to be characterized by (1) the perceived similarity of members; (2) mutual attraction between members or social cohesion; (3) mutual esteem; (4) emotional empathy or contagion; (5) altruism and cooperation, and (6) attitudinal and behavioral uniformity.'<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Turner 1987: 50.

<sup>44</sup> Turner, Oakes, Haslam, and McGarty 1994: 455.

<sup>45</sup> Turner 1987: 57-59.

<sup>46</sup> Turner 1982: 29.

### Consensualization

The stereotypic effect clearly includes elements of misperception or even deception. The deductive process of assigning common characteristics to all members of the group can mask reality. While there may be significant differences between Bostonians and Californians, certain environments may mask those differences and suggest a set of common characteristics as 'American.' But intragroup interaction may reveal those differences and cause friction among members. Thus, Turner suggests that 'face-to-face interaction could sometimes *decrease* intragroup cohesion by providing information which disconfirmed stereotypic similarity.'<sup>47</sup> When cohesion decreases and intragroup comparison increases, there is a tendency for internal groups to form. Recently Turner and several colleagues have analyzed this intragroup phenomenon with the goal of understanding how homogeneity is sustained in the midst of face-to-face interaction. They argue that group cohesion can be maintained by a process of consensualization. This process involves persuasion, negotiation, and argument. They point out that group membership does not automatically entail agreement among members, but they suggest that it does entail the belief that when all issues are fully discussed a basic consensus will emerge. Group members expect to agree and the process of persuasion, negotiation, and argument is designed to bring about that consensus.

### Social Change Theory

Social identity theory highlights the individual's desire for positive distinctiveness and the various strategies that can enable that positive identity. Stephen Reicher claims, however, that 'while Tajfel may have stressed the importance of change and described

some of its elements, he never did provide an *explanation* of the phenomena.<sup>48</sup> He notes that Tajfel 'sketched out some of the considerations that need to be included in a model of change but he died in 1982 without having produced a model of change. As a consequence, those who employ the ideas of social identity theory all too rarely address the issue of change.'<sup>49</sup> Social change 'dropped off the agenda.'<sup>50</sup> The result has been an unbalanced view of the group as predominantly homogenous. Reicher and his colleagues, primarily Nic Hopkins and Fabio Sani, are currently attempting to restore balance to the social identity perspective by re-affirming the reality of social change in intragroup contexts and analyzing the processes involved in social change.

#### Discursive Rhetorical Theory

Social change theory integrates 'discursive rhetorical theory' with elements of self-categorization theory in order to explain how humans influence and change the group and the wider social environment.<sup>51</sup> The theory accepts Turner's basic three-step process involving environmental stimuli, the cognitive mechanism, and perceptions and behaviors associated with self-image, but it attempts to revise and explain the intervening processes in view of the communicative setting in which those processes occur. The key development is found in the theory's rhetorical revision of the cognitive mechanism. More specifically, whereas Turner described the interaction between environmental stimuli and the cognitive mechanism as an almost mechanical process involving

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<sup>47</sup> Turner 1982: 30.

<sup>48</sup> Reicher 1996: 320.

<sup>49</sup> This is taken from his unpublished manuscript titled 'Psychology and Nationhood.'

<sup>50</sup> Reicher 1996: 319.

<sup>51</sup> See Sani 1996: 88; Reicher and Hopkins 1996a; Reicher and Hopkins 1996b.

accessibility and fit, Reicher describes this interaction as a complex discursive affair involving argument, debate, and disputation. Michael Billig introduced the rhetorical approach to social psychology in his 1987 book Arguing and Thinking. A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology. The heart of Billig's thesis is that 'all our mental processes are embedded in a dialogue between alternatives.'<sup>52</sup> Therefore, any attempt to understand the psychological processes leading to a particular self-image, must recognize the competing arguments that inhabit the processes. The potency of Billig's rhetorical model of social psychology for social change theory can be seen in Reicher's review of the book in 1988.

According to social change theory, the cognitive mechanism does not passively receive environmental stimuli as neutral input from an objective world; rather, the cognitive mechanism actively engages with social stimuli, constructing and reconstructing social reality in an argumentative fashion. Reicher and Hopkins claim that Turner's principle of accessibility and fit 'takes the nature of context . . . for granted. . . . The danger is that social reality will be taken as a given for the perceiver who will then be treated as akin to a cognitive automaton which internally computes categories from the objective array of stimuli.'<sup>53</sup> For Reicher and Hopkins, then, 'all the relevant terms are seen as open to argument.'<sup>54</sup> Hence, social change theorists seek to redirect the social identity perspective toward recognition of the discursive construction of reality, whereby people seek to revise or reconstruct the social world, which includes the reconstruction of their own self-identity.

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<sup>52</sup> Reicher 1988: 283.

<sup>53</sup> Reicher and Hopkins 1996b: 355.

<sup>54</sup> Reicher and Hopkins 1996b: 355.

Social change theorists also seek to clarify the relationship between self-identity and behavior. In agreement with Turner and Tajfel, social change theorists believe that meaningful action requires a clear perception of self-identity. 'It is only by assuming an identity that individuals can be part of society and participate within it.'<sup>55</sup> However, they go beyond Turner and Tajfel by emphasizing that identity can be discursively adjusted or reconstructed in view of behavioral objectives. People reconfigure identity categories in a way that warrants or justifies certain activity.<sup>56</sup> This means that discourse that seeks to persuade its auditors to behave in certain ways must relate that behavior to the auditor's constructed identities. Reicher and Hopkins have demonstrated that an author's ability to persuade his readers to think and act in specific ways is directly related to his ability to construct for them relevant and positive identities within a specific social situation. They summarize their view, writing, 'one of the ways in which people could influence the ways in which masses are mobilized is through the ways in which they characterize events and those who are involved in them.'<sup>57</sup> They discuss three ways that 'influence is mediated by social identification.'<sup>58</sup> First, they state that 'conformity to group norms is dependent upon the relevant social identity being salient.' That is, an audience can be persuaded to conform their attitudes and behavior to group norms only if or when they are conscious of belonging to that group. Second, they point out that discourse is persuasive only insofar as it addresses all relevant identities within the situation. That is, discourse that fails to articulate all relevant identity categories clearly and develop the argument around those categories will not be persuasive. Third, 'individuals will only be

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<sup>55</sup> Reicher 1995: 26.

<sup>56</sup> Sani 1996: 91.

<sup>57</sup> Reicher and Hopkins 1996b: 355.

<sup>58</sup> Reicher and Hopkins 1996b: 298.



influential to the extent that they are seen as representing the relevant social identity.’ That is, a writer must identify himself within the social situation by the most appropriate category in order to be persuasive.<sup>59</sup>

Reicher and Hopkins illustrate their rhetorical approach by comparing the speeches of Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock during the Miner’s Strikes of 1984-85. Kinnock described the strike as ‘Thatcherism’ in action, creating an identity category inclusive of the miners and Margaret Thatcher. He then described the characteristic features of this category with highly pejorative terms such as arrogant, coercive, dictatorial, and contemptuous of ordinary people. In Kinnock’s re-creative scheme the outgroup ‘Thatcherites’ are the antithesis of the ingroup ‘the people of Great Britain,’ who are characterized by their compassion for the community. Kinnock included himself and his audience among ‘the people.’ Thatcher described the strike as ‘Britishness’ in action, creating an identity category inclusive of the miners and the people of Great Britain. She then described the characteristic features of this category with highly laudatory terms such as champions for democracy and government. In Thatcher’s re-creative scheme the ingroup is inclusive of the people of Great Britain, the miners, and Margaret Thatcher. Both Kinnock and Thatcher adjust and reconstruct the social situation and the identities of all participants in such a way as to warrant their action and motivate the actions of others.

In Social Change Theory the cognitive mechanism engages environmental stimuli in a complex discursive process involving argumentation and definition with others; it does not merely manage environmental stimuli through an intra-psyche process

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<sup>59</sup> Reicher and Hopkins 1996b. The quotations are from page 355. See too their article 1996a.

involving accessibility and fit. Environmental stimuli do not ‘switch on,’ ‘trigger,’ or ‘activate’ the cognitive mechanism; rather, environmental stimuli ‘engage’ the cognitive mechanism with opposition and resistance or with agreement and acceptance. This engagement is primarily through rhetoric.

### Social Change and Schism

John Turner recognized that intragroup comparison was a significant threat to ingroup homogeneity. He sought to explain how groups maintain unity through a process of consensualization. Fabio Sani and Steve Reicher<sup>60</sup> argue, however, that the expectation of agreement in this process is overly optimistic and unrealistic. They point out that history reveals that the process of consensualization frequently results in schism rather than consensus. Once it is recognized that the process actually concerns the search for consensus rather than the achievement of consensus, the door is opened for an investigation into its various outcomes. They explain, ‘The obvious question, and that which interests us, concerns the conditions under which the process of consensualisation leads to different outcomes.’<sup>61</sup>

Sani and Reicher’s reconsideration of the social identity perspective on the stability of ingroup homogeneity and the phenomenon of intragroup differentiation and change is supported by several other studies that reveal significant degrees of ingroup diversity. In 1975 Jean-Paul Cobol demonstrated that intragroup comparison leads to a competitive situation in which individuals seek to present themselves as ‘more in

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<sup>60</sup> Sani 1996; Reicher 1996; Sani and Reicher 1998, 1999, and forthcoming articles.

<sup>61</sup> Sani and Reicher 1999: 280.

conformity with the social norms' than others in the group.<sup>62</sup> Cobol identifies this as 'the superior conformity of the self phenomenon' or *Primus Inter Pares* or 'the PIP effect.'<sup>63</sup> Recent studies demonstrate that ingroup definitions of identity are not static or standardized, but are flexible and functional. Antaki, Conder and Levine argue that members of the same ingroup can 'avow contradictory identities.' Therefore, they consider 'social identity as a flexible resource in conversational interaction.'<sup>64</sup> Widdicombe and Woofit's 1995 study of identity formation among groups of young people reveals the importance of constant negotiation, debate, and reconstruction of categories. Michael Billig's 1987 study of the rhetoric of social psychology also supports the idea that intragroup homogeneity is unstable and is often contested through discourse. These studies support Sani and Reicher's decision to re-examine the phenomenon of intragroup change, especially when it results in schism and permanent division.

Sani and Reicher identify two key elements that lead the process toward either consensus or dissensus.<sup>65</sup> The first element concerns the choice of discussion topics. They point out that topics are chosen because they are highly relevant to group identity. There is an expectation that group members will agree on matters relevant to group identity; there is no expectation that members will agree on matters irrelevant to group identity. The second element concerns disagreement over essential matters of group identity. They examine the possibility that group members may disagree about 'the core dimensions of their common social identity.'<sup>66</sup> The fact that group members confess solidarity to a group identity does not mean that each member holds the same understanding of that

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<sup>62</sup> Cobol 1975: 457.

<sup>63</sup> Cobol 1975: 463.

<sup>64</sup> Antaki, Conder and Levine 1996: 473.

<sup>65</sup> Sani and Reicher 1999: 280.

identity or that one member's understanding could not contradict another member's understanding of that identity. It is not that some members might intentionally contradict group identity; it is, rather, that some members may believe that the views of other members contradict and negate group identity. Sani and Reicher claim that the process of consensualization freezes when some members believe that other members hold contradictory notions of group identity. If this situation is not rectified it will lead to schism, 'because the corollary of assuming that common group membership will agree on identity-relevant matters is that, where people cannot so agree, they cannot be members of the same group.'<sup>67</sup>

Sani and Reicher illustrate how the process of consensualization can break down and result in schism rather than consensus by analyzing the debate over women's ordination in the Church of England. An intragroup debate took place in London at the General Synod of the Church of England on 11 November 1992. Some members promoted women's ordination (Pro) and others opposed it (Anti), but all members agreed that 'the Church of English is the church of this land, is faithful to God, and that Holy Orders are at the heart of the church's structure.'<sup>68</sup> Both Pro and Anti advocates sought to defend their position as being in concert with the essential identity of the Church of England.<sup>69</sup> On the 'Pro' side, it was argued, 'The ordination of women is not only consonant with the identity of the Church of England, but will allow the Church more

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<sup>66</sup> Sani and Reicher 1999: 281.

<sup>67</sup> Sani and Reicher 1999: 281.

<sup>68</sup> Sani and Reicher 1999: 284.

<sup>69</sup> Sani 1996: 159.

fully to accomplish its true essence.<sup>70</sup> For example, the Right Reverend Stephen Sykes, Bishop of Ely, announced,<sup>71</sup>

I would like to tell the Synod how much I affirm the truth that the argument in favour of this proposition rests upon a theological grasp of the doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement, which lie at the heart of our faith. . . . I would like to leave Synod with a clear message that it is not fashion, it is not civil rights, it is not the drive for self-fulfillment which undergirds the proposition among those of us who support it, but it is faithfulness to the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, to our Anglican tradition which permits us to judge, as Richard Hooker said, of times and seasons, that 'now is a new grown occasion' when church people may affirm the proposal before us as fully consistent with the faith of the one holy catholic and apostolic church.

On the 'Anti' side, it was argued that 'The legislation is not just dissonant with the identity of the Church of England but will fundamentally subvert its essence.'<sup>72</sup> For example, Margaret Laird warned,<sup>73</sup>

We may be planning for the future but we cannot ignore the past, and in this debate, if we were to do so, we would be in danger of destroying the essence of the Church of England. . . . This will lead to anomalies, ambiguities and, I fear, to a Church, which, forgetful of the rock from which she was hewn, will be uncertain of her authority, unclear about her doctrine and unsure about the validity of her ministry.

The argument over women's ordination in the Church of England revolved around the essential identity of the Church. Pro and Anti advocates both sought to promote the identity of the Church of England, but in contradictory fashion. This incident demonstrates that the issue cannot be reduced to the question of accessibility and fit of the given categories 'women' and 'priest.' The debate did not concern the possibility of reconstructing the boundaries of these categories, that is, can the boundaries of the

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<sup>70</sup> Sani and Reicher 1999: 285.

<sup>71</sup> Sani 1996: 166-67.

<sup>72</sup> Sani and Reicher 1999: 285-86.

<sup>73</sup> Sani 1996: 175.

category 'priest' be refashioned to include women; but, rather, the debate was over the question 'will such a reconstruction change the essence of the Church of England?'

### Summary and Conclusion

The social identity perspective offers a helpful analysis of identity formation. It views identity formation as the result of a desire for positive distinctiveness in view of alternative identities. This perspective provides a model of identity formation, defining a sequence that involves social categorization, social identity and social comparison, and positive distinctiveness, and explaining the psychological processes that inhere that sequence. At the heart of these psychological processes is a cognitive mechanism that guides and directs the sequence from initial engagement with relevant social factors toward the formation of a self-identity having positive distinctiveness. This cognitive mechanism engages in a rhetorical dialogue motivated by social realia (persons, events, institutions) and designed to construct, clarify, and reconstruct the social world and its inhabitants. One of the virtues of the social identity perspective is its recognition that analysis of identity formation must be keenly aware of the social context in which such formation occurs.

## Chapter Six

### Social Identity in Ancient Mediterranean Perspective

#### Part One: Methodological Objections Answered

##### Introduction

We have seen that, according to Henri Tajfel, ‘The notion of social identity is based on the simple motivational assumption that individuals (at least in our culture) prefer a positive to a negative self-image’ and that various strategies are employed to achieve this positive identity.<sup>1</sup> For the social identity perspective to be helpful in discerning the apostle Paul’s self-identity it must be commensurate with Paul’s social world. In other words, Tajfel’s parenthetical comment must be given proper consideration. Is the social identity perspective explanatory only within the society in which it emerged? Or can the social identity perspective be useful outside modern Western culture to help us understand ancient persons like Paul?

There are in fact two questions here, a general methodological question and a more specific applicatory one. The first question, which we will examine in this chapter, asks whether or not the use of a modern psychological theory and model is appropriate in the attempt to understand ancient persons and society. That is to ask, is my general methodology inherently flawed? I will argue that modern psychological theories can be valuable aids in understanding ancient persons and society. The general method is not inherently flawed. But this does not guarantee success. The second question, which we

will examine in the next chapter, asks whether or not the social identity perspective in particular offers an appropriate theory and model for understanding ancient persons and society. That is to ask, is my specific theory and model appropriately applicable in this particular situation?

#### Objections to Using Modern Social Psychology to Read Ancient Texts

It is undeniable that the practice of applying a modern theory of social psychology to ancient persons is problematic. William Countryman offers this word of caution: 'I don't think models evolved to explain modern society will always explain ancient society. There is no society, in my opinion, that completely matches up with the ancient Mediterranean world, though there may be some that are more closely related than others.'<sup>2</sup> Countryman's comment assumes that some modern theories can illuminate the ancient world and that others will not. Is he too generous in this assumption?

The social identity perspective was developed through observation, analysis, and description of modern Western persons. It is, therefore, appropriate to question its usefulness for understanding ancient persons. The specific values and strategies associated with the psychological states and processes involved in the creation of a self-identity may differ significantly between ancient and modern persons. For example, modern Western societies may provide more opportunities for individual mobility than ancient ones; likewise, ancient individuals may rely on social networks for identity determination more than modern individuals. Similarly, specific valuations may differ markedly. Whereas modern Western societies may value autonomy as a positive

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<sup>1</sup> Tajfel 1979: 185.

<sup>2</sup> From a telephone interview reported in Dale B. Martin 1993: 108.



distinctive, ancient societies may view autonomy as a negative characteristic demanding rectification. The differences between ancient and modern society must not be ignored. But do these differences discount modern social theories as explanatory tools of ancient society? The interpreter must not assume either a facile commensurability or a flippant incommensurability. In this chapter we will attempt to answer the question of E. A. Judge, 'How can models be validly transferred to a culture from which they are not derived?'<sup>3</sup>

Those who oppose the use of modern psychological theories for understanding ancient persons offer two basic objections to the practice.<sup>4</sup> First, they claim that there is a lack of apposite and reliable data from the ancient world to validate such theories. In regard to our thesis, this objection would claim that the ancient texts provide only a minimal amount of information about social psychological processes, not a sufficient amount to discern regular patterns. I am not dissuaded by this objection, however, for two reasons. As long as there is some data, despite its minimal quantity, it is best to read and interpret that data with the most illuminating methods available, despite the risk of misinterpretation, rather than to dismiss all attempts at interpretation. Additionally, the objection, it seems to me, is far too pessimistic. One might as easily assert that there is an abundance of social psychological data in the texts, if one is prepared to see it, for, given the inherently social-psychological nature of human beings, it is inconceivable that a social-psychological element would not be pervasive in those ancient texts. E. M. Forster's famous line is appropriate: 'the true history of the human race is the story of

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<sup>3</sup> Judge 1985: 24.

<sup>4</sup> Africa 1979: 9. See the excellent survey of literature in Lloyd-Jones 1990.

human affections.<sup>5</sup> What is needed is a method of reading that consciously attends to such matters. Historian Marc Bloch has pointed out that, 'A document is a witness; and like most witnesses, it does not say much except under cross-examination. The real difficulty lies in putting the right questions.'<sup>6</sup> If the texts seem to offer only minimal amounts of data, the problem may not be with the texts as much as with the interpreter. As such, it is necessary that interpreters continually seek new ways of interrogating texts. Bengt Holmberg suggestively opines, 'I think nobody who has read Theissen's essay on social stratification in the church of Corinth would deny that clever interrogation can produce a lot of sociologically relevant data that no one had seen before—because no one had asked for it.'<sup>7</sup>

The second objection is that there is a decisive lack of congruence between ancient and modern society. This objection suggests that social psychological states and processes are relative, indigenous, and contingent. Models derived from one society cannot be used to understand persons in another society. This is a significant objection and must be considered carefully. One basic problem with the objection, however, is that it claims too much. If societies are incomprehensible to each other, then nothing could be known of ancient society, for the ancient world would be wholly other. I will argue that the academic disciplines do enable us to build bridges whereby modern scholars can gain access to the ancient world, its texts, institutions, and persons, at least to some significant

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Thomas 1963: 17.

<sup>6</sup> Bloch 1967: 48.

<sup>7</sup> Holmberg 1990: 11-12.

degree, and that the social identity perspective is one of those bridges. We will now examine and answer these objections in greater detail.<sup>8</sup>

### First Objection: Insufficient Data

Many, perhaps most, studies of the ancient world can be criticized as being based on too little evidence. Those who study the economy of the ancient world, for example, are hindered by a paucity of quantitative data. Nevertheless, ancient historians recognize that insight into economic factors is vital for historical understanding; therefore, they extract what information they can from the minimal evidence, applying qualitative analysis when possible.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, those who study illness, medicine, and life span in the ancient world do so with only a minimal amount of data.<sup>10</sup> They too recognize that such information is necessary for understanding ancient society and, therefore, proceed carefully and inquisitively. The classicist Cornford believes that the demand for more evidence comes too easily and is ultimately vacuous. He writes,<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> A third problem, the problem of reductionism, is sometimes mentioned. The most important discussion of this is Milbank 1990: 101-43, 232-55. But Robin Scroggs has responded appropriately to this claim. He points out (1986: 140) that 'No "scientific" approach need be reductionistic. *Every* "scientific" approach—including the historical—*can* be reductionistic. That is, reductionism does not lie in the methodology itself, but in the theological presuppositions which one brings to sociological or any other methodology.' With characteristic perception, he has turned the tables on the reductionistic claim, stating (1980: 165-66), 'Interest in the sociology of early Christianity is no attempt to limit reductionistically the reality of Christianity to social dynamic; rather it should be seen as an effort to guard against a reductionism from the other extreme, a limitation of the reality of Christianity to an inner-spiritual, or objective-cognitive system. In short, sociology of early Christianity wants to put body and soul together again.' Thus, Philip Esler has rightly noted (1987: 12), 'There is little to be said for the reductionist criticism.'

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Finley 1973 and Brunt 1990.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, the attempt to interpret a minimal amount of data with models in King 2001, Hopkins 1983, 1995/96, 1998, Pilch 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Cornford 1914: 191.

Many literary critics seem to think that an hypothesis about obscure and remote questions of history can be refuted by a simple demand for the production of more evidence than in fact exists. The demand is as easy to make as it is impossible to satisfy. But the true test of an hypothesis, if it cannot be shown to conflict with known truths, is the number of facts that it correlates and explains.

Historians seeking to understand the social psychology of ancient persons must be allowed to proceed despite not having as much data as is desirable. It cannot be denied that ancient persons and ancient texts were shaped by social psychological dynamics; therefore, it is appropriate to be attentive to such information from those texts. The historian Marc Bloch notes that 'historical facts are, in essence, psychological facts. Normally, therefore, they find their antecedents in other psychological facts.'<sup>12</sup> Thomas Africa has wisely written, 'History is both made and written by men, and in either case, no explanation is adequate which does not include psychology. . . . Much about antiquity will remain unknowable to any historical approach, and psychohistory must admit the fragile nature of the sources for ancient history. Whether or not Freudian concepts are employed, historians will continue to make psychological judgments about Greeks and Romans.'<sup>13</sup> It is neither wise nor responsible of historians to dismiss such elements from academic consideration. Neither is it acceptable to allow assumptions and folk beliefs to influence surreptitiously social psychological understanding of ancient persons and texts. Thus, however few they might be, extant texts were shaped and written in contexts where social psychological dynamics were pervasive and influential; the historian and interpreter cannot afford to neglect this dynamic in her search for meaning.

Furthermore, the pessimistic claim that the extant evidence is minimal can be challenged. Matters of the self, identity, and psychology are hardly alien to the ancient

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<sup>12</sup> Bloch 1953: 194.

<sup>13</sup> Africa 1979: 26.

world and ancient literature. Classicists have often noted that the ancient poets, novelists, comics and tragedians were concerned with such matters. For example, considering the works of Homer, Sheila Murnaghan argues that the *Odyssey* can be read as a drama that features the hero's gradual recovery of his identity.<sup>14</sup> Charles Segal has claimed that Oedipus provides 'the archetypal myth of personal identity in Western Culture.'<sup>15</sup> He notes that Oedipus remains confident and whole as long as one truth is kept from him, his true identity. Furthermore, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* offers the well-known tale of Narcissus and the baneful effects of self-reflection. Euripedes and Seneca find in *Medea* the pain of a divided self. Several ancient authors utilized the motif of human transformation into animal form to highlight the mysteries of human identity. So Apuleius in *The Golden Ass* tells the tale of Lucius, whose fascination with sex and magic results in his transformation into an Ass; he wanders in search of one who can restore his true identity, finally experiencing salvation and transformation back to his human self by initiation into the cult of Isis. In *Metamorphoses* Ovid describes several such human-animal transformations. For example, he depicts Actaeon's anguish of identity when he is transformed into a stag; in physical form he is an animal, but he retains his human intellect, and thus experiences a crisis of identity: *ut vero vultus et cornua vidit in unda, 'me miserum' dicturus erat, vox nulla secuta est. ingemuit, vox illa fuit, lacrimaeque per ora non sula fluxerunt. Mens tantum pristina mansit* (*Metamorphoses* 3.200-203). Earlier Ovid described Callisto's transformation into a bear. She too experiences a crisis of identity, retaining a human mind, but the outer appearance

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<sup>14</sup> Murnaghan 1987.

<sup>15</sup> Segal 1995: 138.

of an animal, without the ability to communicate her true identity to her father, who might hunt and kill her (*Metamorphoses* 2.489-495).<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, one may consider that the ancient philosophers sometimes analyzed the psychology of human character. Theophrastus' *Characters* presents a sketch of thirty typical character types, such as 'the coward,' 'the tactless person,' the grumbler,' 'the distrustful person.' These often provided typical character portraits for historians, novelists, and other ancient writers.<sup>17</sup> Cicero offered the four-personnae theory and Hellenistic philosophers sought to develop the Socratic 'care of the self' practice.

My purpose in this very brief survey is not to commend any of the preceding interpretations, nor is it to claim that ancient ideas about psychological states and processes are the same as modern ones, but simply to suggest that the claim that ancient texts rarely discuss psychological states and processes is mistaken. I believe that there is a sufficient amount of ancient data whereby the historian can engage the ancient world and inquire about social psychological states and processes concerned with the self and identity. In the next chapter I will consider some of those texts and attempt to show that the essential thesis of the social identity perspective (individuals prefer a positive rather than a negative identity) is a valid explanatory tool of those texts.

It is worth noting that all of these readings came after the emergence of modern psychology as an academic discipline and the dispersion of psychological ideas and

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<sup>16</sup> On Apuleius and *The Golden Ass* see Shumate 1996, Winkler 1985, and Krabbe 1989. On Medea see Christopher Gill 1987 and Helene Foley 1989. On Ovid's *Metamorphoses* see Paula James 1986. Much could be said about characterization in ancient literature. For an excellent study of this topic see the essays in Pelling 1990. Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet 1990 and Goldhill 1986, especially chapter seven, 'Mind and Madness,' are particularly helpful on characterization in ancient Greek tragedy. On characterization in the ancient novel see Tatum 1994.

<sup>17</sup> On Theophrastus see Fortenbaugh 1979 and Lane Fox 1996.

vocabulary throughout the academy. This comment is not meant as a criticism of such readings; rather, it is to point out that focused attention on psychological ideas has enabled readers of ancient texts to devise new methods of interrogating texts, which reveal aspects of ancient texts and ancient persons previously unseen. Nevertheless, there are dangers associated with this process, which leads to the second objection. Are these newer methods of interrogating texts appropriate?

#### Second Objection: Modern Social Psychology is Incommensurate with Ancient Society

Can a theory of identity that is based on observation of modern Western persons illuminate the identity of ancient persons? Will not the application of such a theory necessarily produce anachronistic and ethnocentric interpretations? We will examine this problem in detail. First we will illustrate the problem with an example of the dangers inherent in the methodology. We will then consider the best method of understanding an alien society and alien persons. This discussion will consider the relative merits and demerits of an insider's and outsider's perspective on the relevant society, as well as the potential of models to illumine and distort. We intend to demonstrate that a model derived from modern social psychology is not necessarily incommensurate with ancient society. In the chapter that follows we intend to defend the claim that the model derived from the social identity perspective is in fact commensurate with ancient Mediterranean society.

### The Problem Illustrated

Robert Darnton offers a fascinating study that reveals the problems associated with using modern psychological theories to read pre-modern texts and understand pre-modern persons. He critiques Eric Fromm's attempt to understand the mental world of eighteenth century French peasants by interpreting their folktales with modern psychoanalytic techniques. In particular he demonstrates the folly of Fromm's psychoanalytic exegesis of *Little Red Riding Hood*. For Fromm the tale reveals the anxieties of pubescence, an adolescent's confrontation with adult sexuality. The meaning of the symbols and metaphors in the tale are obvious to Fromm. The red riding hood symbolizes menstruation. The bottle the girl carries speaks of her virginity. The girl's mother warns her not to stray from the path into the woods where her bottle might break. The wolf is a dangerous male. Darnton observes, however, that although this interpretation might make sense to a twentieth century enlightened person, it would have been nonsense to peasants who originally told the tale. Not only are the crucial symbols not extant in the oldest versions of the story, but, more importantly, this interpretation isolates the story from its social context and interprets tales as if they were 'patients on a couch in a timeless contemporaneity.'<sup>18</sup> Darnton argues that this body of folklore was created and shaped under specific social situations. He describes in detail the brutality of peasant life as involving chronic malnutrition, devastating disease, and the ravages of plagues. Fate was cruel and unpredictable. Life was unfair; it could not be explained, only endured. Village life was a struggle to survive. Women died in childbirth. Children were orphaned. Darnton writes, 'the peasants of early modern France inhabited a world of stepmothers and orphans, of inexorable, unending toil, and of brutal emotions, both



raw and repressed. The human condition has changed so much since then that we can hardly imagine the way it appeared to people whose lives really were nasty, brutish, and short.<sup>19</sup> He notes that more than half of the thirty-five known versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* end with the wolf devouring the girl. He interprets, 'She had done nothing to deserve such a fate; for in the peasant tales . . . she did not disobey her mother or fail to read the signs of an implicit moral order written in the world around her. She simply walked into the jaws of death. It is the inscrutable, inexorable character of calamity that makes the tale so moving, not the happy endings that they frequently acquired after the eighteenth century.'<sup>20</sup>

Darnton's refutation of Fromm's interpretation is convincing. He has effectively shown the inadequacy of Fromm's reading and the dangers of applying modern psychological methods and models to pre-modern texts and persons. But it is vital to ask *why* Fromm failed to understand the French peasants. One might argue that Fromm could not understand because he was an outsider to the world of the French peasants or because his model came from an alien social context. It seems unlikely that the fact of his being an outsider would have disqualified him from understanding the tales. After all, Darnton is even further removed from the peasants than Fromm, yet his reading appears persuasive. Nevertheless, the pitfalls of being an outsider seeking to interpret texts needs to be discussed and understood. We need to evaluate Darnton's charge that the peasants would have found Fromm's interpretation 'nonsense.' How important is it that an interpretation be amenable to an insider? It seems more likely that the problem is related to Fromm's use of a model derived from modern persons. But what exactly is the

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<sup>18</sup> Darnton 1984: 13.

<sup>19</sup> Darnton 1984: 29.

problem here? Is the problem the fact that Fromm used a model derived from modern studies? Or is it that the specific model chosen was incommensurable with the specific task of reading those texts for his determined purpose? All of these questions must be considered, lest we produce a reading of Paul that is as faulty as Fromm's reading of *Little Red Riding Hood*.

#### The Problem Analyzed: The Emic and Etic Perspectives

Can an outsider understand a foreign society? Must the researcher adopt the perspective of an insider in order to understand a social group? It may be helpful to orient this discussion within the larger academic debate concerned with the attempt to understand other people and other societies. In general there are three methodological approaches adopted in the pertinent disciplines: the emic or insider approach, the etic or outsider approach, and a combination of emic and etic approaches.<sup>21</sup> The terms emic and etic are derived from the suffixes of the words 'phonemic' and 'phonetic,' which were coined by the linguist Kenneth Pike to differentiate the actual sounds made in speech (phonemes) and the representation of those sounds in a system of written signs or notations, an alphabet (phonetics).<sup>22</sup> While phonemes refer to the various units of sound that combine to produce a spoken word in a particular language, the phonetic representation of those sound units is based on an outsider's attempt to transcribe those sounds by means of a system of written characters that can be used in the study of all vocal languages. Accordingly, phonetic analysis has an explicit comparative aspect to it. For Pike, then, 'etic viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system,'

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<sup>20</sup> Darnton 1984: 54.

<sup>21</sup> See Marvin Harris 1968 for a helpful explanation of these concepts.

<sup>22</sup> Pike 1967. Pike regards Edward Sapir as having anticipated the distinction.

whereas 'the emic viewpoint results from studying behavior as from inside the system.'<sup>23</sup> The terms have proved useful well beyond the boundaries of linguistics and have been adopted throughout the academic disciplines.<sup>24</sup> Marvin Harris has utilized the emic/etic distinction in anthropological studies, describing the researcher's attempt to adopt 'the native's point of view' through fieldwork or immersion in society as the emic approach and theoretical analysis and comparative work of the researcher as the etic approach.<sup>25</sup> Other anthropologists followed Harris' suggestion, and the term has since become indispensable in anthropological studies. Ernest Gellner provides a helpful definition.<sup>26</sup>

By 'etic', an anthropologist means the characterisation of some social activity in terms appropriately used by an outsider, employing neutral, 'scientific' terminology; by 'emic' the characterisation of an activity in terms employed from the inside, by the natives themselves.

The researcher adopting the emic approach aims to become an insider or 'native,' immersing himself in the social group being studied. This approach claims that social beliefs and behaviors of the group are best understood from within the conceptual systems of the native and that the integrity of the internal conceptual schemata must be maintained to avoid misunderstanding. The result of emic study is predominantly description. The researcher adopting the etic approach aims to observe the social group from outside, comparing the group with other groups. This approach claims that social

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<sup>23</sup> Pike 1967: 37.

<sup>24</sup> For a thorough annotated bibliography on the use of emics and etics in several different disciplines see Hussey and Colich 1990.

<sup>25</sup> Harris 1968 and 1979. Harris was not the first to use these terms in the social sciences. He discusses previous uses in his 1968 article. Nevertheless he is generally regarded as the one who popularized use of the terms in social scientific research. The 87<sup>th</sup> meeting of the American Anthropological Association (November 1988) was devoted to the emic/etic methodology. Pike and Harris were brought together to discuss their understanding and use of the concepts in a four hour session. For a full discussion of the history, theory, and practice of emics and etics, as discussed at the 1988 AAA meeting, see Headland, Pike, and Harris 1990.

beliefs and actions can be analyzed independently of native valuation and meaning, because those beliefs and actions are seen as participating within a general schema of human social functioning. An external observer who is aware of such general functional systems is able to explain concrete social phenomena. Typically the result of etic study is explanation.

In the early days of the social sciences these two perspectives were generally kept separate, with fieldworkers being seen as emic anthropologists and academicians as etic anthropologists.<sup>27</sup> But Bronislaw Malinowski changed this when he famously combined theoretical interpretation with fieldwork.<sup>28</sup> Since then relatively few scholars have held this strict 'either-or' view and have instead opted for a 'both-and' perspective. Among the mediationist positions there are different views concerning the proper relationship between the two. Robert Feleppa offers this general survey of the situation:<sup>29</sup>

The typical attitude underlying emic analysis is Weberian: emics should complement etics, . . . Yet some view emics and etics as innately conflicting and emphasize one to the exclusion of the other; some minimize or ignore emic analysis in the belief that it inhibits the development of a systematic culture

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<sup>26</sup> Gellner 1985: 145.

<sup>27</sup> Kuyper (1992: 3) points out that the 'both/and' position is a relatively modern development. 'The founding fathers [of social anthropology] assumed that there *should* be a division of labour between the theorist (metropolitan, detached, study-bound) and the fieldworker (colonial, dedicated to a particular people, bushwacked). Frazer was famously horrified at the suggestion that he might undertake his own field research, and Marrett assumed that there was necessarily a hierarchical ordering of the two prototypical figures whom he termed "the man in the study" and "the man in the field."'

<sup>28</sup> See his 1944 essays explaining the need to bring scientific theoretical perspectives to the field in order to observe properly. For example, he wrote (1944: 5), 'I think that if anthropology can contribute towards a more scientific outlook on its legitimate subject matter, that is, culture, it will render an indispensable service to other humanities. . . . The ethnographic field-worker cannot observe unless he knows what is relevant and essential, and is thus able to discard adventitious and fortuitous happenings. Thus, the scientific quota in all anthropological works consists in the theory of culture, with reference to the method of observation in the field and to the meaning of culture as process and product.'

<sup>29</sup> Feleppa 1986: 243.

theory, while others willingly sacrifice theory for emic understanding of the culturally specific.

However, before considering the possible relationships between emic and etic perspectives, another important problem must be mentioned.<sup>30</sup>

Having explained the difference between the emic and etic perspective, an obvious problem immediately presents itself to the historian and therefore the biblical scholar too. It is axiomatic that the historian cannot adopt an emic stance. The historian is always an outsider. Quite simply, she cannot immerse herself in the relevant society. The closest the historian can approach an emic stance is a thorough knowledge of material remains, especially the extant texts. Thus, when the historian claims to be interpreting in an emic manner, we should understand that to mean that she is seeking (despite her outsider position) to interpret native behavior and speech in texts using only the means available to the native, that is, using only insider concepts, symbols, etc. However, since texts do not interpret themselves, all interpretation of historical texts, regardless of the historian's attempt to use only 'native' terminology and concepts, is fundamentally an etic procedure. The question that must be faced, then, is this. Is an etic stance capable of rendering accurate historical judgment?

Paul Ricoeur's classic article 'Objectivity and Subjectivity in History' argues persuasively that 'the historian's apparent bondage of never being in the presence of his past object but only its trace by no means disqualifies history as a science.'<sup>31</sup> Ricoeur shows that the etic stance of the historian can provide accurate historical judgments when the historian makes use of a methodical analytical process that begins by positing

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<sup>30</sup> In my discussion I will make frequent reference to 'anthropology.' When I use that term I am referring to the more specific field of cultural anthropology rather than to the broader field that includes physical anthropology.

hypotheses to uncover the 'traces' of historical knowledge. The historian 'goes to meet its meaning by establishing a working hypothesis. The trace is raised to the dignity of an historical document, and the past itself is raised to the dignity of an historical fact. By establishing the document, the historian establishes an historical fact.'<sup>32</sup> Through this methodical analysis Ricoeur shows that the historian's subjectivity 'represents the triumph of a good subjectivity over a bad one.' He concludes, 'there is no reason for history to have an inferiority complex.'<sup>33</sup> Thus, although historians and biblical scholars cannot imitate the emic stance of an anthropologist, an etic stance can provide contacts with emic 'traces' of history. The question now becomes how can the historian or biblical scholar read accurately the emic traces of history from her etic stance?

Before we attempt to answer this question, we should point out that this discussion has clarified an important difference between the emic stance of an anthropologist and the emic stance of a historian. Whereas the emic stance of the anthropologist provides contact with a whole living communicative society, the emic stance of the historian provides contact with incommunicative traces of knowledge. Texts are not as forthcoming with information as people. As Josiah Ober has memorably said, 'A text is nothing other than an artifact; an artifact that is nothing other than a text has remarkably little to say.'<sup>34</sup> This difference in emic stances suggests that the etic methods by which the historian plies his emic traces to 'talk' will differ significantly from the etic methods the anthropologist uses to get his emic insiders to talk.

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<sup>31</sup> Ricoeur 1965: 123.

<sup>32</sup> Ricoeur 1965: 123.

<sup>33</sup> Ricoeur 1965: 30, 25.

<sup>34</sup> Ober 1995: 122. On the relationship between artifacts and texts, see Andr n 1998.

Having clarified this difference between the historian and the social scientist as concerns the specific emic stance available to each, we can now return to the question of the relationship between emics and etics. While it is our ultimate goal to understand the best procedure for the historian in relating emic traces and etic stances, it will prove instructive to consider how social scientists relate the emic and etic stances. It is important to realize that most social scientists today do not believe that it is possible for an outsider to achieve a thorough-going insider or native perspective.<sup>35</sup> The researcher's prior socialisation 'inevitably distorts his or her perception.'<sup>36</sup> The idealistic fallacy is exposed in Becker's comment, 'We all know that social science is, in principle, impossible.'<sup>37</sup> Ernest Gellner offers a clear vision for anyone who thinks otherwise.<sup>38</sup>

Suffice it to say that while some anthropologists claim to hold such a relativist, etic-denying view in their working lives, in practice they behave like normal members of the western scientific community, speak 'etic' to each other most of the time or indeed all of the time, and most or all of the theories and accounts they offer would simply make no sense unless this were so. In a world in which only 'emic' speech existed anthropology and comparative social studies simply would not make sense.

Geertz cautions anthropologists against the attempt to work solely from an emic stance, warning that such a perspective can become 'imprisoned in the immediacy of its own detail' and that the insider can become 'imprisoned within their mental horizon.'<sup>39</sup> We mention this point because it reveals that both the social scientist and the historian must reckon with similar problems of relating the emic and etic perspectives in the best

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<sup>35</sup> The movement known as cognitive anthropology held a much more optimistic view, but this position is now regarded as impossible. For discussion see Garrett 1992: 91-92, Marcus and Fisher 1986: 29, Geertz 1973.

<sup>36</sup> Keesing and Strathern 1998: 8.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Rock 1976: 353.

<sup>38</sup> Gellner 1985: 145.

possible way. Thus, social scientists have been as zealous as historians in seeking the most advantageous relationship between emic and etic strategies in order to insure a 'triumph of a good subjectivity over a bad one.'

In his important essay "'From the Native's Point of View": On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding,' Clifford Geertz has clarified this situation for anthropologists and explains how the emic and etic perspectives are related in his own work. He prefers to speak of 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant' concepts related in a dialectical circle. He explains,<sup>40</sup>

An experience-near concept is, roughly, one that someone, a patient, a subject, in our case an informant—might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. An experience-distant concept is one that specialists of one sort or another—an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist—employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims. . . .

Confinement to experience-near concepts leaves an ethnographer awash in immediacies [*sic*], as well as entangled in vernacular. Confinement to experience-distant ones leaves him stranded in abstractions and smothered in jargon. The real question . . . is what roles the two sorts of concepts play in anthropological analysis. Or, more exactly, how, in each case, ought one to deploy them so as to produce an interpretation of the way a people lives which is neither imprisoned within their mental horizon, an ethnography of witchcraft as written by a witch, nor systematically deaf to the distinctive tonalities of their existence, an ethnography of witchcraft as written by a geometer. . . .

In answering this question, it is necessary, I think, first to notice the characteristic intellectual movement, the inward conceptual rhythm, in each of these analyses, . . . namely, a continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into simultaneous view. . . . Hopping back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts that actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole that motivates them, we seek to turn them, by a sort of intellectual perpetual motion, into explications of one another.

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<sup>39</sup> Geertz 1983: 57 and 1973: 24. For a thorough study of the insider/outsider problem in the study of religion (with an important critique of Wilfred Cantwell Smith) see Russell McCutcheon 1999.

<sup>40</sup> Geertz 1983: 56-57, 69, 70.



Geertz' dialectical method of relating emic description and etic explanation suggests that each perspective maintains a continuously corrective or clarifying function. This dialectic enables the social scientist to be optimistic about understanding accurately the studied social group. The general and the particular are read in a dialectical fashion in an attempt to clarify the meaning and use of the particular. Geertz has summarized this whole process, writing, 'cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses.'<sup>41</sup>

This hermeneutical circle is not unique to Geertz or to anthropology. In fact, as Geertz himself reveals by his mention of Dilthey, this dialectic is discussed and used in a wide variety of academic disciplines. For example, we have already encountered it in our discussion of Jonathan Z. Smith's method in comparative religions, when we described his four-fold procedure involving description, comparison, re-description, and rectification of categories. We need only remind the reader that the researcher adopting Smith's guidelines views and re-views the phenomena from various perspectives and negotiates and re-negotiates the comparison for different purposes and in light of changing interests. Recall Smith's description of this process:<sup>42</sup>

Comparison, as seen from such a view, is an active, at times even a playful, enterprise of deconstruction and reconstitution which, kaleidoscope-like, gives the scholar a shifting set of characteristics with which to negotiate the relations between his or her theoretical interests and the data stipulated as exemplary. . . . Comparison does not tell us how things 'are' . . . ; like models and metaphors, comparison tells us how things might be conceived, how they might be 're-described,' in Max Black's useful term. . . . Comparison provides the means by which *we* 're-vision' phenomena as *our* data in order to solve *our* theoretical problems.

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<sup>41</sup> Geertz 1973: 20.

<sup>42</sup> Smith 1990: 53, 52.

At this point it is worth noting that the specific etic stance of the researcher need not be exactly that of Geertz, but may vary widely as the discipline demands. In this quotation from Smith we see him using the same basic dialectical method of relating emic and etic perspectives as Geertz, but Smith's etic stance involves the additional use of models, which Geertz' does not. Thus, the same general dialectical process is useful across disciplines and with a wide variety of etic stances.

Thus, Zygmunt Bauman finds it unremarkable that this dialectic should be used by historians. He states, 'the famous "hermeneutical circle" . . . is not a particularly ingenious and effective method of study; it is, in actual fact, the very logic of understanding as such. There is no understanding of history apart from the perpetual movement from the particular to the total and back to the particular, in order to render transparent what previously, in its uncompromised particularity, was impervious to our interpretation.'<sup>43</sup> Bauman's description of the hermeneutical circle as 'the very logic of understanding' is suggestive of the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, who studied this general dialectical process in his work on logic, inventing the concept of abduction. He attempted to clarify the process in his theory of reasoning. According to Peirce the retroductive reasoning process consists of induction, deduction, and abduction, describing abduction as 'the process of constructing an explanatory hypothesis.'<sup>44</sup> Phyllis Chiasson has described Peirce's retroduction reasoning process as follows.<sup>45</sup>

1. A surprising fact is noticed.
2. An aesthetic exploration of qualities and relationships is made.
3. Abductive reasoning is applied to make a guess that could explain the

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<sup>43</sup> Bauman 1978: 28.

<sup>44</sup> Peirce 1931: 171. Umberto Eco and Thomas A. Sebeok have sought to restore the importance of Peirce's insights in their 1984 work *The Sign of Three*.

<sup>45</sup> Chiasson 2001. See especially chapter fourteen, 'Constructing a Conditional Purpose.'

surprising fact.

4. Deductive reasoning is applied to explicate the guess and ready it for testing.

5. Once readied, inductive reasoning is applied to test and evaluate the guess.

6. Abduction or deduction is used to interpret that evaluation (or new information is produced) and the cycle begins again until a hypothesis has been fully engendered and is ready for formal explication and testing.

The retroductive process begins when one observes an interesting or surprising phenomenon and explores its attendant circumstances (steps one and two). The observer then begins 'musing' on the phenomenon from an etic perspective, positing a guess or hypothesis as to the possible explanation of the phenomenon. This hypothesis, which may include the use of a standard model, is then explicated and applied to the phenomenon in a deductive fashion. The results of this application are then evaluated through an inductive study from an emic perspective. The retroductive process continues as the observer/interpreter then evaluates the new results from an etic perspective using deductive processes based on a revised hypothesis. This process continues until the phenomenon is explained adequately. For Peirce this reasoning process was essentially heuristic, or in the words of Chiasson 'a possibility machine' generating qualitative explanations, or in his own words 'heuristic' Uwe Wirth has described Peirce's retroductive process as the only 'truly synthetic mode of drawing conclusions since it not only finds an explanation for a puzzling or surprising situation, but also invents new theories.'<sup>46</sup> This retroductive process provides a valuable explanation of the best relationship between emic and etic historical research.

We have seen that the historian and the social scientist should seek to relate emic and etic perspectives in a dialectical or retroductive process, whereby the two perspectives serve to clarify and correct an understanding of the studied society. We have

also noted that within this general process, there are various etic stances that are possible, including stances that adopt the use of interpretive modes and others that adopt the use of models. If we return to the example of historical social scientific interpretation in the work of Eric Fromm and analyzed by Robert Darnton we can say that one major problem in Fromm's reading of *Little Red Hiding Hood* was his failure was to maintain a retroductive or dialectical relationship between his etic stance and the emic traces of history. Darnton supplied that missing dialectic, by discovering the emic traces of history and relating them to Fromm's etic stance, and in so doing showed the incommensurability between Fromm's psychoanalytic model and peasant society as revealed in those texts. Fromm's example suggests a second issue that demands discussion. His psychoanalytic model was not an appropriate model for understanding the peasants. Thus, we must now ask is the practice of using etic models inherently flawed?

#### The Problem Analyzed: The Use of Etic Models

The use of models by biblical scholars utilizing a social scientific hermeneutic has been controversial. Since I am using the social identity perspective as a model, it is necessary that I consider this controversy. Susan Garrett has stated,<sup>47</sup>

It may be concluded, then, that investigative procedures that systematically compare early Christianity with models based on culturally-distant social groups will encounter the problem of incommensurability in heightened form: in order to make such comparisons work, both early Christianity and the movement (or "model") to which it is being compared must be treated at a high level of abstraction, which increases the risk that distortion of meaning will occur.

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<sup>46</sup> Wirth 1995: 405.

<sup>47</sup> Garrett 1992: 93. See also Stowers 1985, Esler 1995: 4-8.

Garrett's argument focuses on the claim that etic models are necessarily more abstract than emic descriptions and, therefore, that etic explanations may obscure or distort meaning. She writes,<sup>48</sup>

Certainly all translation and interpretation involve abstraction . . . . But methods which employ extensive cross-cultural comparison, or which aim to explain social phenomena in the observers' own analytic (etic) categories must abstract the data from their cultural and social context to a much higher degree than do those approaches which seek to employ the views and intentions of the subjects (emic analysis).

She prefers to limit the etic stance to an 'interpretive' stance, interpreting emic categories and concepts as a 'native' might, and forsaking etic models that would distort meaning. Garrett explains that the meaning of social discourse is relative to the specific social situation in which it occurs, because it is expressed in symbols (language and behavior) whose meaning is relative to that situation; therefore, to seek meaning in abstract models is to look in the wrong place. For Garrett the specific meaning of concrete acts and speech is either distorted, obscured, or sifted out in the comparative abstraction process of building models. The interpretive stance in which meaning is sought in the concrete symbols is more appropriate.<sup>49</sup>

The scholar of Christian origins may well decide that the very nature of human "meaning"—rooted inextricably in the concrete and rich details of a given time and place—makes the inductive but focused procedure of the interpretivist a more appropriate exemplar of method than is the empirical procedure of natural scientists.

Garrett's inductive method is based on the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz, whom we have already discussed positively as concerns the relationship between the emic and etic perspectives. However, Garrett's decision to adopt Geertz' specific etic stance, the interpretive stance, as opposed to the modelling stance, is unwise because it fails to

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<sup>48</sup> Garrett 1992: 93.

consider adequately two factors that differentiate biblical studies from anthropological studies: the historical nature of biblical studies and the variety of valid methodological approaches among the individual social science disciplines. These two factors make untenable the adoption of that position for our studies in this thesis.

Interpreting emic categories and concepts from within the native's viewpoint is an important element in anthropological fieldwork, as we have already indicated. Describing the anthropological method, Keesing and Strathern have said, 'Most essentially, it entails a deep immersion into the life of a people. . . . The anthropologist enters as fully as possible into the everyday life of a community, neighborhood, or group.'<sup>50</sup> We have also noted, however, that this avenue is not available to the historian or biblical scholar, who cannot enter the relevant society in the same way as an anthropologist. Garrett appears to ignore the fact that Geertz' interpretive work is based on his fieldwork, which she cannot imitate. The meaning and interpretation of the historian's uninterpreted data cannot be discussed with the 'native.' The anthropologist in the field can focus attention on interpretive methods because he can dialogue with an emic based interpreter. The absence of live communication between the historian and her material data demands that the relationship between emic traces and etic stances be conceived differently from the anthropologist. The historian cannot simply imitate the methods of the anthropologist, but must recognize the unique problems presented by the silent emic traces and seek to reorient the etic stance to a more advantageous position. This is a difference of method not merely of degree.<sup>51</sup> The best etic position is one that generates hypotheses, guesses,

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<sup>49</sup> Garrett 1992: 92.

<sup>50</sup> Keesing and Strathern 1998: 7-8.

<sup>51</sup> In her 1989 monograph Garrett acknowledges that Geertz' anthropological approach cannot be adopted wholesale, but must be adapted. She emphasizes that while it

and questions that enable the texts to 'talk' to the etic interpreter. This suggests that a modelling stance is a valuable perspective.

A second problem with Garrett's work is that she ignores the differentiation between the individual social science disciplines and assumes a methodological unity exists among them. She fails to consider the orientation of the specific disciplines (anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, etc.) that are designated 'social sciences' and, as a result, assumes that there is one etic stance that is appropriate for all the disciplines.<sup>52</sup> Textbooks on the individual social science disciplines often begin with a discussion of the 'scientific' nature of their particular discipline. The authors' assessments can be plotted along a continuum between the humanities and the natural sciences. The author's placement of a discipline at a specific position along this continuum relates to the specific etic stance deemed most appropriate. When the discipline is conceived as closer to the humanities, the preferred etic stance tends to be more interpretive, and, as a result, emphasis is placed on communication, symbol, and ritual as the locus of meaning. However, when the discipline is conceived as closer to the

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may be helpful to compare social discourse with written texts (as Geertz does), the two should also be distinguished (1989: 6-8). However, she does not contemplate the more significant difference regarding access to the studied society. Hence she conceives the difference between anthropological study of social discourse and historical study of written texts as a difference only in degree and not kind. 'The subjectivity of the scholar of antiquity, attempting to piece together relevant bits of a long-lost culture so as to illuminate an ancient text, differs from that of the ethnographer in degree but not in kind' (1989: 8). Nonetheless when she explains her interpretive practice she states that she focuses on comparison with analogous, contemporaneous cultures (p.8; She compares Luke's statements about magic with broadly contemporaneous Jewish texts and traditions). This is indeed a difference in degree, but it is also a difference in kind.

<sup>52</sup> Garrett's argument that a non-modelling stance is appropriate across the social science spectrum is contradicted by Scott Gordon, who claims that modelling (in various forms) is appropriately practiced throughout the social sciences. He writes (1991: 100), 'although models are more common in economics than in the other social sciences, no

sciences, the preferred etic stance tends to be more scientific, and, as a result, experimentation, hypotheses, and models are utilized for explanation.<sup>53</sup> In general anthropology has been seen as oriented toward the humanities end and psychology as closer to the sciences, with sociology meandering between these two. For example, in the introductory textbook *Cultural Anthropology, A Contemporary Perspective*, Roger Kessing and Andrew Strathern state,<sup>54</sup>

Anthropologists have been less preoccupied with being scientific than many of their colleagues in psychology, sociology, and political science, and by and large this has probably been a blessing. Anthropologists have had to struggle with problems of communication as they have worked across gulfs of cultural differences. Finding it sometimes difficult to use tests, questionnaires, polls, experiments, and the like, in human communities where they were guests and where Western instruments of “objectivity” were inappropriate, anthropologists have fallen back on human powers to learn, understand, and communicate.

David Myers, in his introductory textbook *Psychology*, describes the method of psychologists as thoroughly scientific.<sup>55</sup> For good reason, then, Carlson, Buskist, and Martin title their textbook *Psychology: The Science of Behaviour*.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in their textbook *Social Psychology*, Robert Baron and Donn Byrne declare that ‘social psychology is scientific in nature.’<sup>57</sup>

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branch of the subject is today without its models, and the attempt to construct new models of social processes is one of the most flourishing branches of social science.’

<sup>53</sup> Shoemaker *et al* 2003. Morgenbesser has written (1970: 20), ‘Philosophers and social scientists like Comte, Mill, Dewey, Nagel, Skinner, Merton knew that it was silly to argue that the aims, methods, concepts and theories of the social sciences are identical with the natural sciences, and also knew that it was unnecessary to insist that they are similar to, or ought to resemble, each other.’

<sup>54</sup> Keesing and Strathern 1998: 7.

<sup>55</sup> Myers 1995: 11-30.

<sup>56</sup> Carlson *et al* 2000.

<sup>57</sup> Baron and Byrne 1997: 6.



Nevertheless, in recent years there has been an effort to reorient all of the social sciences toward the humanities end of the continuum.<sup>58</sup> Clifford Geertz, in particular, has been influential in the move to 'refocus anthropology—indeed all of social science—away from emulation of the natural sciences and toward a reintegration with the humanities. . . . In other words, he has asked social scientists to rework, if not abandon, their traditional assumptions about the nature of their intellectual enterprise.'<sup>59</sup> Geertz has achieved only a limited success, however. His interpretive anthropology has won favor among many anthropologists, but his program has had very little success outside that discipline.<sup>60</sup> Not surprisingly it has had virtually no impact on those working in psychology or social psychology, where experimental scientific methods remain dominant and where modelling is common. Unfortunately Garrett naively adopts Geertz' highly questionable program. She appears unaware of the methodological debates in sociology or psychology, and simply assumes that the interpretive method used in Geertz' anthropological work will work across the disciplines. It is significant that the only scholars Garrett cites in support of interpretive methods are anthropologists.<sup>61</sup> It may be that Geertzian interpretive methods are the best approach for biblical studies incorporating anthropological work (historical considerations demand considerable adaptation, however), but to claim that the same interpretive methods are the best approach to sociology or psychology is to confuse badly the disciplines. For those

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<sup>58</sup> See in particular the essays compiled in Rabinow and Sullivan 1987. Also influential are Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus and Fisher 1986, and Marcus 1998. For a critique of this movements, see especially Shankman 1984 and Harris 1968: 1-7, Harris 1994.

<sup>59</sup> Shankman 1984: 261.

<sup>60</sup> This is not to say that anthropologists have not been critical of his move. See the several responses to Shankman's article (Shankman 1984: 270-76).

<sup>61</sup> In addition to Geertz, she cites only Peacock 1986 and Marcus and Fisher 1986.

seeking to apply sociological or psychological insight to biblical studies it is best to utilize the methods developed by the leading academicians working in those fields rather than the methods developed by Geertz in anthropology.

Psychologists and social psychologists have remained firmly attached to scientific methods of research for good reasons. Whereas anthropologists and others claiming the superiority of the emic perspective and the importance of an interpretive etic stance believe that local meaning is lost in abstraction and that the native is usually the best interpreter of his beliefs and behaviors, psychologists have taken a more skeptical attitude toward the native's ability to understand the motives and reasons for his actions and a more optimistic attitude toward the ability of abstractions to reveal meaning in particular situations. Darnton's criticism that Fromm's interpretation would have been nonsense to the peasants is an example of the former position. In a similar manner Antony Flew boldly states that etic explanations are invalid if they are not understandable to the native. 'Those agents, however, cannot actually have acted for any reasons which they were not equipped to understand.'<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, psychologists find this view flawed. Introductory textbooks on psychology often begin with a discussion of common sense and intuition, demonstrating that these are not sufficient guides for explaining behavior and other personal expressions in everyday life.<sup>63</sup> These authors argue that native 'common sense' is often wrong and that a more scientific procedure often reveals the inadequacy of such emic or 'native' interpretations. They claim that the average person rarely grasps the deeper motives behind her actions and attitudes and, therefore, that she

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<sup>62</sup> Flew 1985: 22.

<sup>63</sup> Myers 1995: 13-16, Carlson *et al* 2000: 6-7. Most introductory textbooks on psychology discuss this issue.

is an unreliable guide to such matters. Michael Eysenck has pointed out an interesting example of this phenomenon.

One of the key findings of social psychology is that our behaviour is even more affected by other people than we believe it to be. For example, we know that we sometimes modify our behaviour to conform to the expectations or behaviour of others, but most people are unaware of the strength of such pressures to conform. The fact that we are so influenced by other people makes it all the more important for psychologists to consider social pressures in detail.

While psychologists regularly discover examples of human misunderstanding and self-deception, the general public strongly resists the notion that native common sense is an unsound foundation for interpreting human behavior. David Myers discusses the phenomenon described by the phrase 'hindsight is 20-20' to reveal that many beliefs established by science and regarded now as 'general knowledge' could never have been discovered by common sense and in many cases run contrary to common sense.<sup>64</sup> Such knowledge only seems like common sense because 'hindsight is 20-20.' A generation ago H. J. Eysenck spoke of the popular antagonism to the idea that common sense might mislead.

It appears to be an almost universal belief that anyone is competent to discuss psychological problems, whether he or she has taken the trouble to study the subject or not and that while everybody's opinion is of equal value, that of the professional psychologist must be excluded at all costs because he might spoil the fun by producing some facts which would completely upset the speculation and wonderful dream castles so laboriously constructed by the layman.

Psychologists are not alone in this kind of skepticism. Interestingly, historians have often pointed out that distance often brings a helpful perspective when seeking to understand events in the past. A study of 'working history,' that is, the path and results of historical events, often gives a more rigorous and 'scientific' understanding of previous events. The distance in time and place often provides a certain beneficial interpretive

perspective for the outsider compared with the insider who may be 'imprisoned within their mental horizon.'<sup>65</sup> Zygmunt Bauman states that any historicism that 'demands that each era ought to be analysed and "understood" in its own terms becomes unacceptable.' He explains why.<sup>66</sup>

This kind of historicism is unacceptable because of its neglect of the things revealed by later epochs, and its refusal to accept them as categories reflecting the reality of the past more fully, more deeply than the necessarily limited ideas of past thinkers. The demand to apply only 'contemporary', 'local', 'indigenous', 'emic' (or under whatever names they appear) categories in the search for the true meaning of a historically given setting, Marx sees as equivalent to the demand that historians 'share in each historical epoch the illusion of that epoch. For instance, if an epoch imagines itself to be actuated by purely "political" or "religious" motives, although "religion" and "politics" are only forms of its true motives, the historian accepts this opinion.' Having accepted it, our historian becomes party to the misrepresentation of times he admittedly wants to understand. The ideas of contemporaries, which he clings to in hope of penetrating the true essence of the epoch, have been exposed by later developments for what they really are: images of immature relations which, far from revealing the truth, prevented it from being revealed.

For Bauman, then, the meaning of any historical situation given by a 'native' is not necessarily the best or most accurate assessment of that event. In direct contrast to Garrett, Bauman claims that an abstraction may reveal the meaning of a concrete act better than an insider's evaluation. He explains the value of the outsider's perspective.<sup>67</sup>

That is to say, one can achieve understanding of alien forms of life not by immersing oneself in their specific uniqueness or re-living them as if 'from inside', but by following an exactly opposite strategy: by spotting the general in the particular, by enlarging both the alien and one's own experience so as to construct a larger system in which each 'makes sense' to the other. . . .

Rather than forgetting his own specific form of life (as he often mistakenly thinks), the ethnographer (or the historian, for that matter) can only grasp the meaning of another form by unfolding the general which is hidden in the two

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<sup>64</sup> Myers 1995: 13-16.

<sup>65</sup> Geertz 1973: 24. In Geertz 1983: 57 he uses the phrase 'imprisoned within its own detail.'

<sup>66</sup> Bauman 1978: 62.

<sup>67</sup> Bauman 1978: 218, 220.

particularities of his own and the alien culture. In so doing, his own culture is an asset, rather than a liability. It is his own culture, distinct as it is from the one under his scrutiny, which offers him a pole, distant enough from the other, to magnify the projected 'facts of general functioning' as much as is needed in order to make them visible.

We conclude, then, that Garrett's claims about the inability of abstract models to reveal concrete meanings is incorrect. Her attempt to limit all social scientific studies of the Bible to one methodology that has been influential among a very select group, Geertzian interpretive anthropologists, is misconceived. The decision to understand ancient Mediterranean persons using a modern theory of identity formation, the social identity perspective, is not inherently flawed, but in fact may offer significant insight into the actions, attitudes, and speech of certain persons, including the apostle Paul. Having shown that the use of models derived from alien contexts is not necessarily an invalid methodological procedure, we must now demonstrate that the particular model we have chosen, the model of identity as described in the social identity perspective, is appropriate to the social situation in the ancient Mediterranean contexts.

## Chapter Seven

### Social Identity in Ancient Mediterranean Perspective

#### Part Two: Commensurability Established

##### Introduction

In the previous chapter I established that the use of modern psychological models for understanding the ancient world may offer helpful insight into the self-identity of ancient persons, such as the apostle Paul; that is, I demonstrated that use of such models is not inherently flawed. However, in order for such models to provide insight it is necessary that the specific model adopted be commensurate with the social situation and also that the researcher follow a dialectical procedure in relating this etic modelling stance with the emic traces of history. In this chapter I will illustrate this dialectical process and demonstrate the necessary commensurability between the social identity perspective and ancient Mediterranean society. More specifically, in this chapter I intend to show that identity formation as described by the social identity perspective is commensurate with identity formation in the ancient Mediterranean world.

There are two possible avenues we might take for demonstrating such commensurability. On the one hand, in a *tour de force*, we might attempt to demonstrate commensurability by showing that the psychological states and processes described by the social identity perspective are universal, experienced by all persons everywhere. If we were successful, then we would have demonstrated the necessary commensurability, for

those states and processes would necessarily be aspects of identity formation for ancient persons. On the other hand, we could attempt the more modest task of showing that the psychological states and processes described by the social identity perspective are similar to states and processes in the subject field as discovered in the textual emic traces of history.

In their fascinating volume Indigenous Psychologies: The Anthropology of the Self, Paul Heelas and Andrew Lock offer an example of what the first approach might look like. They present a case to show that 'many psychological processes operate independently of culture, which means that we can look to experimental evidence or to other cultures to establish what is amiss with our notions.'<sup>1</sup> They believe not only that there is a 'trans-cultural' dimension to human psychological functioning, but that there is a universal dimension, and that this universal dimension must be considered in any attempt to understand indigenous psychologies. They believe that the social psychology of any particular group or society cannot be understood without relating it to the general psychology of humanity. Lock explains,<sup>2</sup>

Selves are nurtured within a culture; and cultures vary in the self-constituting concepts they provide (thus the conventional). But culture has itself arisen from the protoself of preconceptual man (thus the universal). . . . The way in which such things are conceptualized will vary from place to place (the conventional); but that it is *such* things that are conceptualized will be constant (the universal).

This approach is as suggestive and fascinating as it is (unfortunately) speculative and ultimately impossible to carry out with our present knowledge. Casting one's glance back

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<sup>1</sup> Heelas and Lock 1981: xv. One might argue that the word 'independently' is inaccurate since persons cannot be isolated from their social moorings; however, Heelas and Lock do not mean to imply such an extreme view, for Lock states later (p. 19), 'the concepts of *self* and *culture* are interdependent: one cannot exist without the other. . . . Selves are constituted within culture, and culture is maintained by the community of selves.'

to 'preconceptual man' introduces a myriad of evolutionary theories and problems concerning the unity and diverse origins of the modern human species. To root one's thesis in such speculative material is not wise. Nevertheless, some social historians work under the assumption that such universal psychological states do exist. For example, Jon Lendon, in his study of honor in the ancient Roman world, states, 'The abiding psychological strength of honour derives at least in part from the universal human desire for the esteem of those around us.'<sup>3</sup> Lendon's decision to establish the Romans' attitudes toward honor in a 'universal desire' is not necessary for his thesis, however. It would have been sufficient to demonstrate the existence of honor values in Roman society. Similarly, it would be neither wise nor necessary for me to attempt to demonstrate the existence of universal psychological states and processes associated with identity formation as described by the social identity perspective in order to establish commensurability. It will be sufficient to demonstrate the existence of the same basic states and processes in ancient Mediterranean society as they are revealed by the emic traces of history in ancient texts. This is the approach I will take to establish the commensurability of the social identity perspective with ancient Mediterranean persons. My procedure will be as follows. I will first engage one of the more lively discussions in classical and biblical studies—the relationship between the individual and the group in the ancient world—to test the commensurability of the social identity perspective with ancient society and also to test its ability to provide insight and clarity on relevant ancient texts. Following this I will consider specific examples of identity transformation and identity reformation.

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<sup>2</sup> Heelas and Lock 1981: 20-21.

<sup>3</sup> Lendon 1997: 33.



### The Individual in the Hellenistic World: A Test of Commensurability

Classicists and biblical scholars have said much about the relationship between the individual and the group in the ancient world, but not much of this proceeds from thoughtful emic/etic methodological considerations and even less proceeds from an etic stance that incorporates relevant social psychological research.<sup>4</sup> This methodological failure is evident in the history of scholarship on the individual in the ancient world. Clarifications and advancement have occurred as methodological considerations have been articulated; however, such advances can be brought further with more sustained methodological rigor, as we will attempt to demonstrate.

#### A Theoretical Distinction

Before examining some social psychological perspectives on ancient persons, I would like to introduce a theoretical distinction first proposed by Michael Carrithers in his important 1985 essay 'An Alternative Social History of the Self.' This essay was originally offered as a response to the classic 1938 Huxley Memorial Lecture by Marcel Mauss, 'Une Catégorie de l'Esprit Humain: La Notion de Personne, Celle de "Moi."'<sup>5</sup> In his response Carrithers criticized Mauss for failing to distinguish 'personne-theories' from 'moi-theories' of the individual. Carrithers explains the distinction: a 'personne-theory' recognizes and articulates the social orientation of the individual, whereas a 'moi-

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<sup>4</sup> An important exception to this statement is Bruce Malina, whose social psychological study of the problem of individual and the group can be found in several articles and books such as Malina 1993, 1996. He will be the focal point of the following discussion.

<sup>5</sup> Mauss' lecture is printed in the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 68 (1938) and translated into English by W. D. Hall in Carrithers *et al* (eds.) 1985: 1-25.

theory' articulates the unique individuality of the person. He writes, 'The *personne*, that is, a *conception of the individual human being as a member of a (1) significant and (2) ordered collectivity*. . . . The other term of art is *moi*, defined as a *conception of (1) the physical and mental individuality of human beings within (2) a natural or spiritual cosmos, and (3) interacting with each other as moral agents*.'<sup>6</sup> This distinction is helpful in discussing ancient social psychological notions of the person, because it clarifies certain issues debated among scholars. Using Carrithers' categories it can be shown that modern scholars have used either *personne*-theories or *moi*-theories to describe ancient society and persons. In the following survey, we will see that, until recently, biblical and classical scholars described ancient society and persons by *moi*-theories of the individual, although, of course it must be understood that they did not classify their theories in this way. This *moi* consensus has now been broken, however. Many classical scholars now believe that *moi*-theories are more descriptive of modern society, whereas *personne*-theories are more descriptive of ancient and medieval society. The debate is still raging among biblical scholars, however, with many still unconvinced that *personne*-theories are more commensurate with ancient Mediterranean society. It will prove enlightening to consider briefly these matters.

### Biblical Scholars on Individualism in the Hellenistic World

The one person who is most responsible for bringing the social scientific hermeneutical concern to the attention of biblical scholars is Bruce Malina. He has been a pioneer in introducing the social scientific perspectives (etics) to biblical texts, recognizing clearly that, when asking questions of biblical texts that bring the interpreter

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<sup>6</sup> Carrithers 1985: 235-36. All italics are Carrithers'.

into contact with other academic disciplines, it is necessary to take guidance from scholars in those other disciplines, rather than ignoring their work and speaking of attendant matters in an imprecise or specious manner. He has argued that modern social psychology offers help in providing a more precise and accurate understanding of ancient persons.<sup>7</sup>

Available social-scientific studies, then, suggest that if our goal is to understand ancient Mediterranean persons in some comparative way, our main tool will be a social psychology. It should be built on a circum-Mediterranean “modal” or typical personality, while at the same time taking into account the idiosyncrasies of the culture and distinctiveness of social structure in any give time and place. Obviously there are distinctive cultural groups within the Mediterranean region, along with the types of personalities such groups would sanction. But such distinctions must be allowed to emerge only after we gain some understanding of the circum-Mediterranean personality in general.

Malina’s conclusions can be briefly summarized. Ancient society was predominantly group-oriented or collectivistic and persons embedded in such cultures typically did not value individual freedom and determination and did not practice introspection. Malina’s work can be categorized as belonging to the *personne*-theories. Daniel Stramara and Gerald Downing reject Malina’s thesis, however, and offer a substantive rebuttal to his position.<sup>8</sup>

Stramara finds in ancient texts (Greek, Roman, and Jewish) repeated expression of ‘subjective introspection,’ which he defines as ‘the process of mentally gazing within to a non-physical interiority.’<sup>9</sup> For example, he traces the various interpretations of the Delphic injunction ‘Know Thyself’ in various texts, demonstrating a tendency toward an introspective interpretation among ancient authors such as Epictetus (130 C.E.). He cites

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<sup>7</sup> Malina 1996: 43.

<sup>8</sup> Downing 2000: 43-61; Stramara 2000: 35-60. For one who agrees substantially with Malina, see Witherington 1998: 18-51.

<sup>9</sup> Stramara 2000: 59.

Epictetus' advice: "Turn them [your thoughts] upon yourself" (ἐπιστρέψατε αὐτοὶ εἰς ἑαυτούς), along with several other texts.<sup>10</sup> Stramara claims that such ancient texts reveal that at least a basic sense of interiority existed among ancient persons. He concludes that Malina offers 'an unfortunate misrepresentation of the historical data.'<sup>11</sup>

Downing criticizes Malina's contrast between twentieth century Western 'individualistic' culture and first century Mediterranean 'collectivistic' culture. With the aid of Rom Harre's social psychological analysis of modern persons, Downing offers evidence that the two cultures are not nearly as different as Malina claims. 'We are as much the product of social expectations and reactions as people were then, and we as much as they come to such individuality as we attain and sustain as sexual persons in and through the same or very similar ranges of social interaction.'<sup>12</sup> Like Stramara he examines several ancient philosophical texts that explore personal subjectivity. Epictetus is once again a felicitous example: "No one is dearer to me than myself" (ἐμοὶ παρ' ἐμὲ φίλτερος οὐδεὶς).<sup>13</sup> He also offers the evidence of ancient novels (romances), which reveal that ancient characters are basically similar to characters in modern literature.<sup>14</sup> To a superficial extent these two critiques appear significant. There is clear evidence that ancient Mediterranean philosophers engaged in introspective self-analysis and self-examination. The critiques are shortsighted, however, and fail to engage with Malina's thesis in any significant way. In the final analysis, they do little more than reassert the older consensus on individualism in the ancient Hellenistic world and by-pass the more significant questions and methodological concerns that Malina exposes. Stramara has

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<sup>10</sup> Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 3.22.39.

<sup>11</sup> Stramara 2000: 59.

<sup>12</sup> Downing 2000: 53.

<sup>13</sup> Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 3.4.10

simply cited several well-known texts revealing introspection, but many of them are too late to be relevant for the first century situation. Downing's critique is more substantive, because he does more than cite texts that appear to contradict Malina's basic thesis, attempting to address methodological concerns and the use of social psychology in reading biblical texts. Nonetheless, Downing is disappointing because he rarely moves beyond a simplistic comparison of similarities between ancient and modern persons. He suggestively cites the social-psychological work of Rom Harré in the formation of personal and social identity of modern persons, but then fails to follow up and utilize Harré's work in a positive hermeneutical direction, opting instead to use Harré as a stick to beat on Malina. For Downing, Harré provides social psychological evidence that the modern West is agonistic and that modern persons are dyadic; therefore, Malina must be wrong when he claims that agonistic dyadic ancient persons were very different from modern persons.<sup>14</sup> Downing finds, in contrast to Malina, that the world of the ancient person and the world of the modern person are 'strangely familiar.' But Downing fails to consider how dyadic relationships were interpreted, valued, developed and sustained by ancient and modern persons, which might have sparked a more stimulating exchange of ideas. Thus, in Downing's hands, Harré's work merely validates his view that modern interpreters are similar enough to ancient persons that they can read ancient texts without worrying too much about the problem of anachronism. Downing's misunderstanding of ancient literary romances reveals the failure of this method, however. He correctly points out that individualism is a major motif in the romances, but he then fails to understand the value placed on individualism within those stories, simply assuming that modern

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<sup>14</sup> Downing 2000: 54.

<sup>15</sup> Downing 2000: 44-46.

individualism and ancient individualism will be similar. As a result he has actually turned notions of individualism in the romances upside down. In fact these ancient romances are evidence that Malina is heading in the right direction with his description of ancient persons. B.P. Reardon, one of the leading scholars on these texts, points out that this literary genre emphasizes 'the isolation of the individual in the world.' This isolation is depicted as a social problem that must be resolved by finding a relationship.<sup>16</sup>

Man alone and thus without security, seeks security, in God or his fellow man, or woman. Lacking a social identity, he seeks to create for himself a personal one by becoming the object of the affections of his own kind or of the providence of the Almighty. He identifies himself by loving, God or man, or both.

Thus, the motif of individualism is useful for describing a problem in search of a solution, not a social value among ancient persons. Reardon shows that it is this basic motif that recurs in each of the major extant novels. Thus, Downing's description of the novels sounds too much like modern novels because he misses the idea that isolation is treated as problem not a value. This valuation runs contrary to modern individualism. Thus, things which appear on first glance to be strangely familiar may actually be strikingly different when seen in sharper detail. This is the point that Malina is concerned to emphasize, but which Downing cannot accept.

Both Stramara and Downing have cited ancient texts that, for them, exemplify the importance of the individual in the ancient world and, therefore, the inadequacy of Malina's thesis. The two quotations of Epictetus exemplify that critique. In addition to the fact that philosophers are hardly representative examples of the common person, this critique ignores the fact that Malina is not unaware of such texts, but has incorporated them within his general thesis. Admittedly Malina's writings are not always sufficiently

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<sup>16</sup> Reardon 1969: 293 and 294.

nuanced and his statements can be extreme (but he is certainly not alone in this—we all are guilty at times), nevertheless, his basic position is easily recognized. Unfortunately, however, his opponents too often caricature and critique his views on the basis of his extreme and un-nuanced statements, rather than his actual position. It should be clear that Malina's program involves describing a modal personality, that is, a stereotype. He recognizes that this stereotype may not be realized in any one actual person and he recognizes that specific individuals may contradict the stereotype.<sup>17</sup> He further recognizes that any culture, including the one he is attempting to describe, includes diversity, counter-cultural behavior, personal idiosyncrasy and distinctiveness. Recall this statement, which I have highlighted at the most relevant point.<sup>18</sup>

Available social-scientific studies, then, suggest that if our goal is to understand ancient Mediterranean persons in some comparative way, our main tool will be a social psychology. It should be built on a circum-Mediterranean "modal" or typical personality, *while at the same time taking into account the idiosyncrasies of the culture and distinctiveness of social structure in any give time and place. Obviously there are distinctive cultural groups within the Mediterranean region*, along with the types of personalities such groups would sanction. But such distinctions must be allowed to emerge only after we gain some understanding of the circum-Mediterranean personality in general.

Contrary to the claims of his critics, Malina also acknowledges that an inner consciousness exists in the individual person in the ancient Mediterranean. For example, he has written,<sup>19</sup>

Thus the honorable person would never expose his or her distinct individuality. One's unique personhood, *one's inner self* with its difficulties, weaknesses, confusions, and inability to cope, *and one's distinctive, individual realm of hopes and dreams are simply not of public concern or comment*. Rather, persons of such enculturation know how to keep their psychological core hidden and secret. They are persons of careful calculation and discretion, normally disavowing any dependence on others. *They are adept at keeping their inner-*

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<sup>17</sup> Malina and Neyrey 1996: 15-16.

<sup>18</sup> Malina 1996: 43.

<sup>19</sup> Malina 1993: 64.

*most self concealed* with a veil of conventionality and formality, ever alert to anything that would not tally with the socially expected and defined forms of behavior that have entitled them and their family to respect.

His point is not that ancient persons did not have personal subjectivity, for this statement clearly indicates that they did have such (“distinct individuality”, “unique personhood”, an “inner self”); rather, his point is that such forms of personal subjectivity were *typically not valued* in that culture, and therefore not asserted, explored, dwelt upon, or developed in ancient society. They were, instead, kept ‘hidden and secret,’ ‘concealed with a veil of conventionality and formality.’ For Malina the value of emphasizing the stereotypical and the common is that the atypical and the uncommon are more clearly revealed by the contrast. Such elements are then more likely to be examined and studied further to discern their social meaning, rather than passed over too quickly under the assumption that their meaning is apparent. For example, Malina agrees that ‘self-sufficiency’ or ‘self-reliance’ (αὐτάρκεια) was valued in the ancient Mediterranean, as is revealed in the philosophical texts, but he is concerned that such ‘self-sufficiency’ be understood within that first century cultural setting and not on the basis of a modern construct. He writes,<sup>20</sup>

Whatever the term ‘self-sufficiency’ conjures up for an individualistic reader, in the Mediterranean world αὐτάρκεια is about having access to ‘enough’—that is neither too little nor too much. ... In philosophic usage, the word did not refer to self-reliance in the modern U.S. sense, with its psychological overtones. Rather, ‘having enough’ allowed for nondependence on those other upon whom one was normally dependent, hence a form of nonattachment to persons whom one was connected by social convention: parents, children, spouse, neighbors, village mates, and the like.

Furthermore, Malina has discussed at length a situation in early Christianity that runs contrary to the stereotype he has developed.<sup>21</sup> He has argued that John’s Gospel describes

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<sup>20</sup> Malina 1996: 46. For several more examples, see Malina’s criticism of Malherbe’s work in Malina 1986.

<sup>21</sup> Malina 1984.



Jesus as a unique individualist. John develops this characteristic by adopting features of the romantic tragedy in which,

the unique, the individual, the particular are what count, while universalistic and changeless generalities are useless and illusory. The romantic aspect of this plot focuses on the hero as individual, with the individual's heightened sense of self and self-identification. . . . The main point here, however, is that Jn is indeed concerned about the personal claims and individuality of his hero in a way absent from the other gospel stories about Jesus. . . . As a unique individual, he overcomes the world in which he is constrained and enveloped. He breaks the fetters of the social group ("his own") and stands out uniquely, alone.

He explains that John adopted a formalist mode of argument in order to stress the individuals in the story. John did not follow the stereotypical pattern.

This mode of argument highlights the uniqueness of agents, agencies or means, and acts in the story. Jn presents a range of individual types to people his story: e.g., Nathaniel, Andrew, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, Lazarus, Peter, Thomas, the disciple whom Jesus loved. The reader/hearer can almost imagine each of them in terms of individualistic personality with its focus on uniqueness. And throughout the course of the gospel, Jesus himself stands out as a unique, forceful and significant "personality." As most students of the Bible know, these features are absent from the Synoptic gospels.

The formalist mode of argument seeks to identify the unique characteristics of agents, agencies and acts in the historical field and to assign them to classes with general qualities and specific attributes. In the course of his narrative, the author of Jn does this to an extensive degree that proves rather distinctive for a first century Mediterranean writing.

These quotations demonstrate that Malina is not unaware of examples contrary to the stereotype he describes, but that his concern is to highlight the typical in order that the atypical may be more clearly seen.<sup>22</sup> Critics must do more than simply point out the

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<sup>22</sup> The two quotes are from pages 8 and 9 of Malina 1984. We might point out that Jerome Neyrey has also argued for the same thesis. He has written (Neyrey 1988: 145), 'the Johannine community came to see itself as "an association of Christian individualists, each united to Jesus as a branch on the vine but not overly concerned with the salvific aspect of being united to one another." Aliens in an alien world, they are never sure of one another (see 8:30), and so cling only to Jesus, not to the group. Evidence for this sense of individualism may be found in the criticism of the role of Peter and the authority that Peter represents in the apostolic churches. The new model of personal identity becomes the individually beloved disciple who is Jesus' intimate, who

existence of examples that run contrary to Malina's stereotypical modal personality. They must consider and discuss the meaning and value of such examples within the apposite social system, as Malina has done with John's community.

In the work of Bruce Malina we can see the beginnings of an important new interpretive move that takes seriously the need to use both emic and etic perspectives. Although Malina does not always refine this procedure sufficiently, halting the dialectical relationship too soon, he is the most creative biblical scholar advocating such an interpretive process today. His emphasis on the typical must be taken seriously if the atypical is to be understood properly. The debate among biblical scholars should be seen within the wider discussion among ancient historians and classicist. To this subject we now turn.

#### Classical Scholars on Individualism in the Hellenistic World

The majority of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century classical scholars agreed that classical Athens was a society in which the group dominated and constrained the individual. Aristotle is well known for describing the lone individual as 'either a beast or a god' (*Politics* 1.2, 1255a29), for popular opinion held that the human being was by nature a animal suited for the *polis*. This is because the *polis*, which exists by nature, was necessary for the realization of human ethical virtues (*Politics* 1.1, 488a7; 1.2, 1253a31-

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has immediate access to Jesus' heart and secrets (13:25-26), who alone follows Jesus into danger (18:15; 19:26), and who quickly believes on Easter (20:8) without the material proofs that were offered to the Eleven (20:20) and to Thomas (20:26-29).' For earlier statements on the individualism of the fourth gospel, see also Moule 1962 and Schweizer 1959: 235.

39).<sup>23</sup> These same scholars also believed that a decisive shift took place with the change in political administration under the brilliant Macedonians Philip and Alexander. They described the new Hellenistic world as one very similar to the modern West, a world of anxious individualism, which was the result of the decline of the closely-knit *polis* under Alexander's rising cosmopolitanism.<sup>24</sup> These scholars, giving little attention to their particular etic stance, read the textual emic traces and described the kind of individualism they found. The following statement by Norman Baynes' typifies this old consensus:

Would you agree with me that in the Athens of Pericles man is securely entrenched in *this* world? The city-state supplies his needs: he feels himself at home and can afford to be on terms of easy intimacy even with his Gods. . . . In the West the tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse is a portent: he is the pioneer who points the way to the new monarchy which in Greece will reach its full development in Philip of Macedonia and in Alexander the Great. And before the might of the territorial kingdoms of the Hellenistic Age the city-state is a very little thing. The animosities of faction strife may live on, but political questions are of less significance under the autocracy of the Hellenistic monarchies. The city-state is overshadowed: it no longer inspires the conviction that it can satisfy the needs of its citizens: the gods of the city-state pale before those human Saviours and Benefactors, the rulers of the Greek kingdoms, who can undoubtedly rescue and help their friends. But suppose that you have incurred the autocrat's displeasure, what then? In a world of unleashed egoism, where that egoism has at its service the overwhelming force of the new scientifically organized armies, what can your city-state avail you?—even Tyre fell at last to Alexander the Great—your city fortifications sink out of your thought: the individual cowers defenceless before the rivalries of these Hellenistic *Gewaltmenschen*: no comfortable embrace of his city's walls surround him: nothing stands between him and the utmost limits of the inhabited world: he is face to face with the οἰκουμένη; and thus the two poles of Hellenistic thinking are the individual—and the universe: it is now, as Bury used to say, that the oecumenical idea is born. Man is alone in the cosmos—alone and afraid.

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<sup>23</sup> This view no longer dominates classical studies, however. For a very different assessment of classical Athens, see Robert W. Wallace's 1994 article.

<sup>24</sup> Typical of this older scholarship is the statement by G.H.C. MacGregor and A.C. Purdy 1936: 201: 'Hellenism may be characterized by individualism.' Similarly Clifford Herschel Moore opines, 'the age of the Antonines was an age of egoism, of valetudinarianism.' For the significance of this attitude for understanding early Christianity see Frank Byron Jevons 1908.

It is thus the concern for the individual and the individual's problems which determines one of those queer shifts of human interest which are for the historical student of such primary significance and are yet so baffling. . . . Thus in the centre of the picture stands the individual: defenceless, alone, and afraid.<sup>25</sup>

The work of Gilbert Murray and E.R Dodds helped establish this view as the consensus among the scholarly community.<sup>26</sup> Murray's phrase 'a failure of nerve' and Dodd's phrase 'age of anxiety' served to characterize the period for a generation of classicists. Even as late as 1990 Peter Green could write, 'The cult of the individual had replaced the collective ideal embodied in the *polis*, and was now seeking permanence in stone and metal.' He went on to describe the period as one of

creeping secularism, social fragmentation, loss of cohesive identity. Cities and empires had become too vast and heterogenous to give adequate psychological support to inheritors of the old, local *polis* tradition: their society was no longer either integrated or manageable. The individual was thrown back on himself; and though that, precisely, had been the criterion of judgment demanded by all Greek intellectuals, the loss of the *polis*' tightly structured support system made such an isolated position hard to maintain.<sup>27</sup>

This consensus can be categorized as a *moi*-theory of the ancient individual. This description of the emic textual traces of history proved to be a persuasive manner of reading ancient texts. However, too little attention was given to understanding how each interpreter's etic stance might be affecting this emic description. Certain scholars from the present generation have not been blind, however, to the etic stance of their predecessors. Standing a generation away has enabled them to perceive the subjective bias in the etic stance of their teachers. They regard the consensus of such emic readings

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<sup>25</sup> Baynes 1955: 3, 4, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Murray 1925, Dodds 1951 and 1968. For its influence, see, for example, Sabine 1961: 125-32; W.W. Tarn 1961: 79, 193; Ferguson 1973: 73.

<sup>27</sup> Green 1990: 522.

as affected profoundly by an unrecognized etic stance that was shaped by nineteenth century political and social ideas.<sup>28</sup>

### Etic Origins of the Old Consensus Revealed

The word 'individualism' and its associated concepts emerged in post-Enlightenment Europe as the result of ideas generated by the *philosophes* and the social experiments identified with the French and American Revolutions.<sup>29</sup> The word appears to have been coined in France (*individualisme*) and its earliest known usage is found in Joseph de Maistre's Etude sur la Souveraineté (1820), where he spoke of 'this deep and frightening division of minds, this infinite fragmentation of all doctrines, political protestantism carried to its most absolute individualism [*individualisme*].' The counter-revolutionary Saint-Simonians used the term regularly in the mid-1820s to describe and critique the revolutionary philosophical ideas and practices emerging in France. As the term spread throughout Europe its usage varied according to the local political and social climate. For example, its denotations and connotations were wholly negative in France, referring to 'the dissolution of social bonds, the abandonment by individuals of their social obligations and commitments.' Thus, Louis Veuillot wrote at that time,<sup>30</sup>

The evil which plagues France is not unknown; everyone agrees in giving it the same name: individualism. It is not difficult to see that a country where individualism reigns is no longer in the normal conditions of society, since society is the union of minds and interests, and individualism is division carried to the

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<sup>28</sup> Martin 1994: 119-20. See too Rapport and Overing 2000: 179.

<sup>29</sup> All of these views are explained in detail in Lukes 1971, 1973 and summarized in Lukes 1993. Slightly less illuminating, but still valuable, are Schatz 1907, Swart 1962, Lamberti 1970, and Schliefer 1980.

<sup>30</sup> From a letter to M. Villemain written August 1843 and published in Mélanges Religieux, Historiques, Politiques et Littéraires (1842-56). Paris, 1856-60, *lère série* I.132-33. The translation is from Lukes 1971: 49-50.

infinite degree. All for each and each for all, that is society; each for himself and thus each against all, that is individualism.

In Germany, however, the term carried ambiguous meanings, because of its dual associations, on the one hand with French politics, and on the other with the German Romantic movement, in which context it described 'the cult of individual uniqueness and originality and the flourishing of individuality.' Positive connotations are found in Italy, where the word signified 'the distinctiveness of unique individuals and the cultivation of privacy.' In England the word was used in an overtly positive way, suggesting the virtues of self-reliance and personal initiative. The English word 'individualism' seems to have entered English society in Henry Reeve's 1840 translation of Alexis de Tocqueville's De la démocratie en Amérique. After translating De Tocqueville's line 'Individualism is a novel expression, to which a novel idea [democracy] has given birth', Reeve appended this explanatory note: 'However strange it may seem to the English ear, I know of no English word exactly equivalent to . . . *individualisme*.'<sup>31</sup> For De Tocqueville the *individualisme* exhibited in America was a threat to its society, although it was not a perversity equal to *égöisme*.<sup>32</sup>

Individualism [*individualisme*] is a novel expression, to which a novel idea has given birth. Our fathers were only acquainted with selfishness [*égöisme*]. Selfishness is a passionate and exaggerated love of self, which leads a man to connect everything with himself and to prefer himself to everything in the world. Individualism is a mature and calm feeling, which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows and to draw apart with his family and his friends, so that after he has thus formed a little circle of his

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<sup>31</sup> The text is from Democracy in America revised edition, translated by Henry Reeve (London and New York: The Colonial Press, 1990) II.2.2: 104. See Martin 1994: 119.

<sup>32</sup> The following quotation is taken from the Henry Reeve translation as revised by Francis Bowen with additional corrections and notes by Phillips Bradley and a new introduction by Daniel Boorstin, published by Random House (New York) in 1990, II.2.98. For a fuller explanation of De Tocqueville's use and meaning of *individualisme* see James Schleifer 1980: 245-59.

own, he willingly leave society at large to itself. Selfishness originates in blind instinct; individualism proceeds from erroneous judgment more than from depraved feelings; it originates as much in deficiencies of mind as in perversity of heart.

Selfishness blights the germ of all virtue; individualism, at first, only saps the virtues of public life; but in the long run it attacks and destroys all others and is at length absorbed in downright selfishness. Selfishness is a vice as old as the world, which does not belong to one form of society more than to another; individualism is of democratic origin, and it threatens to spread in the same ration as the equality of condition.

Nevertheless, individualism was considered a great achievement in America. In striking contrast to De Tocqueville's warning, Americans celebrated their individualism. For them the concept conjured glorious images of political and economic freedom, self-determinism, social mobility and hope for a better future.<sup>33</sup> This flowering of the concept of individualism in the post Enlightenment West was destined to affect its thinkers.

In the same time period two significant academic titles were published that dramatically altered the scholars' view of the classical world. In 1840 Thomas Carlyle's On Heroes, Hero-worship, and the Heroic in History appeared. This work defined and defended the 'Great Man' theory of history, the idea that powerful individuals drive history.<sup>34</sup> This idea influenced the other work too, a history of ancient Greece. J. G. Droysen wrote and published his monumental three-volume study Geschichte des Hellenismus between 1836 and 1843. This hugely influential work fundamentally altered scholarly opinion on the ancient world through its invention of the Hellenistic period. Droysen's novel periodization, influenced by the new 'Great Man' view of history, identified the era as bounded by two powerful individuals. It began with the military

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<sup>33</sup> Schleifer 1980: 245.

<sup>34</sup> For a fuller explanation of this view of history, see Robert Stover, 'Great Man Theory of History,' in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (New York: Macmillan, 1972) 3:378-82.

exploits of Alexander the Great and concluded with the rise of the Roman Empire under the brilliant Augustus (Octavian).<sup>35</sup> Droysen's memorable opening line states programmatically, 'Der Name Alexander bezeichnet das Ende einer Weltepoche, den Anfang einer neuen.'<sup>36</sup>

All these factors merged to inspire a view of the classical world in which the 'Hellenistic Age' was characterized by a flowering of individualism. Luther Martin comments, 'Alexander's conquests and the consequent political internationalism they established generated the conditions, it is generally held, for the emergence of individualism, a remarkably timed occurrence given the "invention" of this allegedly seminal cultural period only in the nineteenth century.'<sup>37</sup> By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century not only was the periodization of the Hellenistic era quickly becoming a basic presupposition in studies of the ancient world, but also 'individualism' was becoming the accepted view of Hellenistic society. Recognition of these political and social factors influencing scholarly interpretations of the classical world suggests that the consensus on ancient individualism was more the result of an unrecognized etic stance than it was a reading of the textual emic traces of ancient history. When the later generation of scholars began to recognize some of these elements in the etic stance of earlier scholars, they were able to reconsider the consensus on these emic descriptions. This reconsidered perspective is clearly seen in Michel Foucault's three volume work The History of Sexuality, especially in the third volume, subtitled The Care of the Self.

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<sup>35</sup> Martin 1994: 119-20. Martin also notes the influence of emergent nationalism of this period, with the founding of national archives. He states (p.119-20), 'Human history became structured, consequently, primarily in terms of political change, organized around the foundational acts of its governing and military figures.'

<sup>36</sup> München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980, I.3. Quoted from Martin 1994: 120.



## Foucault's Reconsidered Emic Description of the Individual in the Hellenistic World

In The Care of the Self Michel Foucault has attempted to articulate a more carefully nuanced understanding of persons in the ancient Mediterranean. In his work one views the demise of the older *moi*-theory consensus and the emergence of a newer *personne*-theory. He writes about the older consensus, 'Not everything is false in a schema of this sort. But we may wonder about the reality of that individualistic upsurge and the social and political process that would have detached individuals from their traditional affiliations.'<sup>38</sup> He sees that the changed political situation and the shifting status of the *polis* did not actually weaken the value of personal and social relationships, as the old consensus claimed. 'Broadly speaking, the ancient societies remained societies of promiscuity, where existence was led "in public." They were also societies in which everyone was situated within strong systems of local relationships, family ties, economic dependences, and relations of patronage and friendship.'<sup>39</sup> He is also able to see more clearly that the philosophical teachings most often associated with austere behavior (e.g., Stoicism) 'were also those which insisted the most on the need to fulfill one's obligations to mankind, to one's fellow citizens, and to one's family, and which were the quickest to denounce an attitude of laxity and self-satisfaction in practices of social withdrawal.'<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, he is more careful to distinguish varieties of individualism, such as the

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<sup>37</sup> Martin 1994: 120.

<sup>38</sup> Foucault 1984: 41. Martin 1994: 136 concurs, stating in footnote 19, 'Whereas the polis *ideal* was challenged, the practical effectiveness of this political unit continued to be felt throughout the Hellenistic period.' He cites Erich Gruen's unpublished paper 'The Individual and the Hellenistic Community' presented on 9 February 1991 to a symposium on 'The Individual and the Cosmos in the Hellenistic World' held at The College (SUNY) at New Paltz.

<sup>39</sup> Foucault 1984: 42.

attitude that values the independence of the individual from the group, the positive valuation and promotion of the private life enjoyed in family relationships, and the practice of introspection or 'care of the self' (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι σαυτοῦ). For Foucault it is this third variety, the 'care of the self,' that is characteristic of antique society. He differentiates two basic forms of the care of the self in antiquity: (1) The Socratic 'care of the self' as it was developed and practiced in Hellenistic philosophy during the early Roman Empire and (2) Christian ascetic spirituality as it was developed and practiced in the later Roman Empire.<sup>41</sup> The earlier Socratic practice was ultimately directed outward to others in society. Socrates, in his *Apology* (29D-E), offers himself as an example of one who practiced 'care of the self' in order to better care for the citizens of Athens. Other leading citizens should follow his example; they should, he opines, show as much concern for their soul as for the acquisition of personal wealth, reputation, and honor, for the mastery of the self enables better social relations. This principle is illustrated in Socrates dialogue with Alcibiades. Alcibiades, not satisfied with the status he has acquired through birth and heritage, seeks to gain power over others through political office. As Alcibiades is poised to begin his public and political career Socrates advises him that if he desires such mastery over others he must first master himself, he must take care of himself (*Alcibiades I* 127-132). Foucault explains, 'in teaching people to occupy themselves with themselves, he [Socrates] teaches them to occupy themselves with the city.'<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, the later Christian practice of soul care was not directed outward for others, but renounced and detached itself from the world and concluded with the self. The fourth century saint Gregory of Nyssa typifies this shift in the care of the

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<sup>40</sup> Foucault 1984: 42.

<sup>41</sup> Foucault 1988.

self when he advises in *On Virginity* (12) to turn away from the world and the flesh and to turn one's gaze inward to search every corner of the soul. Those reading ancient texts must be careful to discern the specific forms described. These texts should not be read as advocating a modern western valuation of individuality. In Foucault's work we see the development of a different emic reading based on a more considered etic stance. His emic readings belongs to the *personne*-theory category. His reading of the emic traces in ancient texts is a better reading than representative scholars of the old consensus, because his emic readings are consciously related to a well considered etic stance that is based on a comparative understanding of relationship between the individual and the group in other societies.

It is clear that Foucault's consciously chosen etic stance is superior to the unconsciously 'given' etic stance of an older scholarship. It is not clear whether or not Foucault's knowledge of comparative societies ever developed into an abstract model of human relating, but it cannot be doubted that such was the direction of his method. As such I would like to follow Foucault's lead and attempt to further his understanding of the individual in the ancient world by reading an ancient text from the perspective of the social identity perspective. I will attempt to discover emic traces of the individual/group relationship in Cicero's 'four-*personae* theory.'

#### Cicero's View of Individuals in the Hellenistic World

Cicero's 'four-*personae* theory' is a development of an earlier theory advanced by the stoic philosopher Panaetius (c. 185-109 BCE). Panaetius was head of the Stoa (c. 129-109) and wrote on the virtue of 'being yourself' in two works, *On Proper Function*

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<sup>42</sup> Foucault 1988: 20.

(Περὶ τοῦ καθήκοντος) and *On Peace of Mind* (Περὶ εὐθυμίας). The essence of Panaetius' view of 'being yourself' is found in his advice that one should choose a role in life that is consistent with one's natural capacities and inclinations (*tenenda sunt sua cuique . . . propriam nostram sequamur* [Cicero *De Officiis* I.110])<sup>43</sup>. Although these two works are no longer extant, they were well known in the ancient world and influenced the thought and writing of several other persons, including Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Horace, and Plutarch, through whom it is possible to reconstruct Panaetius' doctrine. We will not concern ourselves with the reconstruction of Panaetius' thought, however, since that is not important for our thesis; what is relevant is the exposition of Panaetian ideas about the self in the other writers, since these ideas were popular, widespread, and influential. Cicero's 'four-*personae*' theory in *De Officiis* 107-121 is perhaps the best example of Panaetius' impact on other thinkers.<sup>44</sup>

Cicero's discussion of the theory is set within the larger context of the '*decorum* theory' (*De Officiis* I.93-151), concerning that which is an appropriate course of life for individuals, and is ultimately contextualized by the larger concern of the book, the duties of humans in view of the four virtues: wisdom, justice, greatness of spirit, and moderation.<sup>45</sup> The book purports to be general advice on career choices written by Cicero for his son, Marcus, who was studying philosophy in Athens (I.1), but it is clear that Cicero sought a wider readership by publishing the work; furthermore, not everything said is applicable to Marcus, for at times he addresses an older elite male contemplating a

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<sup>43</sup> Gill 1988, 1993, 1994, De Lacy 1977.

<sup>44</sup> Cicero's *De Officiis* 'is generally taken as being a prime source for the reconstruction of Panaetius' ethical thinking.' Gill 1994: 4603. For more on Panaetian influence in *De Officiis* see De Lacy 1977 and Dyck 1979.

career change (I.120).<sup>46</sup> Cicero adopts the four-*personae* theory to instruct his son on the means of making good choices, primarily a career choice. We will read the text conscious of our deliberately chosen etic stance, the social identity perspective. It will prove helpful to quote a lengthy portion of the text.

[110] Everybody, however, must resolutely hold fast to his own peculiar gifts, in so far as they are peculiar only and not corrupt, in order that decorum, which is the object of our inquiry, may the more easily be secured. For we must so act as not to oppose the universal laws of human nature, but, while safeguarding those, to follow the inclinations of our own particular nature. Even if other careers may seem better or more noble, we must still regulate our own pursuits by the standards of our own nature. For it is of no use to fight against one's nature or to aim at what is impossible of attainment. From this fact the nature of that decorum defined above comes into clearer light, inasmuch as nothing is proper that 'goes against the grain,' as the saying goes, that is, if it is in direct opposition to one's natural genius.

[111] If there is anything such as decorum at all, it can be nothing more than uniform consistency in the course of our life as a whole and all its individual actions. And this uniform consistency one could not maintain by copying the personal traits of others and eliminating one's own. . . .

[113] If we take this into consideration, we shall see that it is each man's duty to weigh well what are his own peculiar traits of character, to regulate these properly, and not to wish to try how another man's would suit him. For the more peculiarly his own character, the more fitting it is for him.

[114] Everyone, therefore, should make a proper estimate of his own natural ability and show himself a critical judge of his own merits and defects; in this respect we should not let actors display more practical wisdom than we have. They select, not the best plays, but the ones best suited to their talents. Those who rely most upon the quality of their voice take the Epigoni and the Medus; those who place more stress upon the action chosen the Melanippa and the Clytemnestra; Rupilius, whom I remember, always played in the Antiope, Aesopus rarely in the Ajax. Shall a player have regard to this in choosing his role upon the stage, and a wise man fail to do so in selecting his part in life?

We shall, therefore, work to the best advantage in that role to which we are best adapted. But if at some time the stress of circumstances shall thrust us aside into

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<sup>45</sup> M.T. Griffin and E.M Atkins offer a very helpful analysis and introduction to *De Officiis* in their recent translation and edition of the work: *On Duties*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

<sup>46</sup> Gill 1988: 176-77.

some uncongenial part, we must devote to it all possible thought, practice, and pains, that we may be able to perform it, if not with decorum, at least with as little impropriety as possible. And we need not strive so hard to attain to points of excellence that have not been vouchsafed to us as to correct the faults we have.

[115] To the above mentioned characters is added a third, which some chance or some circumstance imposes, and a fourth also, which we assume by our own deliberate choice. Regal powers and military commands, nobility of birth and political office, wealth and influence, and their opposites depend upon chance and are, therefore, controlled by circumstances. But what role we ourselves may choose to sustain is decided by our own free choice. And some turn to philosophy, others to the civil law, and still others to oratory, while in case of the virtues themselves, one man prefers to excel in one, another in another.

[116] They whose fathers or forefathers have achieved distinction in some particular field, often strive to attain eminence in the same department of service: for example, Quintus, the son of Publius Mucius, in the law; Africanus, the son of Paulus, in the army. And to that distinction which they have severally inherited from their fathers some have added lustre of their own. For example, that same Africanus, who crowned his inherited military glory with his own eloquence. Timotheus, Conon's son, did the same: he proved himself not inferior to his father in military renown and added to that distinction the glory of culture and intellectual power. It happens sometimes, too, that a man declines to follow in the footsteps of his fathers and pursues a vocation of his own. And in such callings those very frequently achieve signal success who, though sprung from humble parentage, have set their aims high.

[117] All these questions, therefore, we ought to bear thoughtfully in mind, when we inquire into the nature of decorum. But above all we must decide who and what manner of men we wish to be and what calling in life we would follow. This is the most difficulty problem in the world. . . .

[118] Usually we are so imbued with the teachings of our parents that we fall irresistibly into their manners and customs. Others drift with the current of popular opinion and choose those callings that the majority find most attractive. Some, however, as the result of either some happy fortune or some natural ability, enter upon the right path of life without parental guidance.

[119] There is one class of people that is very rarely met with: those who are endowed with marked natural ability or exceptional advantages in education or culture (or both) and who also have time to consider carefully what career in life they prefer to follow. In this deliberation the decision must turn wholly upon each individual's natural inclination. For we must try to find out from each one's native disposition, as we said above, just what is proper for him. This we require not only as concerns each individual act, but also as concerns the ordering of one's whole life. This last item is a matter that must be considered with great care in

order that we may be true to ourselves throughout our whole lives and not falter in the execution of any duty.

[120] Since the most powerful influence in the choice of a career is exerted by nature, and the next most powerful by fortune, we must, of course, take account of them both in deciding upon our calling in life. But of the two, nature claims the more attention. For nature is so much more stable and steadfast, that for fortune to come into conflict with nature seems like a combat between a mortal and goddess. If, therefore, anyone has conformed his whole plan of life to the kind of nature that is his (that is, his better nature), let him go on with it consistently—that is the essence of decorum—unless, perhaps, he should discover that he has made a mistake in choosing his life's work. If this should happen (and it can easily happen) he must change his vocation and mode of life. If circumstances favor such a change, it will be effected with greater ease and convenience. If not it must be made gradually, step by step, just as, when friendships become no longer pleasing or desirable, it is more proper (so wise men think) to undo the bonds little by little than to sever it at a stroke. And when we have once changed our calling in life, we must take all possible care to make it clear that we have done so with good reason.

As we begin a study of this text, we should first note that it will not help us to understand the typical person in the ancient world. The theory is written for only a very small minority of the ancient population, the elite male. The text is addressed specifically to Cicero's son, and the advice offered is relevant only to other elite males. The career choices presented are available only to elite males: oratory, law, high military posts (115). Similarly, the examples provided are all from the elite citizenry: Quintus the lawyer, Africanus the military genius (116). But Cicero notes that even these elite males, who have every advantage, typically do not choose their own way of life, but instead follow the path of their parents or drift with the current of social opinion (118). Nevertheless, there is a rare class of men (*rarum genus*) who have been endowed with exceptional abilities (*excellenti ingenii magnitudine aut praeclara eruditione atque doctrina aut utraque*), whom he seeks to exhort and encourage by revealing the possibility of high achievement by a strategy of individual mobility (119). It is for this

miniscule minority that Cicero writes. For the majority, his words were irrelevant. With that caveat, we can proceed to read the text.

Cicero's stated purpose ('the object of our inquiry' *quod quaerimus* [110]) is prescriptive, to advise and encourage his readers on how to achieve (*retineatur*) *decorum*, which is 'nothing more than uniform consistency in the course of our life as a whole and all its individual actions' (*nihil est profecto magis quam aequabilitas cum universae vitae, tum singularum actionum* [111]). The attainment of such *decorum* includes a display of moral beauty and excellence in one's life; indeed, one shines (*elucet*) with *honestum* and *virtus* (*De Off.* 1.94-98). Cicero wants to help people secure their most suitable identity or role in life.<sup>47</sup> According to Cicero a young man should give considerable attention to the four-*personae* when deciding on a course of life. Those four-*personae* reveal the course most fitting or appropriate for a person. Success (*gloria*) and eminence (*laudis excellere*) are more likely to follow one who has taken guidance from the four-*personae* (116). We should begin by clarifying Cicero's use of the term *personae*, because he uses it here in a slightly different sense than was usual. Usually the term had reference to a mask worn by an actor in the theatre. The mask identified or revealed the character portrayed by the actor. Outside the theatre the term often referred to the role(s) a person played in life in view of their occupation, duties, and relationships. For example, Seneca speaks of a helmsman as having two *personae* (*duas personas habet*), one as a mate and the other as a passenger on the ship he was piloting (*Epistles* 85, 35). Similarly, Cicero, when offering instructions on rhetoric (*De oratore* 2.24.102),

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<sup>47</sup> The motif of choosing a path in life that determines one's character, identity, and destiny was well known in antiquity. In Greek literature the classic story concerns Hercules' choice between virtue or pleasure. In Greek philosophy the motif inheres the



spoke of himself as having three *personae* when he practiced law: he thought of himself as the defending attorney, the prosecuting attorney, and the judge (*tres personas unus sustineo . . . meam adversarii . . . iudicis*). But this is not how he used the term in the four-*personae* theory. These *personae* are not the roles that we play, but rather the forces that influence the roles that we play. This is made clear in section 120 when he compares the power and influence of the *personae* and says that human nature exerts the most powerful influence, and fortune (third *persona*) exerts the next most powerful influence (*Ad hanc autem rationem quoniam maximam vim natura habet, fortuna proximam, utriusque omnino habenda ratio est in deligendo genere vitae, sed naturae magis; multo enim et firmior est et constantior, ut fortuna non numquam tamquam ipsa mortalis cum immortalis natura pugnare videatur.*)<sup>48</sup> These forces, when properly considered and integrated, have the potential to provide a life of *decorum* and eminence.

The first *persona* is human nature, which each person shares with all other humans. More specifically, this *persona* refers to the rationality that elevates humans above the beast (I.107). We appropriate this *persona* when we think and act on the basis of rationality. For Cicero acting in the light of rational thought is the basis of the four basic virtues: justice, wisdom, greatness of spirit, moderation (I.11-14). Thus, when we live by these virtues we are living in accordance with our human nature. Cicero writes, ‘From this *persona* all morality and decorum are derived’ (I.107). Virtuous choices are made when we are acting according to our first *persona* or ‘being ourselves.’ The second *persona* is the uniqueness each individual possesses, distinguishing that person from all

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whole discussion of *eudamonia*. In the Hebrew Scriptures the theme is described in Proverbs 1-9.

other human beings. Such uniqueness is revealed in one's innate abilities and personality characteristics. Cicero gives several examples of characteristics that distinguish one person from another. He lists, for example, physical capacities such as speed, endurance, beauty, and personality traits such as wit, seriousness, austerity, shrewdness, humility, honesty, openness, and others. He notes that the list is endless: *innumerabiles aliae dissimilitudines sunt naturae morumque* (I.109). He shows how the unique abilities of great men enabled them to succeed in their career choices: Socrates, Hannibal, Pythagoras, Pericles.<sup>49</sup> Good choices are made when we act in accordance with our specific abilities as individual human beings. Thus, the first two *personae* concern our natural capacities as humans. We do well to live in accordance with these forces. They contain our potential for a life of *decorum* and eminence. This potential may not be realized, however; hence, there is a need for exhortation and encouragement. So Cicero exhorts his son to make choices in consideration of these two *personae*.

The next two *personae* do not concern human potential, but concern actual circumstances in life. These two *personae* concern what a person has already become in the course of life.<sup>50</sup> The third *persona* is the identity thrust upon us by fortune, fate, chance or changing circumstances. Examples offered include nobility by birth, wealth,

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<sup>48</sup> For a full discussion of the use of this term in classical antiquity see the excellent study Nedoncelle 1948. Also helpful are Cancik 1998b: 336-39 and De Lacy 1977: 163-65.

<sup>49</sup> Cicero's choice of certain individuals to illustrate this second role is particularly interesting, since they do not always illustrate the first role very well; that is, they do not demonstrate choices made on the basis of living according to the four virtues. Christopher Gill (1988: 181-83) has explored this problem and argues that Cicero's choices were based on the idea that they best illustrate men who have been successful in their career choices. The idea of success is important to Cicero, because it demonstrates that choices made on the basis of one's particular characteristics as an individual human lead to successful careers.

military or political office, or the lack of such things (115). The fourth *persona*, in contrast to the third, is one of our own choosing. This is the *persona* we become because of our own deliberate choices, whether they are wise or foolish. Cicero again offers examples: ‘some turn to philosophy, others to the civil law, and still others to oratory’ (115). He concludes, ‘but above all we must decide who and what manner of men we wish to be and what calling in life we would follow’ (117).

Christopher Gill provides an excellent summary of Cicero’s four-*personae* theory. He explains that if anyone would follow Cicero’s advice,

He must bear in mind that he is a *human being*, with all that this implies in terms of rational self-direction and moral capacities and inclinations. He must bear in mind that he is a human being *of a specific kind*, with distinctive talents and attitudes (a fact which has implications for the context, and the manner, in which his humanity should be expressed). He must bear in mind the *social status and position* in which he finds himself, which brings with it certain obligations, as well as both possibilities and limitations for the future development of his life. And, bearing all three factors in mind, he must choose his *métier and way of life*. This final *persona* has a dual role, serving both as the result of choice, the product of reflection on the other *personae*, and as a further ethical determinant, since a given *métier* and way of life entails specific ‘appropriate’ actions or *officia*.<sup>51</sup>

Cicero’s four-*personae* theory reveals certain similarities and differences with aspects of the social identity perspective. We will consider these using the method described earlier, whereby emic traces and etic models are related in a ‘hermeneutical circle.’ We may begin with a notable similarity. In particular, and perhaps most importantly, Cicero’s advice to persons who ‘strive to attain eminence’ (*in genere laudis excellere* [116]), read from the etic stance of the social identity perspective, suggests that certain persons in Cicero’s social world did express a similar ‘desire for positive distinctiveness.’ These persons sought not only *decorum* (110), but also glory (*gloria*

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<sup>50</sup> On this view that the first two *personae* are hypothetical and the other two are actual, see John Rist 1969: 186-189.

[116]), eminence (*laudis excellere* [116]), and maximum success (*maximeque in eo plerumque elaborant ii* [116]). Both the four-*personae* theory and the social identity perspective identify specific means to achieve such positive distinctiveness, but here the two theories appear to differ. Cicero seems much more concerned with the individual than the group. The individual's identity within the group is a major aspect of the social identity perspective, exploring not only individual mobility but also possibilities of corporate change. At this point it appears that Cicero's theory might be categorized as a *moi*-theory, whereas the social identity perspective is describing a *personne*-theory. This difference needs to be explored more fully.

Cicero appears to have not much advice about how corporate relationships influence one's choices. Aside from a brief discussion of sons following in their father's footsteps (116, 118), which he regards as typical (118), and a cursory mention of popular opinion (118), this aspect of identity formation is seemingly ignored by Cicero. The dominance of the individual over group is perhaps clearest in the opening segment, where Cicero writes (110), 'We must so act as not to oppose the universal laws of human nature, but, while safeguarding those, to follow the inclinations of our own particular nature. Even if other careers may seem better or more noble, we must still regulate our own pursuits by the standards of our own nature.' This motif is highlighted again and again. 'It is each man's duty to weigh well what are his own peculiar traits of character' (113). 'Everyone, therefore, should make a proper estimate of his own natural ability and show himself a critical judge of his own merits and defects' (114). Commentators have noted that this 'stress on the value of retaining one's own, particular, characteristics is especially striking' and that 'in this respect, Panaetius seems to show an almost modern

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<sup>51</sup> Gill 1988: 178.

interest in individual personality.’<sup>52</sup> The social identity perspective indicates, however, that relationships are elemental in the formation of identity and the desire for positive distinctiveness. Are the two theories incommensurate at this point? Are we perhaps missing something in our reading of Cicero? Can the social identity perspective provide insight into the emic traces of this text and offer a clearer perspective? Before considering this further, an additional difference between Cicero’s advice and the social identity perspective should be noticed. Recall that the social identity perspective is concerned with the conflictual elements of personal change, emphasizing the possibility of alienation, disruption, and conflict with others. Cicero again seems oblivious to this element. There is no discussion of how identity change might create tension or conflict in society. These two differences are in fact related, as we will see.

Later in *De Officiis* Cicero does consider the integration of individual and group. He says that there should be one objective for all persons: that the interests of the individual and the interests of the community as a whole be the same (*unum debet esse omnibus propositum, ut eadem sit utilitas unius cuiusque et universorum* [*De Off.* 3.26]). Is this element missing from the four-*personae* theory? Perhaps this harmony between individual and group is implicit in his definition of *decorum* as ‘nothing more than uniform consistency in the course of our life as a whole’ (*Omnino si quicquam est decorum, nihil est profecto magis quam aequabilitas cum universae vitae* [111]). A re-examination of the theory is necessary.

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<sup>52</sup> Gill 1988: 178, 179. Gill mentions several writers who read Cicero in this modern individualistic manner (see pages 179, 180). Gill 1993 shows that this stress on discovering one’s own characteristics and the normative quality of one’s own nature is a recurrent (albeit minor) theme in ethical theory, but finds its greatest emphasis here in Cicero’s *De Officiis*.

Recall that according to the first-*persona* the individual should choose in accordance with rationality, which advocates the social virtues of justice, wisdom, greatness of spirit, and moderation (I.11-14). Cicero claims, 'From this *persona* all morality and decorum are derived' (I.107). It is evident that the individual qualities of the second-*persona* are explicitly subordinated to the rational moral demands of the first *persona* by Cicero. 'We must so act as not to oppose the universal laws of human nature, but, while safeguarding those, to follow the inclinations of our own nature' (110). Thus, Gill correctly sees that, 'The expression of 'personality' (in my sense) does not lead to conflict with the demands of 'personhood' because the claims of the former are specifically subordinated to those of the latter.'<sup>53</sup> But does this suggest that there might be some tension or conflict between the tendencies of the first and second *personae*, and that the first must keep in check the second? No, if we give attention to Cicero's examples of individual characteristics expressed by the second *persona* and examples of particular choices made by the fourth *persona*, we see clearly that all such individuating characteristics are harmoniously related to social roles and responsibilities. Cicero does not conceive that one's peculiar traits might be in tension with existing social structures. On the basis of one's particular gifts, one might choose to practice law, rhetoric, or philosophy, or one might choose a military career (115-116). The extraordinary abilities and characteristics that Cicero describes are simply intensified forms of the standard abilities and characteristics that others possess to a lesser degree. For Cicero, then, a man's 'peculiar traits of character' in no way isolate or alienate him from society, but rather distinguish him within society, that is, render him notable, accomplished, and important. Cicero did not envision a life of *decorum* as anything other than a life fully

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<sup>53</sup> Gill 1988: 180.

integrated in society. It would not have occurred to Cicero to encourage his reader to pursue individuality outside the bounds of social convention or in creative and new ways that reshape social structures and ideals. The second *persona*, with all its uniqueness, is never cause for independence or trail blazing. It must be fully integrated in existing social patterns and norms. Gill correctly discerns that ‘if the conception of individuality presupposed in the discussion is examined closely, it amounts to little more, ultimately, than that of the individual’s actual or potential location in a social grid or class-structure. This rather minimal conception of personality seems to be linked with the fact that the person is often regarded, in the discussion, as the player of one or more socially defined roles.’<sup>54</sup> For Cicero characteristics that are singularly unique and that cannot be utilized in the standard career choices (law, rhetoric, philosophy) are not natural and not good. This type of individuality must not be encouraged, but instead should be eliminated. Elsewhere Cicero has said that the unique qualities that alienate one from society, such as bad habits and false beliefs, must be eliminated. The elimination of such vices would bring about a greater resemblance and uniformity among men (*Leg.* 1.29). ‘If bad habits and false beliefs did not twist the weaker minds and turn them in whatever direction they are inclined, no one would be so like his own self as all men would be like others (*Quodsi depravatio consuetudinum, si opinionum vanitas non imbecillitatem animorum torqueret et flecteret quocumque coepisset, sui nemo ipse tam similis esset quam omnes essent omnium*). Anthony Corbeill explains that, for Cicero, ‘Individuality, when understood as deviation from the natural norm (*depravatio consuetudinum*), betrays an evil nature. . . . A physical deformity damns its bearer for individuality.’<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Gill 1988: 171.

<sup>55</sup> Corbeill 1996: 34, 35.

Thus, we must conclude that social relationships are not only important to Cicero, but that they are thoroughly integrated into the four-*personae* theory and that it is inconceivable that Cicero would have considered his son (or anyone else following his advice) to have achieved *decorum*, success, and eminence outside mainstream society. The type of personal distinctiveness that Cicero advocates is not like the modern Western varieties. It must now be said that the four-*personae* theory cannot be categorized as a *moi*-theory at all, but must be considered a *personne*-theory. The etic modelling stance of the social identity perspective has clarified our emic reading of an ancient text. I believe that this reading has demonstrated the commensurability between the social identity perspective and Cicero's four-*personae* theory. I will now proceed to demonstrate that this commensurability goes well beyond Cicero's theory, to encompass several other ancient texts.

Identity Transformation and Reformation in the Hellenistic World: Confirming  
Commensurability

Morton Smith helpfully explains the difference between modern and ancient society as concerns the ability of an individual to change or transform his identity.<sup>56</sup>

The question [‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’] is common nowadays because family ties have loosened, opportunities for employment have proliferated, and even a lower-class child has a wide range of choices. In antiquity, family ties were strong, vocational training schools uncommon, opportunities few, and choices therefore limited. The average boy became what his father had been before him. This made cultural diversification difficult, but it also made for social and psychological stability. ‘Identity crises’ were rare.

This might suggest, then, that an attempt to discover ancient texts that discuss identity change is bound to fail and may be liable to eisegetical readings. While the second



possibility cannot be discounted, the first is not correct. Examples of identity transformation are not difficult to find in ancient texts. There are several examples of ancient individuals pondering and changing their identity. They may have been a 'rare breed' (*rarum genus* [Cicero *De Off.* 119]), but this fact is to our advantage, for, because they offered such unusual and interesting cases, their stories were remembered, repeated, and written down. In fact, such stories constitute a recurring motif in Greco-Roman literature and it will be possible to discuss only a few of these stories here. Morton Smith, after stating the foregoing, noted that although the ordinary boy had no means of changing his identity, boys with extraordinary strength, beauty, intellect, or spiritual ability might be given extraordinary opportunities to change their station and identity, becoming champion athletes, famous rhetors, or outstanding religious figures.<sup>57</sup> Recall too Cicero's statement about career choice and career change in *De Officiis* 119, 'There is one class of people that is very rarely met with: those who are endowed with marked natural ability or exceptional advantages in education or culture . . .' We will consider a few examples of the phenomenon of identity change, organizing them in two categories: those who achieve identity change through divine intervention and those who achieve identity change through socially scripted means. It is worth noting that these examples confirm our earlier interpretation of the four-*personae* theory: individuating traits did not isolate the person from society but brought greater prominence within society.

Furthermore, in addition to the phenomenon of identity change among the exceptional few, we will notice that many people, perhaps most people in the ancient world, gave a considerable amount of thought and energy to their identity, and can be

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<sup>56</sup> Smith 1978: 18.

<sup>57</sup> Smith 1978: 18-9.

regarded as desirous of achieving a more positive identity, a more honorable reputation. Such persons are not the rare breed who experience identity transformation; rather, they are the common people who are interested in winning greater honor among their peers and thereby reforming their identity. As such they too are relevant in our concern to determine the commensurability of the social identity perspective in the ancient Mediterranean world. We will begin this section by considering examples of identity change among the exceptional. Following this we will concern ourselves with the more common phenomenon of identity reformation among the masses.

#### Identity Transformation through Divine Intervention: Athletes

Unusual cases of identity change are often explained as examples of divine intervention. We might consider, for example, the case of athletes. Champion athletes usually were the sons of athletes or other elite persons. Pausanius tells of the family of Damaretus of Heraea. Damaretus won honors as a runner and a statue was erected for him. His son, Theopompus, and grandson, Theopompus the second, went on to achieve glory in athletics, winning victories at the Olympic Games in the pentathlon and wrestling contest (*Elis* II.10.4). Sometimes, however, an athlete emerged from humbler beginnings to achieve great fame. Such a person experienced a remarkable transformation of identity that could be explained only by divine intervention. Pausanias' tells of Glaucus of Carystus, who became a famous boxer (*Elis* 2.10.1-3). He was born the son of Demylyus and worked as a farmer, but on one particular day his father discovered his unusual physical strength and power in fixing the plough. Demylyus then took his son to the Olympic games, where, although inexperienced and unskilled in boxing, he won the

crown. The whole of Greece wondered at his talents. Glaucus went on to win other crowns at the Isthmian, Pythian, and Nemean games. He was honored with a statue and was buried by the Carystians on the eponymous Island of Glaucus. Why was Glaucus able to change his identity from farmer to athlete? The ancients explained it by creating a legend that Glaucus was actually son of the sea god.

The transformation of the son of Timosthenes, Theagenes the Thasian, another Olympian, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian hero, was explained in the same manner (Pausanias *Elis* 2.11.2). The Thasians said that Timosthenes was not the father of Theagenes; instead, a priest of the Thasian god Heracles was his father, for he took the form of Timosthenes and had intercourse with the mother of Theagenes. Pausanias went on to describe the identity transformation of Euthymus, who also changed from a common boy to an athletic hero (*Elis* 2.6.4). ‘Euthymus was by birth one of the Italian Locrians, who dwell in the region near the headland called West Point, and he was called the son of Astycles. Local legend, however, makes him the son, not of this man, but of the river Caecinus. . . . This river then, according to tradition, was the father of Euthymus.’ Physical beauty might also bring a transformation of identity, as occurred with Philip of Croton (Herodotus 5.47): ‘For the beauty of his person he received honors from the Egestans accorded to no other. They built a hero’s shrine by his grave and offered him sacrifices of propitiation.’

#### Identity Transformation through Socially Scripted Means: Education

In *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle suggests that persons should aim to achieve a positive identity (1214b7 [I.2.1-2]).

Περὶ δὴ τούτων ἐπιστήσαντας ἅπαντα τὸν δυνάμενον ξῆν κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ προαίρεσιν θέσθαι τινὰ σκοπὸν τοῦ καλῶς ξῆν, ἧτοι τιμὴν ἢ δόξαν ἢ πλοῦτον ἢ παιδεῖαν, πρὸς ὃν ἀποβλέπων ποιήσεται πάσας τὰς πράξεις, ὡς τό γε μὴ συντετάχθαι τὸν βίον πρὸς τι τέλος ἀφροσύνης πολλῆς σημεῖόν ἐστιν. Μάλιστα δὴ δεῖ πρῶτον ἐν αὐτῷ διορίσασθαι μήτε προπετῶς μήτε ῥαθύμως ἐν τίνι τῶν ἡμετέρων τὸ ξῆν εὖ καὶ τίνων ἄνευ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οὐκ ἐνδέχεται τοῦθ' ὑπάρχειν.

Having then established in regard to this subject that everyone capable of living according to his own choice must set some mark for noble living to aim at, either honor or reputation or wealth or education, which fixing his eyes on he performs all his actions, since not to arrange one's life with respect to some end is a sign of great foolishness, it is then necessary first to decide within oneself, neither hastily nor carelessly, in which of these things the good life consists, and what are the indispensable conditions for attaining it.

In this passage Aristotle lists a few of the standard means available to ancient persons for achieving a positive identity: honor, wealth, and education. In this section we will consider how the ability to obtain an education might be used to achieve positive distinction.

Only the wealthy could obtain an education. Indeed, Lucian (*The Dream* 1) tells us that the attainment of παιδεία took money, time, and great effort. 'Most believe that education requires great effort, much time, considerable expense, and a distinguished social position' (τοῖς πλείστοις οὖν ἔδοξεν παιδεία μὲν καὶ πόνου πολλοῦ καὶ χρόνου μακροῦ καὶ δαπάνης οὐ μικρᾶς καὶ τύχης δεῖσθαι λαμπρᾶς). For those who were able to obtain it, education provided a valuable mark of distinction. In his excellent study of the role of education in self-making among the Greeks and Romans Tim Whitmarsh explains, 'In Roman Greece, elite Greeks defined their superiority in terms of education; or rather, in terms of *paideia*, the Greek word that also connotes civilization and culture. They were the *pepaideumenoι*, the "educated", as opposed to the both the *idiōtai* (i.e. the

sub-elite) within Greek culture and the *barbaroi* (“barbarians”) without.<sup>58</sup> In a society that did not credential the educated with PhD degrees and was not oriented around book publication, proof of one’s education was demonstrated in public displays and public contests. Honor among the *πεπαιδευμενος* was achieved through a superior display of *παιδεία* in social interaction. Appearance, deportment, and speech, all combined to impress the public. Superior attainment of *παιδεία* could be demonstrated conclusively in the *agon*, the contest.<sup>59</sup> Thus, personal distinction was achieved through a favorable comparison with others. In the ancient Mediterranean world education was, according to Whitmarsh, ‘a means of constructing and reifying idealized identities for Greek and Roman.’<sup>60</sup> It is clear then that the unique abilities that characterised persons in this category did not alienate or isolate them from society, but provided them with a distinctive identity firmly embedded in standard social structures. Furthermore, the means of obtaining this *παιδεία* were also highly social. The essence of an education was imitation (*μίμησις*). Whitmarsh states, ‘Education constructs identity (in the sense of “sameness”) by editing the models that the student must emulate.’<sup>61</sup> The attempt to achieve positive distinction through education was not an attempt to create new social categories or establish a unique stance toward society. Indeed, it was important to perpetuate existing social hierarchies and reproduce ideal identities.

Lucian offers an excellent example of an identity transformed by education. Lucian, a Syrian from Samosata, describes his transformation from a common stone mason to an extraordinary rhetor in the autobiographical text *The Dream or The Life*

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<sup>58</sup> Whitmarsh 2001: 5. For a full study of mimesis in antiquity see now Halliwell 2002.

<sup>59</sup> Gleason 1995: xxiv. Bourdieu 1990: 32.

<sup>60</sup> Whitmarsh 2001: 16.

[Bios] of *Lucian*. In this *bios* Lucian does not tell of his birth (c. 120 C.E.), genealogy, or upbringing, and therefore we do not know whether he was Iranian or Semitic (the two major groups in Syria); instead, he begins the story of his life at the point his father and uncle are deciding that Lucian will follow the career of his uncle as a stone mason (1-2). ‘So, as soon as it seemed a suitable day to begin the trade, I was turned over to my uncle, and I was not greatly displeased with the arrangement, I assure you’ (3a). At this point Lucian is following the typical path of the common boy that he is, taking up a trade determined by his father and family. His first day on the job turns disastrous, however. After breaking a stone slab, he is beaten by his uncle and runs home in tears (3b-4). That night he has a dream in which two women appear to him. One, who is hardened and masculine, attempts to woo him toward the vocation of masonry; and the other, who is dignified, fair of face, and well-dressed, woos him toward education and a rhetorical vocation (5-6). The latter promises him a remarkable transformation of identity:

And I shall ornament your soul, which concerns you most, with many noble adornments: temperance, justice, piety, kindness, reasonableness, understanding, steadfastness, love of all that is beautiful, ardor towards all that is sublime, for these are the truly flawless jewels of the soul. . . . In a word, I shall speedily teach you everything that there is, whether it pertains to the gods or to man. You who are now the beggarly son of a nobody, who have entertained thought of a common trade, will in a short time inspire envy and jealousy in all men, for you will be honored and praised, you will be held in great esteem for the highest qualities and admired by men preeminent in lineage and in wealth. . . . If ever you go abroad, even on foreign soil you will not be unknown or inconspicuous, for I will attach to you such marks of identification that everyone who sees you will nudge his neighbor and point you out with his finger, saying, ‘there he is!’ . . .

On the other hand, if you turn your back on these men, so great and noble, upon glorious deeds and sublime words, upon a dignified appearance, upon honor, esteem, praise, precedence, power and offices, upon fame for eloquence and felicitations for wit, then you will put on a filthy tunic, assume a servile appearance, and hold bars and gravers and sledges and chisels in your hands, with your back bent over your work; you will be a groundling with groundling

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<sup>61</sup> Whitmarsh 2001: 93.

ambitions, altogether humble. You will never lift your head or conceive a single manly or liberal thought, and although you will plan to make your works well-balanced and well-shapen, you will not show any concern to make yourself well-balanced and sightly; on the contrary, you will make yourself a thing of less value than a block of stone.

Most classicist regard this story as a fictional account of an actual occurrence in the life of Lucian; that is, most believe that Lucian did experience some kind of identity transformation early in his life, but it is unclear what specific events occurred.<sup>62</sup> In *The Dream* he relates this experience in two popular literary forms: a ‘two roads’ type story and an allegory of a dream.<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, Lucian describes another personal transformation in his *Letter to Nigrinos*, his transformation into a philosopher after hearing Nigrinos speak. The letter introduces a dialogue in which Lucian’s friend exclaims to him, ‘you have changed!’ (μεταβέβλησαι; *Nigrinos* 1) and Lucian replies that he has been transformed, ‘once a slave, I am now free; once poor, now rich indeed; once witless and dull, now sane’ (ἀντὶ μὲν δούλου με ἐλεύθερον, ἀντὶ δὲ πένητος ὡς ἀληθῶς πλούσιον, ἀντὶ δὲ ἀνοήτου τε καὶ τετυφωμένου γενέσθαι μετρώτερον; *Nigrinos* 1).<sup>64</sup>

Apuleius provides another example of identity transformation through education. This particular example is interesting because it relates another recurring theme: self-examination. Self-examination is a necessary practice if one desires to construct a positive identity through *paideia*. This is illustrated by a well-known story about Socrates. Apuleius tells the story as follows.<sup>65</sup>

An non Socrates philosophus ultro etiam suasisse fertur discipulis suis, crebro ut, semet in speculo contemplantur, ut, qui eorum foret pulchritudine sibi complacitus, impendio procuraret, ne dignitatem corporis malis moribus

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<sup>62</sup> Jones 1986: 6-23; Robinson 1979: 1-4.

<sup>63</sup> Goldhill 2002: 67-69 explains the allegorical elements of the dream.

<sup>64</sup> See the helpful discussion in Cancik 1998: 31-36.

<sup>65</sup> Apuleius *Apology* 15. The same story is told by Plutarch *Moralia* 141D, Galen *Protrepticus* 8, and *Diogenes Laertius* 2.5.16.

dedecoraret, qui uero minus se commendabilem forma putaret, sedulo operam daret, ut uirtutis laude turpitudinem? Adeo uir omnium sapientissimus speculo etiam ad disciplinam morum utebatur.

Wasn't it Socrates, who, conversely, is said to have urged his pupils to observe themselves frequently in a mirror? Those who were pleased with their own beauty would surely take good care not to disfigure their bodily excellence through bad behaviour, whereas those who felt that beauty was not their strongest point would do all they could to earn praise for their virtue and so hide their ugliness. In this way the wisest man of all used even the mirror for his moral teaching.

The advice here about changing one's focus from beauty to virtue in order to hide one's weakness compares favorably with Tajfel's creative strategy of switching from a weaker to a stronger element of comparison. Apuleius' thoughts about the mirror and self-representation are suggestive. He continues his discussion of the value of self-examination with the story of Demosthenes, whose greatness as an orator was sharpened by consideration of his self image in the mirror.<sup>66</sup>

Demosthenes uero, primum dicendi artificem, quis est qui non sciat semper ante speculum quasi ante magistrum causas meditatam? Ita ille summus orator cum a Platone philosopho facundiam hausisset, ab Ebulide dialectico argumentationes edidicisset, nouissimam pronuntiandi congruentiam ab speculo petiuit.

And what about Demosthenes, that first-class expert in speaking? Everyone knows he always practiced his pleas before a mirror as if before a master. So this supreme orator derived his eloquence from Plato the philosopher and learned his argumentation from Ebulides the dialectician, but took to the mirror to give the finishing touch to his delivery.

The mirror is an important device for Apuleius, because it reveals one's image while also distinguishing between that image and the reality.<sup>67</sup> The mirror is a better representation than statues and paintings, not only because these images are produced by an 'other,' but also because they are static portraits. He writes (*Apology* 14),

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<sup>66</sup> Apuleius *Apology* 15. This is also a well-known story. It can be found repeated in Plutarch *Demosthenes* 11.1, *Moralia* 844E, Quintilian *Institutes* 11.3.68.

<sup>67</sup> This discussion is dependent on Too 1996.



For clay lacks vigor, stone lacks color, a picture lacks depth and all materials lack motion, which depicts likeness with excellent faithfulness. In a mirror, however, the image is amazingly reflected, endowed with both similarity and motion, compliant with any gesture of its human source. . . For what is fashioned from clay, poured in bronze, chiselled in stone, imprinted in wax, smeared with paint or created in likeness by any other kind of human art becomes an unlikeness in a brief period of time: and like a corpse, it possesses one motionless expression. To this extent the pictorial arts are surpassed in bringing out resemblances by the artful, smooth surface, that creative brilliance of the mirror.

Apuleius suggests that artistic representation murders its subjects, inducing not *rigor* but *rigor mortis*.<sup>68</sup> The mirror allows the subject to retain some control over her image.

Nevertheless the mirror-image is not reality; it does produce various distortions. A convex mirror shrinks its objects; a concave mirror enlarges them; some mirrors produce double images; and all mirrors reverse left and right (*Apology* 16). These distortions suggest to Apuleius that the mirror represents its subject in much the same way that a text represents its author. This mirror and text comparison is a well-known motif in ancient literature, going back at least to the fourth century B.C.E., and Apuleius makes good use of the tradition in order to suggest that his own literary productions are a 'poetics of self-representation.'<sup>69</sup> Like the mirror, texts reflect persons better than statues and paintings because they are more nuanced and suggestive, but, also like the mirror, they can distort the author's image (*Apology* 34, 91). He notes, with some humor, that erotic poets are not necessarily lascivious (*Apology* 9-11). Texts are like mirrors in that they reveal their author to a reader, but also because they mask the reality of the author with various distortions. In *Florida* 16 Apuleius, who is being honored by the Carthaginians by the

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<sup>68</sup> Too 1996: 135.

<sup>69</sup> On the mirror as a metaphor for literary texts see Too1996: 306, fn. 27. He lists Isocrates *Evagoras* 8-10, Aristides *Sarapis* 45.1-14, Dio *Olympian Oration* 12.62-72, Lucian *Quomodo historia conscribenda sit* 8, Pindar *Nemean* 7.14, Donatus *De Comoedia* 5.1, Cicero *In Pisonem* 71, Pliny *Epistles* 8.18.1, Apuleius *De Deo Socratis* 17.158.

creation of a statue in his image, proposes that a second image be created. He offers his acceptance speech as a self-portrait. He will have it published and made known around the world.

I will also intone my thanks more fully in a piece written for the dedication of my statue. And I will instruct that book to go through all the provinces, and to advertise my praises of your benefaction in every other place throughout the whole world and to continue to do so for all time to come.

Apuleius is not unique in his attitude toward the discursive construction of self-identity. The idea recurs throughout Greek and Roman texts. It is not possible nor necessary to continue with examples of the role of education in identity transformation among the elite.<sup>70</sup> These have established the point. We now proceed to consider identity reformation among the common people.

#### Identity Reformation through the Honor Contest

The most basic strategy available to every person in the ancient world for achieving a positive identity was by winning honor. Φιλοτιμία, love of honor or distinction, appears to have been a powerful and pervasive aspect of ancient society.

Plutarch (*Moralia* 546C) described the intensity of φιλοτιμία with potent metaphors:

When others are praised, our love of honor [φιλοτιμία] causes the urge for self-praise to burst forth; it is seized by a lust or urge for glory that stings and tingles like an almost unquenchable itch, especially if a person is being praised for something in which he is our equal or inferior. For just as those who are starving find that the sight of other people eating food intensifies and aggravates their hunger, so the praise of near-equals inflames the rivalry of those who cannot control their appetite for honor.

This desire for honor cut across all social boundaries, for everyone was concerned to achieve or affirm honor in daily social interaction. The 'honor contest' or *agon* is a well

known social institution in the ancient Mediterranean world.<sup>71</sup> Once again it should be noted that the desire to win honor and establish positive distinction was not a desire for solitary distinction, individuality, or uniqueness; but, instead, was a desire to be seen by others as abundantly possessing valued traits and characteristics. Seneca (*Epistles* 102.8) defined honor or distinction as ‘the favorable opinion of good men. . . . Distinction is not simply a matter of pleasing a single individual’ (*claritas autem ista bonorum virorum secunda opinio est. . . . sic nec claritas uni bono placuisse*). Furthermore, the honor contest brought honor not only to the victor but also to the group he represented.

Cicero describes these contests (*De Finibus* 5.22.61):

With what earnestness they pursue their rivalries. How fierce their contests. What exultation they feel when they win, and what shame when they are beaten. How they dislike reproach. How they yearn for praise. What labors will they not undertake to stand first among their peers. How well they remember those who have shown them kindness and how eager to repay it.

Cicero’s word may well be true of the powerful elite contesting for honor, but in this context he was not speaking of politicians, rhetoricians, or wealthy businessmen, but of young boys. This illustrates, then, that honor was sought by all—young and old, slave and free, male and female. Inscriptions reveal that slaves and freedman were concerned with honor. The epitaph of the slave Iucundus reads ‘As long as he lived, he was a man. . . . As long as he lived, he lived honorably.’ (*us vixit vir fuit . . . quan dius vixit honeste vixit*).<sup>72</sup> Horace laments that ‘glory drags along the lowly no less than the high-born’ (*Satires* 1.6.23: *sed fulgente trahit constrictos gloria curru non minus ignotos generosis*).

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<sup>70</sup> For those interested in pursuing this theme further, Maud Gleason’s 1995 study of the famous rhetors Favorinus and Polemo is a good place to begin.

<sup>71</sup> The best treatment of this institution is Carlin Barton 2001. See also Barton 1994, 1999, Lendon 1997, and Malina 1993: 28-62.

Valerius Maximus (8.14.5) notes, concerning soldiers, 'There is no status so low that it cannot be touched with the sweetness of glory' (*nulla est tanta humilitas, quae dulcedine gloriae non tangatur*). Cicero (*De partitione oratoria* 26.91-92), again, states, 'There is no one so wild as not to be greatly moved, if not by the desire for those things honorable in themselves, then by the fear of reproach and dishonor' (*Nemo est enim tam agrestis, quem non, si ipsa honesta minus, contumelia tamen et dedecus magnopere moveat.*).

Barton says, 'The plebian was as preoccupied with honor as the patrician, the client as the patron, the woman as the man, the child as the adult.'<sup>73</sup>

The means and devices for attaining honor and avoiding shame differ from one social group to another. As an extreme example, some social contexts might authorize physical violence as an appropriate means of winning honor; other contexts might regard physical violence as shameful behavior. Thus, Seneca suggests that physical violence might be appropriate among the lower classes, but it was definitely not an appropriate choice for the elite aristocrats, for whom the contest sought to reveal one's superior attainment of *paideia* (*De Clementia* 1.7.3-4). The specific social factors that might cause a person to blush may differ from one society to another, and from one person to another, but Seneca believes that all persons are liable to blush on account of shame. He writes (*Epistles* 11.2),

Even very constant men, when in the public eye, break out in a sweat, just as if they were fatigued and overheated. The knees of others, when they are about to speak, begin to tremble. I know of some whose teeth chatter, whose tongues falter, whose lips quiver. Training and experience can never eradicate this propensity. Nature exerts her power and by this weakness makes herself felt even by the strongest men. I know that the blush, too, is like this, spreading suddenly

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<sup>72</sup> From *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, volume 6.2, no. 6308 and taken from Joshel 1992: 90. For other slave inscriptions concerned with honor see Joshel 1992: 46, 56, 90-91, 117-18, 120-21. See too Lendon 1997: 27, 97.

<sup>73</sup> Barton 2001: 11.

over the faces of even the most distinguished men. While the young are the most likely to blush, . . . nevertheless the blush touches even the veteran and the old.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate the commensurability of the social identity perspective and ancient Mediterranean society. Commensurability has been demonstrated in several texts. Ancient persons, both common and elite, were concerned about establishing a positive identity. We have seen that a positive identity meant an identity that was highly regarded by others. Personal identity was thoroughly social in ancient Mediterranean society. Positive distinctiveness never resulted in isolation or alienation or conflict, but always resulted in eminence and glory within social groups. The elite and the exceptional might realize a transformation of identity through either a purported miraculous intervention of a deity or by working hard to obtain an education. The common person could only hope for a reformation of identity in terms of winning greater honor and building a reputation among peers. The social identity perspective is therefore relevant for understanding all ancient persons, elite or common. In the final part of this thesis we will apply the social identity perspective to selected Pauline texts in order to discern what apostolic identity Paul sought to obtain either by transformation or reformation.

Part Four  
The New Answer

Paul the Spiritual Guide

## Chapter Eight

### The Apostolic Self-Identity of Paul in 1 Thessalonians

#### Paul the Spiritual Guide for Spiritual Battle

##### Introduction

It has become customary for biblical scholars to study Paul's letters using insight from rhetorical studies. Many scholars claim that Paul was cognizant of and made use of ancient rhetorical techniques in writing his letters.<sup>1</sup> Other scholars claim that Paul's letters can be studied using modern rhetorical approaches and that it is not necessary to adopt an ancient perspective.<sup>2</sup> In this study I will adopt the rhetorical approach of the social identity perspective as a means of studying Paul's persuasive discourse in 1 Thessalonians.<sup>3</sup>

According to Reicher and Hopkins, the major advocates of this discursive rhetorical theory, persuasion occurs when an author engages with environmental stimuli, reconstructing the social situation and redescribing all relevant identities in such a way as to provide a positive distinction for ingroup members, thereby motivating or making

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<sup>1</sup> See any of the commentaries by Ben Witherington for examples of this perspective.

<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm Wuellner is one of the leading advocates of this position. The literature on this issue is voluminous. For a brief but illuminating historical survey, see Wuellner 1995. For full discussion of the different perspective, Porter and Stamps 1997 is a good place to begin.

<sup>3</sup> This is not the first study of 1 Thessalonians from a social identity perspective. Esler 2001 is a thorough study of the Thessalonian letters from this perspective. This chapter is the first study of 1 Thessalonians using the rhetorical approach of the social identity perspective.

salient ingroup identity, behavior and perceptions. Thus, Paul's literary ability to persuade his Thessalonian converts to think and act in conformity to Christian norms depends upon his ability to reconstruct and reinterpret the specific social situation they inhabit and characterize the specific identities of all relevant persons in that situation, including, and perhaps especially, his own. In the following study I will, first, identify the basic social categories Paul uses to give meaning to the situation in Thessalonica, second, examine Paul's reconstruction of that situation, and, third, describe Paul's reconstructed literary apostolic self-identity.

### Constructing Social Categories in Thessalonica

In the social categorization process an author cognitively partitions the social environment into meaningful units. Identity occurs when persons are oriented on the basis of these categorizations. We will briefly consider Paul's spatial and temporal categorizes and their relation to his construction of basic identity categories. Central to Paul's categorization process in 1 Thessalonians is a uniquely Christ-oriented temporal framework that reconstructs the values and dimensions of the social situation. It is significant that this situation occurs within one shared social space. Within these spatial and temporal categories Paul constructs all relevant ingroup and outgroup identities.

### Temporal Categories

Paul's interpretation of the situation is constructed within a three-fold temporal framework that begins with the conversion of the Thessalonians and ends with the return of Jesus to earth. In between these two points the Thessalonians face a spiritual battle in



which they must live a life that is pleasing to God. This temporal orientation is seen throughout the letter, but is presented in introductory and summary fashion near the beginning of the letter (1:9-10): 'You turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.' Paul's prayers throughout the letter highlight this temporal orientation. In Paul's first prayer of thanks for the Thessalonians (1:3), the three-fold frame may be implicit: 'We always give thanks to God . . . remembering . . . your work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.' The focus here is on their present work, labor, and endurance in the midst of difficulties; but, he notes that the inspiration for their present faithfulness is their orientation toward the past, when they first responded to the Gospel in faith, and toward the future as they hope for the return of Jesus. Thus, present faithfulness is motivated by an orientation that draws on the past and the future. This suggests that Paul will continue to remind them of this three-fold temporal orientation in order to continue inspiring them to faithful living. Each of the remaining prayers gives attention to at least one of these temporal points. The second prayer gives thanks for their conversion in the past (2:13): 'We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you.' The next prayer is concerned about their present faithfulness (3:10-13): 'Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore what is lacking in your faith. . . . May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another.' This prayer concludes with the third point of the temporal framework (3:13): 'May he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before

our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.’ The last prayer in the letter focuses on this final aspect (5:23): ‘May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Thus, Paul’s concern for the Thessalonians, which motivated him to write the letter, is expressed in prayers that reveal a temporal orientation. He seeks to inspire faithfulness in the present distress by reminding them of their past and enlightening them about their future. This temporal framework is uniquely God or Christ-oriented. It begins when the Thessalonians ‘turned to God’ (1:10), which is also described as the time that God chose them through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the preaching of Paul (1:5), and it ends with the return of Jesus Christ (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-5:11). Its present aspect concerns living a life that is pleasing to God (2:12).

In Paul’s construction, the Christ-orientation of this temporal framework serves to highlight two aspects of the situation in Thessalonica. First, it emphasizes the spiritual quality of the battle they are facing. The general nature of the present situation they face is described by Paul as ‘persecution’ or ‘affliction’ (1:6; 3:3-4; ὀλιψις; cf. 2:14) and a ‘battle,’ ‘struggle,’ or ‘contest’ (2:2, ἀγών). But the uniquely Christian framework reveals that the battle is spiritual in nature and that it is ultimately a battle between God and Satan (2:18). Therefore, Paul can identify the people in the struggle as either the children of light or the children of darkness (5:5). Given this viewpoint, Paul explains that such conflict is to be expected (3:4). Second, it highlights the continuity of victory in the battle. Each of the three temporal points is seen as one aspect in the overall plan of God for the life of the Thessalonians. It was God who chose to save the Thessalonians in the

past (1:6) and it is God who will maintain the Thessalonians' faithfulness until the return of Jesus: 'The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this' (5:24). Nevertheless, this continuity is being threatened by incidents occurring in Thessalonica. And it is this challenge that rests at the heart of the letter.

The challenge threatens not only their future faithfulness, but also the meaningfulness of their past conversion. Paul's own identity is revealed in this context of a threat to the Thessalonians continuity in the faith. He was instrumental in their conversion (1:6). He will also be instrumental in their present and future faithfulness to the Lord (4:1-2). Paul's recognition of his responsibility in this situation is seen when he writes, 'When I could no longer bear it, I sent [Timothy] to find out about your faith. I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor had been in vain' (3:5). Upon receiving the good news that the Thessalonians were still faithful, Paul exclaims, 'we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the Lord' (3:8). In this statement Paul reveals that his own identity is integrally related to the Thessalonians' identity as faithful followers of the Lord. The question of continuity has led us to the question of identity, to which we now turn.

### Identity Categories

An analysis of the letter in regard to the categorization of relevant identities reveals that Paul constructs two basic groups: an ingroup of followers of Jesus and an outgroup of unbelievers. Within the ingroup there is a subcategory of a more intimate ingroup consisting of Paul, the Thessalonian believers, and God. We will consider first the most basic ingroup—all believers. Throughout the letter the ingroup is given a highly

positive distinctiveness in contrast to the wholly negative identity of the outgroup. This positive/negative distinctiveness is possible only within the uniquely Christian temporal orientation, however. The ingroup obtains a positive identity because they experience the love and salvation of God, whereas the outgroup obtains a negative identity because they experience the wrath and condemnation of God (e.g., 5:9). Without this Christian orientation, the situation might be interpreted very differently.

The most basic identifying feature of the ingroup is their positive relationship with God, which is marked by their faith in Jesus Christ and their unity as a group in God. They are referred to as 'believers' (1:7; 2:10, 13) and as existing 'in [ἐν] God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (1:1; cf. 2:14). Paul constructs this ingroup in such a way as to accentuate its unity and cohesion 'in' God. The unity and the strength of their bond is emphasized not only by the repeated use of the kinship terms 'brothers' (18 times) and 'God the Father' (1:3; 3:11, 13), but also by the fact that they experience the same hostility from the outgroup (1:6; 2:2; 2:14; 3:3-5) and that they imitate one another (1:6-8; 2:14). The practice of imitating one another strengthens the group bond by stereotyping perception and behavior so that 'the self comes to be perceived as categorically interchangeable with other ingroup members.'<sup>4</sup> If these positive qualities of the ingroup become salient in the reading of the letter, they will serve to influence the perceptions and behavior of the Thessalonians, encouraging them to remain faithful and steadfast in the midst of persecution.

The most basic identifying feature of the outgroup is their antagonism toward God, which is marked by their hostility toward the preaching of the gospel and a life of obedience to Jesus (1:6; 2:2, 15-18; 3:3-5). Paul repeatedly used highly negative terms to

characterize members of this group. He speaks of them as ‘outsiders’ (4:12, τοὺς ἕξω) and as the objects of God’s wrath (1:10; 2:16). He depicts their opposition to God as stereotypical behavior. The same hostile behavior is seen in Thessalonica (1:6), Philippi (2:2), Judea (2:14), and is to be expected as the norm for outgroup members (3:4). There is a ‘normative fit’ to the behavior of the Thessalonians’ opponents, identifying them with the wider group of forces hostile to God. In this way, outgroup members also imitate one another and display a unity of purpose and nature. By characterizing the outgroup in this way, Paul may influence the ingroup to perceive them similarly and behave towards them as he does.

Paul constructs these two groups in stark contrast to one another (1:6; 2:2, 15). Ingroup members are children of the light and of the day, whereas outgroup members are children of the darkness and of the night (5:5). God leads the activity of the ingroup members (2:4), whereas Satan leads the activity of the outgroup members (2:18). Fabio Sani observes that this practice of constructing identities as strict opposites is typical in persuasive discourse. ‘At an intergroup level, we can see what social groups want to be and do normally contrasts with what other social groups want to be and do. The identity that a certain group claims, in order to act in a certain way, is denied, jeopardised, and rebutted by other groups, and *vice versa*.’<sup>5</sup> In order to accomplish this stark contrast Paul accentuates intergroup differences and intragroup similarities and attenuates intergroup similarities and intragroup differences. Paul’s construction has an unreal quality and it is likely that the actual social situation that the Thessalonians faced was much more muddled and confused than the situation Paul constructs.

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<sup>4</sup> Haslam 2001: 44.

<sup>5</sup> Sani 1996: 94.

The Thessalonians are members of the ingroup of believers, as such they are vitally related to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. But they are also intimately related to Paul, and this fact reveals the existence of another ingroup category in the letter. The introduction reveals that Paul is constructing a subcategory, a smaller ingroup within the larger ingroup of believers. He sees himself, the Thessalonians, and God as forming an intimate relationship. Vanhoye notes this 'triangular' relation among the three: 'On a déjà là une relation triangulaire: Paul (1) s'adresse aux Thessaloniens (2) aimés de Dieu (3).'<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the literary style of the thanksgiving unites the three persons—first person plural ('we', 'our'), second person plural ('you', 'your'), and third person singular ('God')—in the closest of literary bonds. For example, the thanksgiving begins, '*We* always give thanks to *God* for all of *you*' (1:2). This unity continues throughout the section: 'knowing *your* election, brothers—beloved by *God*—because *our* gospel came to *you*' (1:4-5). It is perhaps clearest in the statement 'you became imitators of us and of the Lord' (1:6), for not only do we find the three literary persons, but the term 'imitators' emphasizes purposeful similarity and stereotypicality between members of the group, as does the term 'examples' (1:7). This subgroup has its origins in Paul's initial visit to Thessalonica.

It is within this subgroup that Paul's apostolic self-identity emerges as salient. When describing his initial visit to Thessalonica Paul says 'as apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you' (2:7). It is not relevant for our purpose to consider whether Paul's apostolic status was salient while he was in Thessalonica during that visit. What is relevant is that at the time Paul wrote this letter he was conscious of that identity in his relationship to the Thessalonian believers. That identity controls his behavior and his

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<sup>6</sup> Vanhoye 1986: 6.

perceptions. It is as an apostle of Christ that he writes to them, providing authoritative guidance and instruction for them as followers of Jesus (4:1-2; 5:12). Thus, Paul writes to the Thessalonians conscious of his apostolic identity.

### Spatial Categories

It is important to note that this ingroup/outgroup division between believers and nonbelievers was not a clean and tidy physical separation whereby the two groups were isolated and maintained little interaction. The ingroup did not establish a separate community, as some philosophical groups did (Epicureans). The ingroup lived ‘in God’ (1:1), but they also continued to live in Thessalonica. They were ‘brothers’ to one another (2:1), but they did not form a physically separate household. This spatial proximity intensified the conflict for the Thessalonian believers (4:12). The deviant minority could not simply escape the hostility of the majority. In the letter Paul never advocates a flight from the present distress. The minority will have to suffer the full brunt of the majority’s strategies to pressure them into conformity. Having examined the basic temporal, spatial, and identity categories that Paul adopted to construct the situation in Thessalonica, we can now examine in greater detail the specific aspects of that situation. Following the method we explained in part two of this work, we will make use of emic and etic stances in a dialectical fashion to clarify the situation in Thessalonica.

### Constructing the Social Situation in Thessalonica—Spiritual Battle

In 1 Thessalonians Paul offers his own construction/interpretation of the situation facing the Thessalonian believers in contrast to and in refutation of other interpretations,

which threaten to influence the followers of Jesus and motivate them to misperception and misbehavior. Paul's construction, as we have seen, is based on his own uniquely Christ-oriented view of temporal and spatial categories of thought. In brief, according to Paul, the situation the Thessalonians are facing is a spiritual battle, involving supernatural cosmic forces. Satan is attempting to hinder and thwart the work of God in Thessalonica, but God will in the future intervene to destroy the opposition and rescue the faithful. In the mean time the believers must remain faithful to God. We begin with a detailed consideration of the spatial dimension and how this influences our understanding of the situation in Thessalonica.

#### Thessalonica as Face-to-Face Society

The spatial and social organization of ancient Thessalonica reveals the face-to-face quality of life in the city. Michael Vickers' studies of the city planning of Hellenistic Thessalonica have uncovered and revealed the basic architectural shape of the city. He shows that the ancient walled city was laid out in a grid pattern, with roads running parallel to or perpendicular to the main street. 'Blocks of approximately 100 m. x 50 m. would give two rows of four houses in each block; i.e., slightly smaller than those which probably existed at Antioch and Laodicea and much the same as those of Damascus and Beroea.'<sup>7</sup> In addition to the main streets, he has identified locations for the agora, gymnasium and stadium, sacred area, and Serapeum, and many other civic buildings. The populace, estimated to range from 65,000-80,000,<sup>8</sup> was tightly crowded within the city's walls. One century before Paul's arrival in the city Cicero lived in exile here (58 BCE)

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<sup>7</sup> Vickers 1972: 160.

<sup>8</sup> Malherbe 2000: 301.



and described the masses of merchants trafficking in and out of the city (*Att.* 3.14). Like many other ancient cities, cramped *insulae* necessitated a life spent in the public spaces—public latrines, temples, shrines, baths, gymnasia, shops, etc. MacMullen writes, ‘more time would naturally be spent among one’s neighbors, the more intercourse and friendliness, the more gossip and exchange of news and sense of fraternity.’<sup>9</sup>

In such face to face societies there were various levels of belonging and therefore various notions of personal and social identity. At a higher level of abstraction the entire city could be regarded as one large ingroup, especially in view of rival cities, which represent rival outgroups. At a lower level of abstraction the family was the basic ingroup. A person’s perceptions, attitudes, and behavior were influenced by the particular identity that was salient. When an identity at a high level of abstraction became salient, such as being a member of a city, then one’s perception and attitudes toward one’s neighbors in the city were generally positive, because they were other members of the ingroup; however, when an identity at a low level of abstraction became salient, such as being a member of a household, then one’s perceptions and attitudes towards one’s neighbors in the city were generally negative, because they were members of various outgroups. Either identity could become salient depending on the specific situation. A person might have a very positive identity as a member of a highly regarded household, but a negative identity as a member of a poorly regarded city.

For nearly all persons in the ancient Mediterranean the primary ingroup, that is, the ingroup identity that was nearly always salient, was the household, the *familia* or οἶκος. When this ingroup identity was salient, nearly all other persons were regarded negatively, with suspicion and caution. Esler notes, ‘Among one’s kin there are strong

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<sup>9</sup> MacMullen 1974: 62-63.

bonds of affection, co-operation and sharing of available resources, . . . while toward outsiders (except those regarded as friends) there is an attitude of suspicion and competition.<sup>10</sup> Even within the household there were varying levels of belonging; thus, the strongest bonds are blood bonds, as Bartchy notes, ‘the tightest unity of loyalty and affection was experienced in the sibling group of brothers and sisters, rather than in the emotional bonds of marriage.’<sup>11</sup> The predominant social value was honor and it was the responsibility of the male members of the household to maintain or win honor for themselves and the household. Malina explains,<sup>12</sup>

Honor is always presumed to exist within one’s own family of blood, that is, among all those one has as blood relatives. A person can always trust his blood relatives. Outside that circle, all people are presumed to be dishonorable, guilty, if you will, unless proved otherwise. It is with all these others that one must play the game, engage in the contest, put one’s own honor and one’s family honor on the line.

Behavior outside the household brought either honor or shame on the household, and outsiders were quick to notice and exploit shameful behavior. In Terence’s play *The Brothers* (91-92) Demea complains to Micio about the disgrace that Micio’s son Aeschines has brought on the household, because of his activities the previous evening: ‘the whole town is shouting that this was a completely disgraceful act! Scores of people told me this on my way here, Micio. It’s on everyone’s lips.’ Behavior within the household also brought honor or shame on the household. In particular, harmony among the members was highly valued.<sup>13</sup> Dio Chrysostom explains that such harmony must be practiced by husband and wife, master and slave (*Discourses* 38.15-16): ‘Although their safety depends not only on the like-mindedness of master and mistress, but also on the

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<sup>10</sup> Esler 2000: 145.

<sup>11</sup> Bartchy 1999: 68.

<sup>12</sup> Malina 1993: 38.

obedience of the servants; yet both the bickering of master and mistress and the wickedness of the servants have wrecked many households.' Discord within the household was shameful and brought dishonor on the head of the household (*paterfamilias*). So Plutarch writes, 'A glorious thing it is for you Philip to be inquiring about the harmony of the Athenians . . . while you let your household be full of quarrelling and dissension' (*How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* 70C). And Melanthius shames the orator Gorgias, saying, 'This fellow gives us advice about concord, and yet in his own household he has not prevailed upon himself, his wife and maidservant, three persons only, to live in harmony. . . . A man therefore ought to have his household well harmonized who is going to harmonize state, forum, and friends' (Plutarch *Advice to Bride and Groom* 144BC).

Membership within the city was also valued and civic harmony was highly desirable. Competition with other cities for honor brought one's identity as a member of a city into salience. Social harmony was one of the most important values in the Greek cities of the Roman world and devotion to such harmony was requisite among its citizens.<sup>14</sup> Dio Chrysostom highlights the values of civic harmony (*Or.* 48.4, 5, 6, 9, 15-16):

If you do this, you will be bringing honor upon yourselves, since the greatest honor a city has is the praise its citizens receive. . . . If ever a quarrel arises and your adversaries taunt you with having wicked citizens, with dissension, are you not put to shame? . . . For truly it is a fine thing and profitable for one and all alike to have a city show itself of one mind, on terms of friendship with itself and one in feeling, united in conferring both censure and praise, bearing for both classes, the good and the bad, a testimony in which each can have confidence. Yes, it is a fine thing, just as it is with a well-trained chorus, for men to sing together one and the same tune, and not, like a bad musical instrument, to be discordant, emitting two kinds of notes and sounds as a result of twofold and

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<sup>13</sup> Xenophon *Memorabilia* 4.4.16

<sup>14</sup> MacMullen 1972: 62. Sheppard 1984.

varied nature. ... Do you imagine there is any advantage in market or theatre or gymnasia or colonnades or wealth for men who are at variance? These are not the things which make a city beautiful, but rather self-control, friendship, mutual trust. ... Is it not disgraceful that bees are of one mind and no one has ever seen a swarm that is factious and fights against itself, but, on the contrary, they both work and live together. ... Is it not disgraceful, then, that human beings should be more unintelligent than wild creatures which are so tiny and unintelligent?

Ramsay MacMullen explains further, 'They competitively asserted their status against the patriots of neighboring cities through the acknowledged claims of material amenities—a grander temple, a grander amphitheater.' He continues, 'Conspicuous, too, were the means of advertising one's claims to particular honor for some particular service. ... What most magnified honor, however, was the degree to which city life was lived publicly, in the open. Thus, whatever one was or did, everyone knew at once.'<sup>15</sup>

Thessalonica, the capital of the Macedonian Province, was just such a competitive city. Livy describes the city as *urbs celeberrima* (Livy 45.29.9). Various Greek inscriptions and coins from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE reflect civic pride, describing Thessalonica as the 'mother of all Macedonia', 'chief of Macedonia', and 'Metropolis.'<sup>16</sup> Such descriptive phrases were not taken lightly, for competition among Macedonian cities for benefactions and honor was great, as Holland Hendrix has shown.<sup>17</sup> The Greek cities sought to win the favorable attention of Rome in order to obtain benefactions to improve their city. It was important for city administrators to find means of honoring their Roman benefactors in order 'to attract and sustain influential Romans' commitments and favors.'<sup>18</sup> One means of honoring the Roman benefactors was to give them a distinction of honor near the gods of the city. 'Honors for the gods and Roman

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<sup>15</sup> MacMullen 1972: 62.

<sup>16</sup> R. M. Evans 1968: 4.

<sup>17</sup> Hendrix 1984.

<sup>18</sup> Hendrix 1984: 253.

benefactors expressed a hierarchy of benefaction extending from the divine sphere into human affairs.<sup>19</sup> Hendrix has shown that the Thessalonians sought to win favor for their city by honoring Rome through zealous promotion of the imperial cult. The Thessalonians honored the emperor as a god.<sup>20</sup> During the reign of Augustus they built a temple for the emperor where the people of the city could express the appropriate praise and honors.<sup>21</sup> As the Augustan dynasty continued and new emperors ascended the throne, the Thessalonians' faithfulness to the imperial cult proved to be an 'ongoing cultivation of the new ruler's confidence in the city's loyalty to him and his successors.'<sup>22</sup> It was important that the whole city together honor the Roman benefactor, for many persons were entirely dependent on such benefactions for survival.<sup>23</sup> Faithfulness to these religious rites maintained political and economic stability. Abandonment of these practices was considered utterly shameful and potentially dangerous. Such behavior could ruin the city, bringing economic hardship as well as physical dilapidation. The first century C.E. poet Horace warned (*Odes* 3.6),

You hold empire because you walk humbly before the gods. From this everything should start and to this refer every outcome. The gods, because they were neglected, have imposed much suffering on the sorrowing West.

Turning away from the civic religion was not tolerated, yet this is exactly what the Thessalonian believers did under the guidance of Paul. It is in this context that we must read Paul's statement, 'you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven' (1 Thess. 1:10).

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<sup>19</sup> Hendrix 1984: 336.

<sup>20</sup> Hendrix 1984: 108 says, 'Thessalonica acclaimed Julius a god.'

<sup>21</sup> Hendrix 1984: 62.

<sup>22</sup> Hendrix 1984: 337.

### Conversion in a Face-to-Face Society

In his classic study of conversion in the ancient Mediterranean world, A.D. Nock showed that earliest Christianity was characterized by an exclusivity such that the convert was totally alienated from his former life and identity. He emphasized that a person *converted* to an exclusive faith (i.e., Christianity) whereas one merely *adhered* to a non-exclusive religious group (e.g., Isis, Orpheus, Mithra).<sup>24</sup> Christian conversion was, then, an unusual kind of religious persuasion, involving a complete disruption of one's former life and a dramatic change in one's identity. Turning to God from idols involved the rejection of the established social values and beliefs pervading one's social networks in the city and household. It meant the rejection of certain roles and responsibilities typically carried on within the household and city, specifically those connected to civic and domestic religion. It must be remembered that religion, piety, or worship of the gods in the ancient Mediterranean world never stood alone as an independent entity; rather, it was always embedded in relevant social structures, such as the household and city.<sup>25</sup> For example, Cicero, who lived in exile in Thessalonica one hundred years prior to Paul's visit, describes the integrity of domestic religion: 'What is more holy, more protected by every religion, than the household of every citizen? Here are altars, hearths, the divine *Penates*. Here holy shrine, worship, and cult are united' (*de Domo sua* 41.109). The *paterfamilias* was responsible for perpetuating traditional family rites inherited from the

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<sup>23</sup> See R. Riesner 1998: 376; R.M. Evans 1968: 34-63.

<sup>24</sup> Nock 1933: 7. The point is that adherence to one or more of the mystery religions did not exclude one from domestic or political religion and piety, dislocate one from social groups, or disrupt the harmony of household and civic life, and deconstruct one's identity; but conversion to Christianity involved all of these. Despite this insight into Christian conversion in ancient society, Nock continued to define conversion in overtly psychological and introspective way: 'by conversion we mean the reorientation of the soul of an individual' (p. 7).

ancestors, including the worship of the *Lares* and *Penates* and other sacred family obligations (*sacra familiaria*). Cato the Elder reveals that those who lived in the countryside gathered together as whole households (*familiae*) for religious rituals involving the protection of herds and bounty of crops (*de Agricultura* 141). All the major stages of life (e.g., acceptance of a child into the family, coming of age, marriage, death) were marked by religious ceremonies within the family.<sup>26</sup> Cicero also highlights the overlap of politics and religion, advising that ‘the most eminent and illustrious citizens might ensure the maintenance of religion by the proper administration of the state, and the maintenance of the state by the prudent interpretation of religion’ (*de Domo sua* 1).<sup>27</sup> Political religion was pervasive. Well known, but often underestimated, is the role of the imperial cult in ancient society.<sup>28</sup> Religious decisions necessarily involved domestic

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<sup>25</sup> On this matter see Malina 1986.

<sup>26</sup> John North 1998: 49.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Beard emphasizes this penetration of religious ideas in the political and philosophical thought of Cicero. She writes (Beard *et al* 1998: 115), ‘Cicero’s speech *On his House* is not an isolated survival, a lucky “one-off” for the historian of late republican religion. A leading political figure of his day, the most famous Roman orator ever, and prolific author – Cicero’s writing takes the reader time and again into the immediacy of religious debate and the day to day operations of religious business.’ She also notes that in his treatise *On the Laws* ‘he even devised an elaborate code of religious rules for an ideal city – not so very different from an idealized Rome’ (p.116). She explains, ‘As part of Roman public life, religion was (and always had been) a part of the political struggles and disagreements in the city. Disputes that were, in our terms, concerned with political power and control, were in Rome necessarily associated with rival claims to religious expertise and with rival claims to privileged access to the gods. [citing Livy *The Struggle of the Orders*] ... It would have made no sense in Roman terms to have claimed rights to political power without also claiming rights to religious authority and expertise’ (pp.134-35). Later in this same book we are told (p.217), ‘A dictionary compiled in the Augustan period defines “religious people” as “those who have a taste for carrying out or omitting ritual in accordance with the custom of the state and are not involved in superstitions”.’ The ‘dictionary’ is cited as ‘Festus, p.366 L.’

<sup>28</sup> The two volumes edited by Richard Horsley (1997, 2000) reassert the pervasive quality of imperial religion in the Hellenistic cities Paul visited. For the continuing potency and influence of the imperial cult in early Christianity (second and third century) see Allen Brent 1999.

and/or civic matters.<sup>29</sup> Members of the city and its household assumed various responsibilities toward these institutions. Rejection of those duties would not be ignored. All other ingroup members, both in the city and especially in the household, would regard such a rejection of duties as a betrayal bringing shame on the group. As Florence Dupont has noted, 'Social life constantly reminded a Roman of his duties. To shirk them was to betray oneself, the hopes of one's youth, one's family, one's ancestors and those friends who had been unstinting in their support.'<sup>30</sup> Harnack rightly exclaims, 'How deeply conversion must have driven its wedge into domestic life!'<sup>31</sup> Early Christianity must therefore be seen in its socio-political context. Barclay is entirely correct when he states, 'From our cultural and historical distance we easily underestimate the social dislocation involved in turning, as Paul puts it, from "idols" to the "true and living God" (1:9); and we barely appreciate the offense, even disgust, which such a change could evoke.'<sup>32</sup> The conversion of some members of the household and city will have disrupted the harmony of life for all members of that household and city. Such discord could not be tolerated.

Since Nock's work social scientists have explored the social dimensions of conversion. Several of these works should be mentioned, although only briefly. Sociologists have viewed conversion as a process of resocialization. For example, Lewis Rambo has defined conversion as 'a dynamic, multifaceted process of change. For some, that change will be abrupt and radical; for others, it will be gradual and not inclusive of a

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<sup>29</sup> J. North (1998: 50-52) points out that it is wrong to assume a separation between domestic and political religion, since civic religious ceremonies are sometimes accompanied by rites conducted by families. He offers several examples of the interplay between public and private religious ceremony.

<sup>30</sup> Dupont 1989: 25.

<sup>31</sup> Harnack 1902: 393.

<sup>32</sup> Barclay 1993: 514.



person's total life.<sup>33</sup> This process view has roots in Arnold van Gennep's classic work The Rites of Passage, which explored 'transitions' in a variety of social contexts, revealing a threefold process of (1) separation from former groups and statuses, (2) transition to the condition of being without group or status, (3) aggregation or incorporation into new group and status.<sup>34</sup> Important too has been the work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, whose The Social Construction of Reality emphasized three moments or steps in the socialization process of persons: (1) externalization, (2) objectivation, and (3) internalization. Applying their work to religious conversion they argue that conversion ('alternation') resembles the socialization process: 'Alternation requires processes of re-socialization. These processes resemble primary socialization, ... [but] they are different from primary socialization because they do not start *ex nihilo*, and as a result must cope with a problem of dismantling, disintegrating the preceeding nomic structure of subjective reality.'<sup>35</sup> They emphasize the importance of ongoing community life ('plausibility structure') for maintaining the new stance after conversion.<sup>36</sup>

The plausibility structure must become the individual's world, displacing all other worlds, especially the world the individual inhabited before his alternation. This requires segregation of the individual from the 'inhabitants' of other worlds, especially his 'cohabitants' in the world he has left behind. ... The alternating individual disaffiliates himself from his previous world and the plausibility structure that sustained it, bodily if possible, mentally if not. ... Such segregation is particularly important in the early stages of alternation (the "novitiate" phase). Once the new reality has congealed, circumspect relations with outsiders may again be entered into, although though outsiders who used to be biographically significant are still dangerous. They are the ones who will say, "Come off it, Saul," and there may be times when the old reality they invoke takes the form of temptation.

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<sup>33</sup> Rambo 1987: 73.

<sup>34</sup> Van Gennep 1960: 11.

<sup>35</sup> Berger and Luckman 1966: 157.

<sup>36</sup> Berger and Luckman 1966: 158-59.

More recently Snow and Machalek have described conversion as a fourfold process of transformation or resocialization: (1) 'biographical reconstruction' describes the process in which a person reinterprets past relationships and life in terms of the new belief, (2) 'master attribution' describes the process in which a person reinterprets reality beyond the self in terms of the new beliefs, (3) 'suspension of analogical reasoning' refers to the idea that the new group is wholly unique and not comparable to other groups, and (4) 'assumption of a master role' refers to the total integration of the convert into the new group with the consequent assumption of a representative role for the group in dealings with outsiders.<sup>37</sup> Biblical scholars have appropriated some of this social scientific work to conversion in the New Testament. For example, Meeks describes 'Pauline converts' as undergoing 'an extraordinarily thoroughgoing resocialization, in which the sect was intended to become virtually the primary group for its members, supplanting all other loyalties.'<sup>38</sup> And Alan Segal has emphasized that 'conversion merely begins a process of commitment to the group.'<sup>39</sup> He notes three major characteristics of group commitment: (1) retention of members, (2) group cohesiveness, and (3) social control.<sup>40</sup> Finally, we should mention Shaye Cohen's 1989 study 'Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew' in which he finds seven degrees of assimilation to ancient Judaism. All of these studies reveal the importance of viewing conversion as a process of resocialization in which former patterns of socialization must be dismantled and new patterns established. Failure to successfully negotiate the process results in an aborted conversion and a return to familiar social patterns.

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<sup>37</sup> Snow and Machalek 1983: 266-78.

<sup>38</sup> Meeks 1983: 78.

<sup>39</sup> Segal 1990: 76.

<sup>40</sup> Segal 1990: 76.

These sociological studies are helpful in emphasizing that conversion involves a general process of resocialization. They suggest the kind of process the Thessalonians began when they turned to God. However, they do not consider in detail that the process of resocialization or conversion also involves social conflict, which is a critical element in the Thessalonians' conversion. We must turn to the social psychologists for insight into this aspect of conversion. In particular the social identity perspective offers light on intergroup conflict and the struggle for a positive identity in the conversion process. This perspective views conversion as an individual's desire to obtain a positive identity by changing group membership, using the strategy of individual mobility. The individual believes that by leaving one group, which she perceives as possessing a comparatively negative identity, and joining another she will obtain a more positive self-identity. This approach to conversion, by focusing on the question of identity, highlights several important issues that are sometimes neglected in conversion studies. Most importantly, it highlights the possibility of responses to the positive and negative evaluation of group membership and identity, which suggests the emergence of intergroup conflict. Furthermore it suggests that the conversion process involves not only the individual, but all members of both groups. The varied responses to conversion by ingroup and outgroup members is an important factor in the resocialization process of conversion. These responses typically involve the attempt to restore lost honor or maintain a newly established identity, all of which may involve conflict. For example, the outgroup, which has now been evaluated in negative terms, may seek to restore its positive image by winning back the convert by various means—the strategy of individual mobility in reverse—and the ingroup will try to counter those efforts. The outgroup may focus

attention on other strategies, especially if the convert is not likely to return, in order to restore a positive image and prevent further losses of membership. Thus the social identity perspective indicates that the process of conversion goes well beyond the resocialization process of an individual, but is a process that concerns groups in conflict and various strategies for achieving ingroup positive distinctiveness.

Gabriel Mugny has studied the corporate and conflictual nature of conversion, giving particular attention to the dynamics that exist when groups are of very different population sizes, or what he calls a 'majority group' and a 'minority group.' Explaining the conflictual nature of conversion, he claims that conversion always foments antagonistic relationships, creates disequilibrium in the social system, and contradicts established norms and values.<sup>41</sup> When a person converts from the majority group to the minority group, each group has various possible responses to the situation. Other social psychologists have recognized that majority groups have powerful means to influence the situation, but Mugny, along with Serge Moscovici, has shown that minority groups also have powerful means of influence in such conflicted situations. While the majority group initially focuses its attention on the individual mobility of persons, the minority group focuses its attention on maintaining its perceived positive ingroup status. The majority, then, seeks to influence individuals through social pressure and forced compliance, whereas the minority group seeks to influence group harmony through

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<sup>41</sup> Mugny 1984: 507. Among social psychologists researching and writing on the means of social influence, Mugny has been particularly careful to highlight that influence is contained within a 'web of relationships', which are marked by conflict (1984: 505-09; 1982: 28-33). But he is certainly not alone in this recognition, for many researchers now regard conflict as a given in contexts of influence. So, for example, Moscovici (1980: 213) writes, 'All influence attempts, no matter what their origin, create a conflict, ... We speak of dissonance in one case and of divergence in the other, but either way a conflict

consistent behavior. Moscovici says ‘there is a difference in kind between majority and minority influence, which can be seen in the asymmetry between compliance and conversion.’<sup>42</sup> The majority outgroup, which views conversion as dysfunctional behavior, applies social pressure to control the outbreak of deviance and restore order to the group. Such pressures utilize their advantages, which are authority and the ability to punish or reward. They seek to force compliance from the deviants, bringing them back into harmony with majority norms and values. This phenomenon is known as the ‘conformity process.’<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the minority ingroup, which tends to see their conversion or ‘deviance’ as innovative and creative behavior that brings a more positive identity, is not without means of influence. Although they lack numbers and the resources of power and authority, the minority group’s ‘behavioral style’ can wield significant influence, especially over time. Moscovici defines ‘behavioral style’ as follows: ‘It refers to the organization of behaviors and opinions, and the timing and intensity of their expression—in short, it refers to the “rhetoric” of behavior and opinion.’<sup>44</sup> The key to minority influence is consistency in behavioral style. Mugny explains that members must act with ‘diachronic’ consistency—‘the firm, systematic, and non-contradictory repetition of the same mode of response’ and with ‘synchronic’ consistency—‘the existence of an intraminority consensus, that is, a total unanimity among minority members.’<sup>45</sup> Charlene Nemeth, working from within the same general social identity perspective, builds further and claims that confidence is also integral to success. She writes, ‘It is not passive

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is created.’ For more on this see Nemeth 1974 and 1979, Moscovici 1976 and 1985, and David and Turner 1996 and 1999.

<sup>42</sup> Moscovici 1980: 211.

<sup>43</sup> Nemeth 1979: 225.

<sup>44</sup> Moscovici 1976: 110.

<sup>45</sup> Mugny 1982: 16, 17.

consistency that aids the minority in its influence attempts but, rather, the maintenance of a position with confidence. Thus behavioral style that heightens the perception of confidence should increase the minority's effectiveness.<sup>46</sup> If consistency is maintained the minority group ultimately may achieve status as a valid alternative model.

When deviants cannot be brought back and it is necessary to prevent further conversions from the majority group to the minority group, the majority group must find ways to reduce the influence of the minority and restore its own positive distinctiveness. In addition to the basic strategies used by groups to achieve a positive identity—social creativity and social competition—groups that have lost members through conversion to other groups must minimize the appearance that they are lacking in some important area. According to Mugny, the majority group has three creative options to counter the decrease in its membership. The majority may attempt to either 'psychologize,' 'individualize,' or 'dogmatize' the behavior of the convert.<sup>47</sup> Mugny explains that to 'psychologize' conversion is to attribute such behavior to personal characteristics and dispositions. To 'individualize' is to attempt to isolate members of the minority and prevent them from uniting and establishing strong bonds and shared group identity. To 'dogmatize' is to interpret the behavior of the minority as necessarily excluding all others. The wider populace will therefore see itself as excluded from the minority and will not be influenced to join it.

Statements from persons living in the ancient Mediterranean reveal that conversion was seen as a process of resocialization that involved intense conflict between minority and majority groups. Tacitus charged that conversion to Judaism meant a

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<sup>46</sup> Nemeth 1979: 230.

<sup>47</sup> Mugny 1984: 509-513.

decision 'to despise the gods, to disown their country, and to regard their parents, children, and brothers as of little account' (*Hist.* 5.5). Aseneth, providing a voice from the perspective of the convert, laments, 'All people have come to hate me, even my father and mother, because I too have come to hate their gods and have destroyed them and caused them to be trampled underfoot by men' (*Jos. & Asen.* 11.4). She describes herself as 'an orphan, and desolate, and abandoned by all people' (12.7), and cries out to the Lord, who is 'protector of the persecuted' and 'helper of the afflicted' (12.13).<sup>48</sup> In this context, Philo's advice about showing special care and consideration to converts to Judaism can be appreciated (*Spec. Leg.* 4.178). He explains that such a person

has turned his kin, who in the ordinary course of things would be his sole confederates, into mortal enemies, by coming as a pilgrim to truth and the honoring of One who alone is worthy of honor, by leaving the mythical fables and multiplicity of sovereigns, so highly honored by their parents and grandparents and blood relations of this immigrant to a better home.

In his attack on Christianity Celsus charged that it was 'impious to abandon the customs which existed in each locality from the beginning' (Origen, *Contra Celsus* 5.25), claiming that 'if everyone acted the way the Christians did, the empire would fall apart' (Origen, *Contra Celsus* 8.481). And Cassius Dio invents a discussion between Maecenas and Octavian in which Maecenas offers the following advice to the future emperor (52.36.1-3).

In addition, not only must you yourself worship the divine everywhere and in every way according to ancestral custom and force everyone else to honor it; but you must also reject and punish those who make some foreign innovation in its worship, not only for the sake of the gods (since anyone despising them will not honor anyone else), but also because such people who introduce new deities persuade many people to change their ways, leading to conspiracies, revolts and factions, which are most unsuitable for a monarchy. So you must not allow anyone to be godless or a sorcerer.

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<sup>48</sup> Helpful discussion can be found in Rees Conrad Douglas 1989 and Randall Chesnutt 1995.

Here it is evident that the majority strategy of social pressure and forced compliance includes persecution of deviants. When the Empire did experience disasters, such events were often blamed on those who had disrupted the social order through change or conversion. De Ste. Croix states, 'The monotheistic exclusiveness of the Christians was believed to alienate the goodwill of the gods, to endanger what the Romans called the *pax decorum* (the right harmonious relationship between gods and men), and to be responsible for disasters which overtook the community.'<sup>49</sup> Nero's decision to blame the Christians for the fire in Rome is a well-known example. Later Tertullian expounded on this propensity to blame any and every evil on Christians (*Apol.* 40.2): 'If the Tiber reaches the walls, if the Nile does not rise to the fields, if the sky doesn't move or the earth does, if there is a famine, if there is plague, the cry is at once: "The Christians to the lions!"' The antagonism is seen in the persecution of Christian minority groups in the early church (Acts 4, 12, 14, 17, 19). Conflict was not limited to the city and larger institutions, however. Conflict inevitably occurred in the household too. So we read, 'When differences arise in any household between a believer and an unbeliever, an inevitable conflict arises, the unbelievers fighting against the faith and the faithful refuting their old errors and sinful vices' (*Recognitions of Clement* 2.29). Tertullian writes, 'Though jealous no longer, the husband expels his wife who is now chaste; the son, who is now obedient, is disowned by his father who was formerly lenient; the master, once so mild, cannot bear the sight of the slave who is now faithful' (*Apol.* 3). Beard, North, and Price explain,<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> G. E. M. de St. Croix 1963: 24.

<sup>50</sup> Beard, North, Price 1998: 96.



The Roman family was firmly based on the authority of the father over all his descendants, who formed a religious as well as a worldly community. It would have been disturbing and quite unacceptable that a man, or still worse a woman or child, of this community should take action that transferred their obedience to new and unauthorized groups, such as Bacchist.

McVann summarizes the situation correctly, writing,<sup>51</sup>

Change or novelty in traditional religion or religious doctrine and practice meet with especially violent rejection. In situations where the tradition and its values are believed to be seriously at risk, compromise is categorically rejected, and a struggle is waged to assert the ascendancy of, or to remain faithful to, the tradition, no matter the personal or social cost (1 Sam 8, cf. Hos 8:1-4; 9: 15; 1 Kgs 14:7-16; Ps 119:9-10, 35-37; Prov 28:9; Sir 1:21-24; Jer 6:18-21; 11:1-13; Mark 3:23-24; 13:21-23; 2 Cor 11:1-5; Gal 5:7-12). In Mediterranean culture, therefore, change or novelty is a means value which serves to innovate or subvert core and secondary values.

For ancient Mediterranean societies the power of the majority to enforce social compliance from deviants (i.e., the ‘conformity process’) was contextualized in the honor-shame code. Conversion, the evaluation of one group as inferior to another, and the decision to join that other group, was a challenge to the honor of the poorly evaluated group and, as such, demanded a response in kind. Since conversion involved a rejection of roles and responsibilities within both the household and the city, it also involved a disruption of harmony within both city and household. The loss of honor demanded a decisive response.<sup>52</sup> Members of the household could respond by applying social pressure

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<sup>51</sup> McVann 1998: 19.

<sup>52</sup> Malina (1993: 46) suggests three hypothetical degrees in the honor-shame challenge. ‘The first degree involves extreme and total dishonor of another with no revocation possible.’ Examples include murder, adultery, and kidnapping. The response to such total shame would be an equally thorough vengeance. ‘The second degree would be a significant deprivation of honor with revocation possible, for example, by restoring stolen items, by making monetary restitution for seducing one’s betrothed, unmarried married daughter, and the like.’ ‘The third and lowest degree of challenge to honor would be the regular and ordinary interactions that require normal social responses, such as repaying a gift with one of equal or better value, allowing others to marry my children if they let my children marry theirs.’ The case of dishonor due to conversion would likely fit best as a second degree offence, because restoration of honor could be achieved.

on a day to day basis, while civic authorities might have other means available to relocate the convert.

Generally the threat of disgrace and dishonor was sufficient to prevent anti-social behavior such as conversion (cf. Dio *Or.* 31, 48). Lendon observes, ‘honour was a social sanction. Fear of loss of honour—disgrace—enforced social norms and some of those norms, including deference (and the appropriateness of praise and blame) and the duty of gratitude, the reciprocity of favours and honours, could be used to work one’s will in society.’<sup>53</sup> Dupont agrees, noting, ‘collective approbation and reproof regulated everything that law and institutions overlooked – in other words, the whole of moral life.’<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, when deviance did occur the reality of social shame and disgrace was a potent device for returning the ‘convert’ or ‘deviant’ back to the fold. David DeSilva has written,<sup>55</sup>

Society’s displays of disapproval (whether in the form of insult, abuse, shunning, or more severe marginalization, e.g., martyrdom) seek to “shame” those whom society regards as deviants into falling back in line with society’s values. Dishonor and persecution are, in the first place, attempts to rehabilitate the deviant. This social pressure carries tremendous weight, especially as it continues over time.

Such strategies were sometimes effective in causing Christians to return to former allegiances. For Pliny the Younger (c. 112 CE) reports that ‘those [Christians] who had withdrawn from these healthy activities are now returning to fulfill their social and civic obligations’ (*Letters to Trajan* 10.97).<sup>56</sup> But the history of persecution and martyrdom reveals that many Christians did not always succumb to the pressure.

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<sup>53</sup> Lendon 1997:69.

<sup>54</sup> Dupont 1989: 11.

<sup>55</sup> DeSilva 1999: 7.

<sup>56</sup> See Wilson 1995 for a study of apostasy in the early church.

When strategies focusing on individual mobility failed, other methods were adopted. Mugny's 'psychologizing' strategy appears to have been popular in the ancient world. The charge that the common person tended to be gullible and easily persuaded by charlatans was a common theme in oratory of the ancient Mediterranean. Cicero speaks of the ease with which an orator can win over the audience (*Brutus* 193),

The crowd sometimes gives its approval to an orator who does not deserve it, but it approves without comparison. When it is pleased by a mediocre or even bad speaker it is content with him; it does not apprehend that there is something better; it approves what is offered, whatever its quality; for even a mediocre orator will hold its attention, only if he amounts to anything at all, since there is nothing that has so potent an effect upon human emotions as well-ordered and embellished speech.

Elsewhere he writes, 'Fellow citizens, you are of too simple and gentle a character; you have too much confidence in everyone. You think that everyone strives to perform what he has promised you' (*ad Her.* 4.27.49). Likewise Demosthenes chastised the gullibility of the Athenians: 'It is by your own doing, men of Athens, that the state is in such great peril. For you have failed to defend yourselves, by recklessly believing everyone and by esteeming as most useful the opinions of those whose counsels are most cowardly' (*Frag.* 54).<sup>57</sup> In the *Romance of Chariton*, Dionysius, in order to deceive Chaereas regarding the location of Callirhoe, instructs a messenger to tell Chaereas that Callirhoe had been awarded to him. When the message was delivered, 'Chaereas readily believed, ... for a man in misfortune is easily deceived' (7.1.5). The effect of this device is to render inconsequential a person's choice to convert and therefore his negative evaluation of a group.

While a deviant or convert might be psychologized as gullible, the person responsible for his social deviance was typically portrayed as immoral or evil. Civic

leaders often used two rhetorical devices to counter the ability of charlatans to dupe the common persons: invective (ψόγος) and comparison (σύγκρισις). As a literary category the invective was an exact opposite of the encomium, serving to censure rather than praise; it therefore mirrored the structure of the encomium (Cicero *ad Her.* 3.6.10-12). It is defined as ‘a form of literature which, having regard to the *mores* and ethical preconceptions of a given society, sets out publicly to denigrate a named individual.’<sup>58</sup> Invectives might be found in speeches or in written documents. Although typically invectives were directed against specifically named individuals,<sup>59</sup> they could also be directed in a more general manner, for Aphthonius states, ‘you may make an invective in common or individually’ (*Progym.* 9). In fact, most invectives, including those directed at named persons, manifested a generic quality because the specific charges were drawn from a conventional stock rather than from actual experience.<sup>60</sup> Comparison was especially useful in an invective for demonstrating the superiority of an alternative, as is seen in the above quotation of Cicero (*Brutus* 193). Aphthonius states that ‘in general the comparison is a double encomium or an invective combined with an encomium’ (*Progym.* 10).

Dio Chrysostom’s *Thirty-Second Discourse* is a good example of a rhetorical invective that makes effective use of comparison. At the time of this discourse Alexandria had become a hotbed of rebellion and riotous conduct that needed to be

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<sup>57</sup> Compare Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4.

<sup>58</sup> Watson 1996: 762.

<sup>59</sup> For examples of invectives directed against specific individuals see Sallust’s *Invectives*.

<sup>60</sup> Owen 1983: 15-18. Süß (1910: 247-254) analyzed the most frequent types of censure found in the fifth century BCE Athenian orators. He lists the following popular styles of abuse: charges of being a slave or son of slaves, a barbarian, a common laborer,

quelled (72-4).<sup>61</sup> Dio constructs the situation and the various identities of relevant persons in such a way as to persuade the Alexandrians to follow his advice. In constructing his own positive identity within the social situation, he compares himself with other orators and philosophers, who, according to Dio, are deserving of blame because they have either not done anything to pacify the situation or helped to incite it. When constructing the identity of the Alexandrians he begins with a variant on the aforementioned theme of gullibility, charging them with being too easily pleased, seeking merely to be entertained, and lacking seriousness (1).<sup>62</sup> He continues by telling them that they are in great need of one who can offer an honest and bold speech (5),

but you have no such critic ... to reprove you in all your friendliness and to reveal the weaknesses of your city. Therefore, whenever the thing does at last appear, you should receive it gladly and make a festival of the occasion instead of being vexed. ... but discourses like mine that make men happier and better and more sober and better able to administer effectively the cities in which they live, you have not heard. (7)

The Alexandrians can obtain a more positive identity ('men happier and better and more sober and better able to administer') if they will follow Dio's counsel. But the

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a thief or plagiarist, sexually immoral, a hater of the people, effeminate in appearance, a coward.

<sup>61</sup> There is disagreement on the dating of this speech. Some favor a pre-exilic date during the reign of Vespasian (circa 72) and others favor a date in the reign of Trajan (circa 108-112). Although the dating will affect attempts to identify historical referents, it does not affect the rhetorical situation of the speech—the confusion and rebellion in Alexandria—for that is established by the text (72-4). For discussion on dating, see C.P. Jones 1973: 302-09 (who argues for the earlier date) and a contrary response by J.F. Kindstrand 1978: 378-83. Most scholars, with Kindstrand, are inclined toward the later date, which has been most recently defended by H. Sidebottom 1992: 407-19 and supported by S. Swain 1996: 428-29, who opines (p.429) 'A Trajanic date is not secure, but is preferable.' Paolo Desideri (in Swain 2000: 96) remains unconvinced and continues to support the earlier date (see his Desideri 1978: 68-70). So too C.P. Jones 1978: 44 who suggests that Dio is actually bringing a message from the emperor Vespasian, warning the city to calm down else he will be forced to act harshly.

<sup>62</sup> For a description of Alexandria at the time of Dio's speech see Dill 1904: 374-75.

Alexandrians are not entirely to blame for their weaknesses; instead, 'the fault may lie rather at the door of those who wear the name of philosopher' (7). He goes on to describe these men and why they failed to benefit the city (8-9).

For some among that company do not appear in public at all. ... Others exercise their voices in lecture halls, having secured as hearers men who are already allies and those who are easily controlled.<sup>63</sup> And as for the Cynics, ... posting themselves at street-corners, in alleyways, and at temple-gates, [they] pass around the hat and play upon the credulity of lads and sailors and crowds of that sort, stringing together jokes and much philosophic babble and that vulgarity that smacks of the market-place. Accordingly they achieve no good at all, but rather the worst possible harm, for they accustom thoughtless people to deride philosophers in general.

Dio constructs the identity of his opposition in highly negative terms. He continues his invective by censuring orators who 'declaim epideictic speeches intended for display, and unlearned ones at that, or else chant verses of their own composition, as if they had detected in you a weakness for poetry.' It is especially heinous 'if in the guise of philosophers they do these things with a view to their own profit and reputation, and not to improve you. ... It is as if a physician when visiting patients should disregard their treatment and their restoration to health and should bring them flowers and courtesans and perfume' (10).<sup>64</sup> Dio then notes that there are a few philosophers who speak boldly, but 'they merely utter a phrase or two, and then, after berating rather than enlightening you, they make a hurried exit, anxious that you may raise an outcry and send them off before they are finished' (11). Having described the philosophers and orators that are to

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<sup>63</sup> C.P. Jones (1978: 37) thinks that 'Dio must refer at least in part to members of the Museum when he deplores so-called philosophers who huddle in their lecture rooms rather than venture before the people (8), or who amuse it with empty eloquence (10, 37, 39, 68); the "wise Theophilus," who lived in Alexandria without ever addressing the people, may be another member of the Museum (97-98).'

<sup>64</sup> Winter argues that for Dio 'The bad philosopher then is one who fails to assist in *politeia* or serve as the "saviours and guardians" through the exercise of his powers of persuasion and reason' (1997:46).

blame for the dismal situation in Alexandria, Dio moves on to describe the philosopher that can lead them forward (11).

But to find a man who speaks with a pure and guileless boldness, who makes no false pretensions for the sake of reputation or for gain, but who of good will and concern for his fellow-men stands ready, if need be, to be scorned and to bear the rancor and the riot of the mob. To find such a man as that is not easy, but rather the good fortune of a very lucky city, so great is the dearth of noble, independent souls and such the abundance of flatterers, frauds, and sophists.

Finally Dio offers himself as that philosopher. 'In my own case, for instance, I feel that I have chosen that role, not of my own volition, but by the will of some deity. For when divine providence is at work for men, the gods provide, not only good counsellors who need no urging, but also words that are appropriate and profitable to the listener' (12). Thus, Dio constructs a gloriously positive identity for himself and a shameful negative identity for the other orators in the city. This is a persuasive manner of motivating the Alexandrians to follow his counsel against the others. Bruce Winter summarizes this speech,<sup>65</sup>

He thus establishes his credentials before the Alexandrians by clearly demonstrating the inadequacy of those who have claimed for themselves leadership roles in the city, namely sophists and poets. He has done so through skillful use of *synkrisis* and finally through invoking his appointment by a god at whose bidding he speaks.

Dio offers a striking example of rhetorical invective as a means of countering the influence of a perceived negative perspective.<sup>66</sup>

This material offers suggestive insight into the situation faced by the converts in Thessalonica. Their negative evaluation of their former ingroups (city and households)

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<sup>65</sup> Winter 1997: 46.

<sup>66</sup> For a thorough study of the history of Dionian scholarship see Simon Swain 2000. Also helpful is the review of the recent literature on Dio (up to 1987) in B.F. Harris 1991. For a detailed discussion on the interpretation of Dio's *Thirty Second Discourse* see Paolo Desideri 1978: 61-186.

would have been challenged forcefully by their former ingroup compatriots. Civic leaders, household members, and the *paterfamilias* in particular would have been active in seeking to restore the lost member to his former identity in the group. The new ingroup would likely seek to retain the new member by making salient the new ingroup identity through the promotion of stereotypical attitudes and behavior, reinforcing a consistent behavioral style.

### Persecution in Thessalonica

The conversion of some of the Thessalonians has resulted in intergroup conflict. The converts have formed a new and exclusive minority ingroup and have abandoned or re-evaluated their former group civic and household memberships and associated behaviors, such as the worship of idols in domestic and civic religious ritual (1:10). The conversion process has not been smooth and tensions have been evident since the beginning (1:6; 2:2). Former allegiances have been broken, causing social disruption in households and in the city (2:14; 4:11-12; 5:12-14). Majority outgroup members have responded aggressively and tensions have escalated into persecution (2:14), which further threatens to disrupt the process of identity formation in the new ingroup (3:3).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Malherbe (1987: 36-48) takes the indefensible view that the Thessalonians were not suffering from external persecution but from internal distress. Much of Malherbe's argument is inspired by a faulty comparison between Epicurean communities and the community of Jesus-followers in Thessalonica. He observes that Epictetus spoke pointedly about the despair experienced by converts to Epicureanism. This leads him to conclude (p. 47) that 'Paul's converts apparently experienced the same distress and anxiety at and after their conversion that converts to other groups experienced.' But this is wholly unpersuasive, since Epicurean communities differ from the Jesus-follower communities in two important ways. First, Epicureans joined together in physically separate communities isolated from society; hence, they were not threatened by the same type of θλίψις as the early Christian communities. Second, Epicureanism had a specific interest and focus on inner mental states that is absent from Pauline communities. A. A.



Paul's descriptions of θλίψις and πάθημα indicate he viewed the social pressures as persecution in a spiritual battle. He states that when the Thessalonians accepted the message of the gospel they 'became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in great affliction [θλίψις] with the joy of holy spirit' (1:6); they 'became imitators of the assemblies of God that are in Judea (in Christ Jesus), because you suffered [ἐπάθετε] the same things from your compatriots as they suffered from the Judeans (2:14). It is not merely social conflict, then, but spiritual conflict, with Satan taking a prominent role in battle (2:18). Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians in order to reinforce the Thessalonian's ingroup identity 'so that no one would be shaken by these afflictions [θλίψις]' (3:3). He goes on to explain that he had 'told you beforehand that we were going to suffer affliction [θλίβω], as has happened, as you know' (3:4), and that he was 'afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labour had been fruitless' (3:5).

The specific identity of the persecutors is not known. Paul describes them only as the Thessalonians' 'compatriots' (συμφυλετῶν, 2:14). Interpreters have offered various suggestions. A minority view has been that Paul faced opposition from within the Christian community. Some early Greek Fathers suggested that the opponents in Thessalonica were heretical pseudo-apostles challenging Paul's authority and doctrine. F.C. Baur and the Tübingen scholars argued that these were 'Judaizers' such as were found in Galatia.<sup>68</sup> Walther Schmithals claimed that Gnostic enthusiasm had gained a

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Long explains (1997: 125), 'Subjectivity, selfhood, moment-by-moment consciousness, being at peace in the world, what it feels like to be securely happy – these are the fundamental concerns and starting points of Epicureanism.'

<sup>68</sup> See Frame 1912 for this view. See Best 1972: 16-22 for a helpful discussion.

foothold among the Thessalonian believers.<sup>69</sup> Robert Jewett has also claimed that spiritual enthusiasts challenged Paul, because he appeared to lack the necessary spiritual power.<sup>70</sup> The major stumbling block to this view is its lack of evidence. 1 Thessalonians offers no evidence for alternative Christian groups in Thessalonica. Furthermore, if such groups existed, it seems likely that Timothy's report to Paul would have mentioned them, but, instead, Timothy says that the believers have remained faithful to Paul and look forward to his return (3:6). Most interpreters have thought that the opposition came from outside the church. Taking a suggestion from Acts 17, some have thought that the opposition came from local Judeans. But does *συμφυλετῶν* include Judeans? Todd Still has argued that the term should be taken as including only the gentile Thessalonians.<sup>71</sup> However, Mikael Tellbe has shown that the term *συμφυλετῶν* need not have a strict ethnic sense and, therefore, may include Judeans.<sup>72</sup> This whole discussion seems headed in the wrong direction, however. The social identity perspective suggests that persecution comes from those closest to the converts—one's former ingroup members, including one's household ingroup and one's wider ingroups such as neighborhood and city. There is no need, then, to posit specific racial and religious outgroups as the persecutors. The Thessalonians will have suffered from those most closely identified with the converts—members of their former ingroups.

The principal strategy adopted by the majority group appears to be the imposition of social pressures designed to coerce the believers back to their former group roles and

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<sup>69</sup> Schmithals 1972: 90-157. For this view see also Lütgert 1909, Hadorn 1919 and 1919-20. But this view has not been well-received. For a response see Marshall 1983: 17-19 and Best 1972: 17-19.

<sup>70</sup> Jewett 1972; 1986: 102-04. This view has not won adherence either, however. See Best 1972: 19-22 for a response.

<sup>71</sup> Still 1999: 218-26.

responsibilities (3:3-5). The minority group has maintained a consistent stance (3:6) and displays a behavioral style that Paul applauds and seeks to bolster (4:1). They are heading towards the consummation confidently (5:24).

### Conclusion and Summary of the Social Situation

On the basis of this emic and etic dialectical study we may conclude that the situation the Thessalonians faced was one of intense social pressures designed to draw them back to their previous roles and lifestyles within their respective households and other social structures. The converts will have disrupted life in the household and city to a significant degree, bringing shame and potential ruin to those groups. Majority response would have been quick and continuous. Paul interprets this situation as a spiritual battle. We must now consider Paul's response to this spiritual battle. Paul regards himself as a spiritual guide sufficient for the task of directing the faith of the Thessalonians through this storm.

### Constructing Self-Identity in 1 Thessalonians—Paul as Spiritual Guide

Paul constructs his own apostolic identity as a member of the triangulated ingroup of God, Paul, and the Thessalonians by means of the three-fold temporal framework and within the social situation constructed as a spiritual battle. Paul was instrumental in the Thessalonians' conversion, when God 'chose' them through Paul's preaching (1:4), and, therefore, considers himself their 'father' in the faith (2:11). He believes he is responsible for their continuing faithfulness in the present time, even while he is physically absent from them, and, therefore, considers himself their 'instructor' and 'model' in living a life

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<sup>72</sup> Tellbe 2001: 112-115.

that pleases God (4:1-2; 1:6). He intends to continue guiding them in a life of holiness and increasing maturity until the day Jesus returns for them (2:19; 3:13; 5:23). Paul regards this three-pronged responsibility as his calling as an apostle (2:7). Thus, Paul's apostolic self-identity includes conscious recognition of his role as 'father' and 'instructor' and 'model' and 'guide' for the Thessalonian believers. An etic perspective suggests that these elements may be summed up in the identity of the ancient spiritual guide. The and identity of the spiritual guide in antiquity needs to be examined some detail.

### The Spiritual Guide in the Ancient World

Although somewhat neglected by modern scholarship, the spiritual guide was a well-known and highly revered figure in the ancient world. He is found throughout the Mediterranean world from Homeric times to Medieval times and beyond, and within both religious and philosophical traditions.<sup>73</sup> Stuart Smithers has written,<sup>74</sup>

It would appear that all such traditions stress the necessity of a spiritual preceptor who has immediate knowledge of the laws of spiritual development and who can glean from the adept's actions and attitudes his respective station on the spiritual path as well as the impediments that lie ahead. Furthermore, the guide is responsible for preserving and advancing the precise understanding of the teaching and spiritual discipline to which he is heir, including a written tradition and an oral tradition 'outside the Scriptures,' which at its highest level is passed from master to succeeding master and to certain disciples according to their level of insight.

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<sup>73</sup> For an excellent survey and introduction see I. Hadot 1986. For more detailed analysis of this ancient figure, see Anderson 1994 and Valantasis 1991. Smithers (1987: 30) has written, 'Pythagoras and Socrates remind us that the worthy figure of the spiritual guide is not confined to the strict forms of religion but can also be identified in various fraternities, orders, and academies whose primary concern is the self-transformation and spiritual enlightenment of their members.'

<sup>74</sup> Smithers 1987: 29.

It is possible to describe an 'ideal type' of the ancient spiritual guide.<sup>75</sup> Smithers states, 'the paradigmatic feature of the spiritual guide is always his intermediate status.'<sup>76</sup> As an intermediary figure the guide stands between God and humans, between heaven and earth, between the spiritual and the physical cosmos. Some guides serve the souls of the dead, directing their path in the celestial world, but most guides are earthly figures directing the earthly lives of humans. Similarly, most traditions have both an inner guide, a spirit indwelling the adept, and an outer guide, a human master instructing the adept. In Christianity Jesus remains the principal spiritual guide, having served as an earthly spiritual guide during his earthly life and, following the ascension, serving as an inner guide through the Holy Spirit. In addition to Jesus as the continuing transcendent guide of believers, Christianity has recognized the importance of mature humans or 'elders' who serve as earthly guides through life. Paul claims to be 'sent' by this same Jesus to serve as a spiritual guide. The earthly spiritual guide directed the lives of others by providing a model of holy living and by offering instruction in appropriate attitudes and behavior. These instructions could be either oral or written and were based upon either inspired revelation or the guide's mastery of the received tradition or both. Hadot has said 'his work is considerably aided by two factors: authority and friendship.'<sup>77</sup>

Each religious and philosophical tradition has its own unique spiritual guide. For example, whereas the spiritual guide in the mystery religions possessed magical powers by which adepts were initiated into an esoteric experience of communion with the god, the spiritual guide in philosophical circles possessed wisdom and moral perfection by

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<sup>75</sup> Anderson (1994: 3) notes that the early Roman Empire had a vast number of such persons and they differed widely in their views and practices. Nevertheless, he is able to construct an ideal type.

<sup>76</sup> Smithers 1987: 29.

which he instructed adepts in daily living.<sup>78</sup> In Second Temple Judaism the sages functioned as spiritual guides. These men ‘molded every sphere of the life of the Jewish people and influenced their comprehension of their past, their hopes, and their future aims.’<sup>79</sup> In their role as spiritual guide, the sages—scribes, elders, priests, Pharisees—directed the people in two basic ways. They directed attention toward the temple in Jerusalem as the place where God dwelt and where rituals were accomplished for their spiritual benefit. They also provided instruction in daily living by teaching the Torah. In Judaism, then, temple and torah were at the heart of spiritual guidance.

In the early years of Christianity the general mode of spiritual guidance was experiencing a significant change. This change is related to a shift from sacred places to sacred persons. Prior to this period sacred sites assumed a vital role in spiritual guidance. While pilgrimages were essential aspects of the spiritual life in Judaism, Roman religions sanctified many local places in towns. For example, in Roman towns the walls of the city were regarded as sacred, protecting the city against hostile invasion and providing gates for the expulsion of pollution.<sup>80</sup> However, during the first and second centuries the locus of spiritual guidance shifted away from these specific places. Peter Brown has said, ‘In the popular imagination the emergence of the holy man at the expense of the temple marks the end of the classical world.’<sup>81</sup> Whereas Brown dated this shift to the fourth and

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<sup>77</sup> I. Hadot 1986: 436.

<sup>78</sup> E. R. Dodds (1951: 146) believes that at an earlier time magical powers and philosophical wisdom were combined in the shaman, but after the fifth century B.C.E. these were differentiated in the religious guide and the philosophical guide, although they might be found together occasionally in some unusual figures, such as Epimenedes and Pythagoras.

<sup>79</sup> E. E. Urbach 2002: 636.

<sup>80</sup> R. A. Markus 1990: 146.

<sup>81</sup> Brown 1971: 103.

fifth centuries C.E. Jonathan Z. Smith finds evidence of the same 'as early as the second century (B.C.).'<sup>82</sup> He describes this shift in terms of Roman religions.<sup>83</sup>

One way of stating this shift is to note that the cosmos has become anthropologized. The old imperial cosmological language that was the major mode of religious expression of the archaic temple and court cultus has been transformed. Rather than a city wall, the new enclave protecting man against external hostile powers will be a human group, a religious association or secret society. Rather than a return to chaos or the threat of decreation, the enemy will be described as other men or demons, the threat as evil or death. Rather than a sacred place, the new center and chief means of access to divinity will be a divine man, a magician, who will function, by and large, as an entrepreneur without fixed office and will be, by and large, related to "protean deities" of relatively unfixed form whose major characteristic is their sudden and dramatic autophanies. Rather than celebration, purification and pilgrimage, the new rituals will be those of conversion, of initiation into the secret society or identification with the divine man. As a part of this fundamental shift, the archaic language and ideology of the cult will be revalorized—only those elements which contribute to the new, anthropological and highly mobile understanding of religion will be retained. . . . The ancient books of Wisdom, the authority of the priest-king, the faith of the clergy in the efficacy of their rituals, the temple as the chief locus of revelation—all of these have been relativized in favor of a direct experience of a mobile magician with his equally mobile divinity.

Smith goes on to suggest that early Christianity participated in this shift to a greater extent than the Judaism from which it emerged. He points out that the arrangement of the Hebrew Scriptures differs in the two traditions. 'The Jewish collection ends with the promise of 2 Chronicles 36:23 of a rebuilt Temple and restored cultus. The Christian collection ends with the promise to Malachi 4:5 of the return of the *magus* Elijah—a promise fulfilled in the figure of John the Baptist who reinterprets an archaic water-ritual of purification into a magical ritual that saves.'<sup>84</sup> After the destruction of the temple the

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<sup>82</sup> Smith 1977: 238. Smith sites Joseph son of Tobias as a second century B.C.E. example.

<sup>83</sup> Smith 1977: 238.

<sup>84</sup> Smith 1977: 239.

role of spiritual guide in Judaism was concentrated on the Rabbi while the synagogue assumed greater importance as the locus of the ideal human society.<sup>85</sup>

The Book of Acts reveals this shift taking place in early Christianity. While the temple decreases in importance, holy men increase in importance. Peter and John possess miraculous powers and perform great signs and wonders in the name of Jesus (Acts 3-5). Stephen's speech reveals the changed attitude toward the temple, stating 'the Most High does not live in dwellings made by human hands' (Acts 7:48). Paul echoes these words several chapters later: 'God . . . does not live in dwellings made by man' (Acts 17:24).<sup>86</sup> Luke describes the ministry of Paul as devoted to establishing alternative human communities through conversion, initiation, and identification with Jesus. For Paul daily life in these households, the spirituality of personal relationships—husband and wife, parent and child, master and slave—takes precedence over ritual and cult. Paul himself becomes a model to be imitated, an instructor in the way, an authoritative guide who leads and directs as a friend and brother.

#### Paul as Spiritual Guide in Thessalonica

Paul constructs his apostolic identity in 1 Thessalonians as one of these ancient itinerant spiritual guides. He possesses authority from God to guide the believers in Thessalonica (2:4) and he conducts his guidance by securing an intimate friendship (2:7, 11), modelling the holy life (2:10), and providing verbal and written instructions about

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<sup>85</sup> On the spiritual guide in Judaism see E. E. Urbach 2002 and Green 1979. Smith (1977: 247, n.66) writes, 'In the synagogue, Judaism found its secret society: in the rabbi, its magician. Through the magic of words it attempted, in the great rabbinic legal enterprise, to construct a mythical cosmos, a portable homeland in which any Jew might dwell.'



daily life (4:1-3). He assumes the burden of their spiritual progress (3:5). His positive identity is determined by their maturation in the faith (2:19; 3:8). He suggests that a failure on their part will affect his own identity: 'we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the Lord' (3:8). This identity as spiritual guide is relevant to the situation in Thessalonica because the believers are undergoing persecution that threatens to weaken their faith and drive them back to their former lives. The passage that reveals Paul's self-identity most continuously in 1 Thessalonians is 2:1-12. This passage has become somewhat controversial in recent biblical scholarship. Before offering our view of Paul's teaching, we will review that discussion.

#### 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12: Contrasting Interpretations in Biblical Scholarship

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 is one of the most disputed passages in current biblical scholarship. Much of the discussion of the 'Thessalonians Correspondence Seminar' of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* in Prague (1995) and Strasbourg (1996) was devoted to this passage.<sup>87</sup> These seminars revealed that an older consensus that the chapter is best understood as an 'apologetic' has been overturned by forceful claims that the chapter is 'paraenetic.' The apologetic view claims that Paul is defending himself against specific attacks from an opposition group in Thessalonica, charging him with deceit, trickery, and the other listed vices in the passage.<sup>88</sup> The paraenetic view claims

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<sup>86</sup> For a fuller discussion of Luke's attitude toward the temple and cult, see Esler 1987: 131-63.

<sup>87</sup> Several of the papers from these meetings have been published in Donfried and Beutler 2000. The book is divided into two parts. Part one is devoted to 2:1-12 (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 as Symptomatic of the Exegetical Debate) and part two takes up the rest of the book (1 Thessalonians: The Methodological Debate).

<sup>88</sup> H.D. Betz (1986:23) writes, 'It should be clear that in this presentation the issue of rhetoric plays an important part. Paul defends himself by setting up opposing types: the charlatan as juxtaposed to the true messenger of God; the false friend (flatterer, deceiver, con artist) as juxtaposed to the true friend who shares everything, including

that Paul is presenting himself as an ideal philosopher, a model to be imitated, demonstrating to the Thessalonians the proper Christian lifestyle. Despite claims that the apologetic view is no longer a serious contender, it continues to find eager champions (e.g., Holtz 2000, Weima 2000),<sup>89</sup> preventing any formation of a new consensus. After reviewing this discussion, we will offer a third way, based on the social identity perspective.

The apologetic view mirror-reads Paul's denials as responses to specific charges against him from opponents in Thessalonica. Thus, according to this view, when Paul states, 'our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery' (2:3) and 'we never came with words of flattery or a pretext for greed, nor did we seek praise from humans, neither from you or from others' (2:5-6), he is denying these specific accusations made against him—that he was deceitful, used trickery and flattery, etc. The existence of opposition in Thessalonica (e.g., 2:14; 3:3) has made this view appealing throughout the history of biblical interpretation. Thus Walter Schmithals opines, 'On this point the exegetes from the time of the Fathers down to the last century have never been in doubt.'<sup>90</sup>

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century nearly all exegetes agreed that Paul's purpose in 2:1-12 was to defend himself against real opponents. However, slowly over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this consensus was eroded. In 1909 Ernst von Dobschütz, while agreeing that these verses have an apologetic tone, suggested that this tone originated more from Paul's

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himself; and the rhetorical phony as juxtaposed to the sincere person whose rhetoric elicits conviction. This kind of defense by setting up opposing character types is, of course, part of ancient rhetoric itself (*synkrisis*).'

<sup>89</sup> Others who accept the apologetic view include Bruce 1982, Marshall 1983, Still 1999.

<sup>90</sup> Schmithals 1972: 151.

own inner psychological mood than from any actual opposition in Thessalonica.<sup>91</sup> Later in 1925 Martin Dibelius claimed that in these verses Paul sought to assure the Thessalonians of the purity of his motives ('Die Lauterkeit seiner Motive sicherzustellen') by distancing himself from the behavior of contemporary Cynics, but that the verses do not suggest Paul was aware of or responding to any real accusations spoken against him.<sup>92</sup> In 1970 Malherbe picked up on Dibelius' suggestive comments about Paul and Cynics, explored the literary similarities between Paul and Dio Chrysostom in greater detail, and concluded that Paul's purpose was not apologetic at all, instead he sought to present himself to the Thessalonians using the language of the ideal philosopher. In 1972 Malherbe developed his view of 1 Thessalonians further, arguing that the whole letter, including chapters 1-3, was paraenetic. His mature views were explained in 1983 when he argued that the purpose of Paul's 'adaptation in chapter 2 of the description of the ideal philosopher' was to present himself as a model to be imitated.<sup>93</sup> He has continued to expound this view without substantial change.<sup>94</sup> George Lyons, in a doctoral dissertation published in 1985, adopted and expounded in greater detail Malherbe's paraenetic-imitation view.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Dobschütz 1909: 106-07. He writes (p.107), Alle diese eregetischen Dersuche sind dadurch irre gegangen, dass sie den Anlass für die "Apologie" in objektiven Derhältnissen bei den Lesern suchten, statt zunächst an die Stimmung des Briefschreibers zu denken. Dersesst man sich in die Lage des plösslich gewaltsam von der eben erst begründeten gemeinde getrennten Apostels, dessen Dersuche nach Thessalonich zurückzukehren immer wieder vereitelt wurden , so ist nichts natürlicher als dass er sich Gedanken macht über das Derhalten seiner Gemeinde, und bei dem Temperament des Paulus, bei der grade für den Aufenthalt in Athen und die erste zeit in Korinth bezeugten Depression mussten das trübe Gedanken sein.

<sup>92</sup> Dibelius 1925: 6-11, quotation from page 9.

<sup>93</sup> Malherbe 1983: 58.

<sup>94</sup> Malherbe 1987; 2000; 1992: 294.

<sup>95</sup> Klaus Berger 1984: 1134-36 also supported the paranaetic imitation view.

In Lyons' view Paul seeks to influence the character of his converts by presenting his own character as a model for imitation. Paul's rhetoric is motivated not by opponents in Thessalonica but by his own aims. 'It appears that what he reestablishes is not his authority but his ethos, and not for the purpose of defense but for *parenensis* [sic].'<sup>96</sup> 'It is Paul's rhetorical and argumentative goal, not his "opponents," which determines that he shall present his ethos as an embodiment of his gospel and his converts' ethos as an imitation of his.'<sup>97</sup> For Lyons' it is entirely inappropriate to mirror-read the antithetical statements as responses to accusations by opponents. He claims that the methodological presuppositions on which mirror reading is based are 'arbitrary, inconsistently applied, and unworkable.'<sup>98</sup> In his view the antithetical constructions are 'often, if not always, examples of pleonastic tautology used in the interest of clarity which need not be assumed to reply to charges.'<sup>99</sup> Underlying Lyons' dismissal of mirror reading, however, is an even more sweeping refusal to allow any 'extra-textual factors' to influence a reading of the text. He writes,<sup>100</sup>

Implicit, if not explicit, in all historical reconstructions of the Galatian situation is the admission that the letter's text alone provides insufficient data from which the opponents may be described and their charges specified. One must resort to other Pauline letters or nearly contemporary "background" information to supply the lacunae.

Lyons insists that proper methodological procedure demands the separation of literary questions from historical concerns; that is, all historical reconstructions or conjectures

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<sup>96</sup> Lyons 1985: 185.

<sup>97</sup> Lyons 1985: 189-90.

<sup>98</sup> Lyons 1985: 96. The dangers and difficulties of mirror reading do not warrant it wholesale rejection, as most scholars recognize. John Barclay (1987) helpfully offers seven logical criteria for mirror reading. These criteria include (1) type of utterance (assertion, denial, command, prohibition), (2) tone, (3) frequency, (4) clarity, (5) unfamiliarity, (6) consistency, and (7) historical plausibility.

<sup>99</sup> Lyons 1985: 110.

that would inform the meaning of a text are inappropriate. In his view literary questions must be addressed before moving to historical concerns. He writes,

These chapters [his thesis] also studiously avoid moving from the literary question of function to the historical question, "What really happened?" Their concern is strictly literary. Such an approach would appear to be the necessary prerequisite of any responsible historical reconstruction utilizing Paul's autobiographical statements. Until the question of function is answered, the historical value of these statements remains in doubt.

This methodology is impossible, however, for a text has no meaning in isolation from its social context. Texts are embedded in social contexts and are reflections of social context. Bruce Malina has exposed the fallacy of thinking one can read a text without importing any extra-textual factors. He has persuasively argued that 'meaning inevitably derives from the general social system of the speakers of a language. ... [Therefore] any adequate understanding of the Bible requires some understanding of the social system embodied in the words that make up our sacred Scripture.'<sup>101</sup> Although Lyons may think he is studiously avoiding importing extra-textual factors to interpret the text, the very fact that he finds in the text any meaning shows that he has in fact done so. Unfortunately, in his methodological slumber, Lyons is unaware of the social system informing his reading of the text.<sup>102</sup> The challenge for biblical exegetes, then, is not to studiously avoid reading texts through the lens of a social system, but to seek the most relevant social system(s) with which to read the ancient texts. It is for this reason that Philip Esler, while

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<sup>100</sup> Lyons 1985: 98.

<sup>101</sup> Malina 1993: 2. The artificial separation between the literary function of a text and its social-historical setting is revealed in Lyons' own statement that 'In order to determine the function of an autobiography or of autobiographical remarks within another work it is essential to know the author's relationship to his audience, the setting, and his intentions' (1985: 61-62).

<sup>102</sup> Esler charges that Lyons' reading of Galatians 'represents a socially unrealistic imposition of modern individualist notions on ancient texts where they are quite inapposite' (1988: 66).

acknowledging the real difficulties of mirror reading and historical reconstruction, rejects Lyons' methodological proposal and challenges biblical exegetes 'to approach the problem differently, through injecting some social-scientific realism into the discussion.'<sup>103</sup>

Concerning the antithetical statements in 2:3-6 Lyons is dependent on Malherbe's argument that such statements reflect similar ones made by philosophers seeking to distinguish themselves from charlatans. Since they were not defending themselves from accusations made against them, there is no need to think Paul was defending himself.<sup>104</sup> Malherbe's argument, however, is deeply flawed, as we will demonstrate below. But we should note at this point that it is odd that Lyons, who vehemently denounced exegetes who would impose 'extra-textual factors' onto the text including 'historical reconstructions,' 'conjectures,' and 'background' should so glibly accept Malherbe's imposition of alien historical elements onto the text. With evident approval, Lyons quotes Malherbe:<sup>105</sup>

Malherbe notes that in the first century A.D. Greco-Roman, eastern Mediterranean world in which Paul moved "... transient public speakers were viewed with suspicion. It is understandable that the genuine philosophic missionary would want to distinguish himself from other types without his having explicitly been accused of acting like a particular type." Dio Chrysostom, a late contemporary of Paul and a Cynic philosopher and orator (ca. A.D. 40-120), is a good illustration of this phenomenon. In *Oration* 32, in a situation in which "there is not question of his having to defend himself ... against specific charges that he was a charlatan," Dio characterized himself as "the ideal Cynic in negative and antithetic formulations designed to distinguish himself from them."

Lyons need for this social context points out the impossibility of his stated 'literary' method. Against his methodological claims, he is forced to contextualize the text in a

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<sup>103</sup> Esler 1998: 64.

<sup>104</sup> Lyons 1985: 105.

<sup>105</sup> Lyons 1985:105-106 from Malherbe 1970:204-05, 214.

social world in order to derive meaning. But contextualizing the Thessalonian situation in the world of the ancient philosophers is a mistake. The chief witness for Malherbe's case is Dio Chrysostom's *Thirty Second Discourse* (i.e., Lyons' *Oration* 32), which we discussed earlier. The relevant portion of the discourse (11-12) is as follows:

But to find a man who speaks with a pure and guileless boldness, who makes no false pretensions for the sake of reputation or for gain, but who of good will and concern for his fellow-men stands ready, if need be, to be scorned and to bear the rancor and the riot of the mob. To find such a man as that is not easy, but rather the good fortune of a very lucky city, so great is the dearth of noble, independent souls and such the abundance of flatterers, frauds, and sophists.

Although Malherbe supplements his study with other passages from Dio, it is this passage that drives his discussion. He emphasizes the similarity between this description of the ideal philosopher with Paul's self-description in 1 Thessalonians 2:3-7.

For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impurity or trickery, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed, nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children.

There are indeed verbal and formal similarities. Dio described the ideal philosopher as one who spoke boldly yet in purity (καθαρός) and without guile or trickery (ἄδολος); similarly Paul claimed that his preaching was without deceit (οὐκ ἐκ πλάνης), impurity (ἀκάθαρτος), and guile or trickery (οὐδὲ ἐν δόλῳ). The ideal philosopher makes no pretensions for the sake of reputation or gain; likewise Paul did not come with words of flattery, with a pretext for greed, nor to seek praise from humans (οὔτε ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας ἐγεννηθημεν . . . οὔτε ἐν προφασει πλεονεξίας . . . οὔτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν). Finally both passages are constructed with antithetical statements. Malherbe concludes that these similarities are forceful enough to call into question the

apologetic reading of 1 Thessalonians 2. According to Malherbe, it is clear that Dio was not speaking apologetically; therefore, there is no need to think that Paul was speaking apologetically.<sup>106</sup> Rather, Malherbe suggests, both Paul and Dio were presenting themselves as the ideal philosopher. He writes,<sup>107</sup>

The similarities between Paul and Dio, and between Paul and Cynicism in general, can be extended, but these suffice to show that there are verbal and formal parallels between Paul and Dio that must be taken into account in any consideration of 1 Thessalonians 2. One is not obliged to suppose that Dio was responding to specific statements that had been made about him personally. In view of the different types of Cynics who were about, it had become desirable, when describing oneself as a philosopher, to do so in negative and antithetic terms. This is the context within which Paul describes his activity in Thessalonica. We cannot determine from his description that he is making a personal apology.

He elsewhere states that 'Paul's readers must have been aware of the similarities between Paul's description of himself and the descriptions of the ideal philosopher.'<sup>108</sup>

But Malherbe's case is unconvincing; in fact, it is fatally flawed. To suggest that the existence of linguistic similarities between two otherwise completely unrelated passages indicate in any way a similarity of *purpose* is wholly and obviously fallacious. Such descriptive terminology is not limited to discussions of Greek philosophers, but is found in a wide diversity of texts, each having its own purpose. For example, William Horbury notes that these same linguistic patterns are 'also and especially appropriate to the Jewish post-biblical development of the biblical passages on true and false prophecy.'<sup>109</sup> Thus, the language need not refer to philosophers but may be used of prophets in the biblical tradition.

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<sup>106</sup> Holtz rightly notes that Malherbe's claim that Dio is not responding to personal attacks 'is not obvious from [reading] Dio' (2000: 75).

<sup>107</sup> Malherbe 1970: 48.

<sup>108</sup> Malherbe 1987: 4.

<sup>109</sup> Horbury 1998: 14. Horbury argues that this passage is Paul's defense against charges of false prophecy. He shows that the false prophets' appeal (*paraklesis*—a



Furthermore, Malherbe has not described the *Thirty Second Discourse* accurately. Dio's speech has a polemical thrust, which Malherbe misses. He does not merely seek to establish himself as the ideal philosopher, one whom the Alexandrians will be wise to heed; rather, through skillful invective and comparison Dio vitiates his opposition, all the other philosophers who ply their trade in Alexandria.<sup>110</sup> His use of antithetical statements in 32:11b-12 have reference to his prior invectives in 32:8-11a. Thus when he describes the ideal philosopher as one who speaks in purity and without guile and makes no pretensions for the sake of reputation (δόξα) or gain (ἀργύριον) (11), it is because he has already described the Cynics as those who use deceitful ploys, who 'pass around the hat and play upon the credulity [ἀπατήτος] of youth' (9) and the Orators as those who speak 'with a view to their own profit [κέρδος] and reputation [δόξα] and not to improve you' (10). Therefore, it is evident that the antithetical statements have an invective or polemical tone, while they also serve to establish Dio's own identity in the Alexandrian

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common LXX term for prophetic exhortation) is often condemned as intended to deceive (*plane*, Deut. 4:19; 13:6; Isa. 19:14) and results in impurity or uncleanness (*akatharsia*, Ps.Sol.8.12,22; Test.Levi 15.1). Guile (*dolos*) is also associated with the false prophets (Test.Ben.6.2; Wis.Sol. 1.5; 4.11; 7.13). Isaiah 53:9 (LXX) states, 'there is no guile (*dolos*) in the mouth of the true servant.' For more information about linguistic similarities serving a wide variety of rhetorical purposes, see also Zimmer 1897, Denis 1957, Henneken 1969. These authors demonstrate that the language of the antitheses ('deceit', 'without guile', etc.) is equally pervasive outside the world of Greek philosophy. Thus, there is no necessary reason to identify the language with Dio or with Greek philosophy. J. Munck (1959: 194) offers an all-encompassing interpretation: 'During the further struggle it is the charges that we know from 1 Thess.2.3ff., against itinerant preachers and teachers of all categories, that we meet in the church's accusations against the apostle.'

<sup>110</sup> As is properly noted by Holtz (2000:76), who writes, 'He must begin by legitimizing himself over against those who presented themselves to the public in like fashion,' and Bruce Winter (1997:42), who writes, 'There Dio seeks to establish his own credentials as counsellor and saviour of Alexandria through his use of comparison with philosophers, sophists, orators and poets' and (p.51) 'Dio's self-promotion as the ideal wise leader and advisor at this point is the culmination of his *synkrisis* with orators and poets, but it is by no means the end of it, for he has another criticism of them.'

context. Clearly there is an opposition group in Alexandria and Dio's speech is designed to render that group's influence ineffective while creating a positive identity for himself. It would, of course, be interesting to know how the Cynics and Orators in Alexandria might have responded to Dio's charges. Might the Orators have denied the charge that they speak only to enhance their own reputation and gild their coffers? Might they have claimed instead that their motives were pure and without guile? The specific answers are obviously irrelevant, but the point is that any apologetic they might have offered would have used the same antithetical formulas introduced by the polemicists. Antithetical statements can be used by either side, either by the polemicists (Dio) or the apologists (Alexandrian philosophers). Malherbe's understanding of Dio's speech is flawed.

Furthermore, if we assume with Malherbe that Dio's particular description of ancient philosophers and orators is accurate, then it is impossible to believe that the Thessalonians would have seen Paul described as an ideal philosopher in 1 Thessalonians 2. If Paul can be compared with any group of philosophers, then the more likely comparison is with the secluded philosopher who teaches in a private home or rented hall. In a previous chapter we pointed out that Stanley Stowers has demonstrated that public speaking and the use of public buildings required status, reputation, and recognized roles which Paul did not have. And Malherbe agrees with Stowers on this very point. He agrees that Paul was not a marketplace or street corner preacher, writing, 'the secluded setting in which Paul worked to found churches was provided by private homes.'<sup>111</sup> This is significant because Dio does not believe that the household philosopher is the ideal philosopher; in fact, just the opposite, Dio repudiates them for hiding away from public service! For Dio the ideal philosopher is one who does *not* hide

in homes or halls, but who courageously presents his speech to the public, in public buildings or in the marketplace. He writes, 'the fault may lie at the door of those who wear the name of philosopher. For some among that company do not appear in public at all' (8). Malherbe correctly perceives that the philosophers under attack at this point in Dio's speech are those that served in private households (such as Seneca and Cornutus) and lecture-halls (such as Musonius, Epictetus, and Demonax).<sup>112</sup> Household philosophers often served as spiritual guides. Nock writes, 'the equivalent of domestic chaplains: we find them at death beds, as for instance Demetrius the Cynic at Thræsea's (Tacitus, *Annals* 16.34).' He continues, 'The philosopher's lecture-room was "a hospital for sick souls".'<sup>113</sup> But one must exercise caution before too quickly identifying Paul with these household philosophers. It is not the identity of the philosopher that compares favorably with Paul, but the generic activity of spiritual guidance. But even then the specific type of spiritual guidance differed significantly. It is highly unlikely that the Thessalonians would have identified Paul with Dio's description of the secluded philosopher, for when the comparison concerns specific identity markers, Paul is clearly not included among the philosophers. I have already argued this case in my earlier chapter evaluating Paul as a philosopher, but we can add to that argument by pointing out that in 1 Thessalonians 2:9 Paul emphasizes that he was a laborer: 'you remember our labor and toil, brothers; we worked night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you while we preached the gospel.' This identification with manual laborers in the workshops would have clearly differentiated Paul from the philosophers who served in wealthy

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<sup>111</sup> Malherbe 1987:12. In addition to Stowers 1984 article, see Hock 1980.

<sup>112</sup> Malherbe 1970: 38.

<sup>113</sup> Nock 1933:178.

households and avoided all suggestion of servitude.<sup>114</sup> This most basic of features, then, his physical location and labor, would have ruled out Paul as one of the ideal philosophers according to Dio's categorization.<sup>115</sup> Finally, it is worth pointing out that most philosophers identified themselves as philosophers; therefore, there was no real question as to who was or was not a philosopher.<sup>116</sup>

#### 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12: The Social Identity Perspective

In 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Paul looks back to his initial visit to Thessalonica to remind the believers of the success of that mission and to suggest reasons for that success. Of course, the Thessalonians knew that the mission had been successful (αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε; 2:1); nevertheless, Paul deemed it advantageous to explore the reasons (γὰρ; 2:3, 5) for that success because in so doing he would be reinforcing that success for the continuation of the mission in Thessalonica. In 2:1-2 he presents the mission as successful or, rather, 'not in vain' (οὐ κενῆ),<sup>117</sup> despite the fact that it was conducted in

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<sup>114</sup> Holtz 1986: 86-88.

<sup>115</sup> Horbury agrees: 'Despite the familiarity of the wandering philosopher in late antiquity, he was not clearly identified by the early Pauline communities as the figure from whom the apostle wished to dissociate his preaching' (1998: 112). It is true that later in the second century the itinerant Christian preacher could be seen as a wandering Sophist, as is evinced in Lucian's presentation of Peregrinus Proteus in *De morte Peregrini*. But there are two problems with concluding that the same equation would likely have been made with Paul one hundred years earlier (*pace* Holtz 2000: 78). First, the social situation of both the Christian ekklesia and the sophistic had changed significantly by that time. Second, Paul's practice in Thessalonica and his practice in general regarding work were not typical of itinerant Christian preachers (cf. 1 Thess. 2:9; 1 Cor.9:5-27).

<sup>116</sup> Dio Chrysostom *Thirteenth Discourse*, 'The great majority of those styled philosophers proclaim themselves as such' (section 11).

<sup>117</sup> The meaning of κενῆ here is disputed. Some (Lightfoot 1904:18; Lyons 1985:192-93; Johanson 1987:89) argue that it points to the character of Paul's mission; that is, it was not empty in the sense of 'wanting in purpose and earnestness.' But this is an unusual usage of the word. Others argue that it points to the results of Paul's mission (Best 1972:89-90; Wanamaker 1990:92); that is, that it was not empty in the sense of fruitless, ineffectual. There is no reason why Paul's usage cannot suggest both ideas (so

the midst of a great battle, a spiritual battle (πολλῶ ἀγῶνι), in which the missionaries had already suffered (πάθος) and been shamed (ὕβριζω) in Philippi. After his departure from Thessalonica (2:17) Paul worried that the believers might falter and succumb to the social pressures designed to overturn their faith (3:5) and thereby make ‘vain’ (κενή) his work in the city. He sent Timothy to discover their status and was pleased to hear that they were standing faithful (3:6-10). Nevertheless, despite this encouragement, Paul’s burden to nourish the believers in their faith was not relieved and he continued to see himself as responsible for the Thessalonians’ identity as faithful believers (3:10-11). Therefore, he continued to pray for them (3:11-13) and instruct them through correspondence (this letter). He also hoped to return to Thessalonica to ‘restore whatever is lacking in your faith’ (3:10).<sup>118</sup> In his correspondence he not only seeks to reinforce their identity as faithful believers in the Christian household (4:1-5:22), but also he seeks to reinforce his own positive apostolic identity as their spiritual guide in their ongoing spiritual battle (2:1-12). By presenting himself and them as having highly positive honorable identities in God Paul seeks to persuade the believers to continue in the faith until the day of Jesus’ return.

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Moore 1979:33; Bruce 1982:24; Marshall 1983:63). But I have taken it as leaning strongly toward the latter sense for four reasons. First, the perfect tense of the verb ‘to be’ (γέγονεν) points in this direction: our visit has not become vain. Second, the use of the term κενή in 3:5 suggests it. Paul had feared that the results of his mission might have been nullified by the outgroup’s application of social pressure (3:5). But Timothy’s report had encouraged him that this was not the case. Thus, he seeks to explain why his visit had not ‘become vain’ (2:1) and capitalize on those reasons for future success. Third, this is the more usual usage of the term in Paul (1 Cor.15:10, 58; 2 Cor.6:1; Gal.2:2; Phil.2:16). Fourth, Paul’s initial thanksgiving emphasizes the results of his visit (1:2-10). Thus, this naturally leads him into a discussion of the reasons for that success (2:1ff).

<sup>118</sup> Dobschütz (1909: 107) correctly perceived that one should read Paul’s statements in 2:1-12 in the light of this semi-eased anxiety over their threatened relationship and his continuing desire to ‘restore whatever is lacking in your faith’, but he

Just as the initial phase of the apostolic mission proved to be successful, so the continuation of the mission can be successful too. The believers can continue in the faith for the same reasons that they initially came to faith. Those reasons are explained in 2:1-12. The reasons revolve around two related aspects of Paul's identity as an apostolic spiritual guide. This passage emphasizes that he is authorized by God to serve as their guide in the faith (2:4) and that he is a dedicated friend to the Thessalonians, serving them tenderly and compassionately (2:8-12). It is clear that the Thessalonians already accept Paul as their spiritual guide sent by Jesus Christ, for they regard him as a model worthy of imitation (1:6) and they obediently follow his instruction (4:1-3). This passage, then, is written to reinforce that acceptance in order to strengthen their resolve in the midst of pressures to compromise. In verses 3-8, Paul constructs a series of antitheses that explain the reasons (*γὰρ*; 2:3, 5) why he was successful in preaching the Gospel to the Thessalonians. The success is attributed to his identity as a spiritual guide approved and sent by God, yet still compassionate and loving toward the Thessalonians. Ilsetraut Hadot has identified these two features as primary sources for the success of a spiritual guide. The work of the spiritual guide 'is considerably aided by two factors: authority and friendship.'<sup>119</sup> Paul establishes both factors in these antitheses. Paul identifies eight negative features that do not characterize him, but only three positive features that do characterize his ministry as a spiritual guide. Most scholars have focused on the negative aspects, as we saw above in the survey of apologetic and paraenetic approaches to this text, and the positive features have received less attention. We believe these three positive statements are essential for understanding Paul's construction of his positive

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did not consider seriously enough the source of that anxiety within the social setting of Thessalonica.

identity, because they establish his authority from God and reveal his loving attitude toward the Thessalonians.

Paul reveals his authority to act as spiritual guide by stating twice that God ‘approves’ (δοκιμάζω) his ministry (2:4). Reflection on the literary style of this paragraph suggests that for Paul this is the key statement in this paragraph. It is placed at the center of the antitheses. Three negatives precede it (deceit, motives, trickery) and three negatives proceed from it (flattery, greed, praise). By placing this feature at the heart of the antitheses Paul highlights his belief that his identity as a spiritual guide for the Thessalonians was established by God. His authority to speak, to instruct, to lead comes from God and he was entrusted with (πιστευθῆναι; cf. Ga. 2:7; 1 Cor. 9:17) this ministry by God. The statement is designed to contrast with the negative characteristics. But what is the purpose of these negative statements? We will argue that these negative statements serve as stark contrasts to Paul’s identity, thereby elevating his identity and showing it in its best light. We will further suggest that the negative characteristics serve to establish the negative identity of the Thessalonian outgroup.

Sandwiched between Paul’s two statements that he is approved by God is the statement that he does not seek to please humans (οὐχ ὡς ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκοντες). The placement of this negative at the heart of the section suggests its importance for Paul. In ancient society ‘pleasing’ others was not regarded as a weakness or negative trait. Within the conceptual grid of words denoting friendliness toward others, the word ἀρέσκειν generally has positive references. ‘Pleasing’ others is deemed appropriate behavior.<sup>120</sup> It

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<sup>119</sup> Hadot 1986: 436.

<sup>120</sup> Flattery (κολαξ) differs from pleasing others (ἀρέσκειν) in that the flatterer seeks self promotion (Theophrastus *Characters* 2.1; Aristotle *Nic.Eth.* 1173b31; 1108a26; 1126b12-15; 1127a7-9; *Eud.Eth.* 1233b30). The one who pleases others

often describes virtuous behavior. For example, in Romans 15:2 Paul counsels, ‘Each of us is to please [ἀρέσκειν] his neighbor for his good’ and in 1 Corinthians 10:33 he cites himself as an example, ‘Just as I also please [ἀρέσκειν] all people in all things’ (cf. 1 Cor.9:22; 10:24). Indeed, in this very antithesis in 1 Thessalonians (2:4) Paul claims to please [ἀρέσκειν] God. And later he will encourage the Thessalonians ‘to please God’ (4:1). In invectives a person may be charged with ‘flattery’ (κολαξ; e.g., Dio *Discourses* 51.4); but to charge someone with ‘pleasing others’ is rather weak and ineffective. Therefore, it is unlikely that Paul is being charged with ‘pleasing humans.’ His denial is not a response to an invective. Instead, it is more likely that Paul is constructing an alternative social system in which pleasing God is more important than pleasing humans. Values in ancient social systems typically revolved around notions of honor and shame. But social groups might differ as concerns the specific values they identified as honorable. In verses 6 Paul offers a surprising view of social values and honor when he states that ‘we did not seek honor [δόξα] from humans, whether from you or from others.’ Seeking honor (δόξα) from humans was standard human behavior in ancient Mediterranean society; it was expected that everyone would seek to win honor from others. In this light, Paul’s denial strikes one as rather odd. Again, it is unlikely that the statement represents an accusation hurled at Paul from an opposition group in Thessalonica, since they would not regard seeking honor as wrong. In fact, the statement probably describes accurately the behavior and values of the outgroup; therefore, it may have a polemical thrust. With his denial of this standard social practice Paul may be redefining certain values so as to counter the accepted social system for obtaining honor.

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(*areskein*) may do so excessively, in which case it becomes improper (obsequiousness),



The effect of this will be not only to counter outgroup strategies for winning back the converts, but also to establish a new ground for comparison of ingroup and outgroup identities, whereby the ingroup is enabled to maintain its positive distinctiveness.<sup>121</sup> The Thessalonian outgroup, in their attempt to restore the honor of their households and city, would probably have appealed to the convert's sense of honor previously enjoyed as members of the household and members of the city. Their strategies would have pointed out that the recent behavior of the converts had brought a loss of honor and a shameful reputation, but that by returning to their previous identities within the household and city they could restore their honor in the eyes of their neighbors. In the quest for a positive identity, Paul recognizes that the outgroup has the more valid claim to the superior comparative identity *given the existing values and social system*. Therefore, in order for Paul to obtain a superior identity for himself and the ingroup he must redefine the values of the social system. This is an example of social creativity. Since the honor-shame code was one of the most potent elements in the outgroup's arsenal, Paul's redefinition of the source of honor and shame as God and not humans effectively nullifies its use and enables Paul and the ingroup to maintain a positive identity.<sup>122</sup>

The earlier and later antithetical statements (vv.3 and 5) might be read in a similar way. For example, Paul's claim that he did not come with 'words of flattery or with a

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but there is a proper method of pleasing others that is socially appropriate and valuable.

<sup>121</sup> Compare M.A.K. Halliday's sociolinguistic approach to this matter (Halliday 1976). He discusses the relationship between two opposing social groups. 'An anti-society is a society that is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it' (1976: 570). An anti-language is anti-society's response to the power structures of society, whereby it seeks to redefine the common vocabulary ('relexicalization').

<sup>122</sup> Scott Bartchy states, 'Essential to Paul's messianic morality was a profound redefinition of family, no longer based on blood ties that required honor-defending strategies, but rather based on each individual's personal commitment to Israel's compassionate God and the resulting social vision of generalized reciprocity' (1999: 69).

pretext of greed' (v.5) may be read as a polemic against outgroup strategies to win back converts. We have already discussed the detrimental effects of conversion on the household and city, some of which involved economic consequences. In view of the likely economic struggles that followed conversion, it may be reasonable to conjecture that one of the outgroup's most impassioned and effective appeals to their former members would be a basic economic appeal. Survival and sustenance were at stake. However, in Paul's creative discourse, such potentially effective economic appeals become, instead, shameful examples of greed. This polemic demands a creative redefinition of greed, however, similar to the redefinition of honor and shame. It is unlikely that the outgroup would have interpreted their goals as greedy. But if Paul can reconstruct the situation in such a way as to define their economic appeals as appeals to greed, then he has won the higher ground and has again provided ground for positive distinctiveness in the ingroup. There is some evidence that such a redefining process was occurring within some of the early Christian communities (Matt. 6:19-24; 6:25-34), including the Pauline communities (1 Timothy 6:6-10). 'Do not be worried about your life—what you will eat or what you will drink, nor for your body, what you will put on it—Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... Do not worry, then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear for clothing?" For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things. But your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you' (Matt.6:25, 31-33). 'Godliness is a great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into this world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be

content' (1 Tim. 6:6-7). These texts reveal that within Christian communities there has been a reconstruction of the notion of greed. In the same way, notions of what constitutes 'flattery' will be different between ingroup and outgroup, so that appeals regarded as proper by the outgroup might be regarded as 'flattery' to Paul and the ingroup. Appeals directed to the believer's previous possession of honor within their former groups, reminding them of the important roles and responsibilities they managed in those groups, become accusations of 'flattery' in Paul's discourse.

Throughout these antitheses, then, Paul offers a vision of the situation in Thessalonica, where there is a spiritual battle raging and the faith of the converts is being challenged but not defeated. Paul claims that God is the ultimate reason for the converts' success in maintaining their faith. God sent Paul, his tested and approved servant, to Thessalonica. Paul sought to honor and please God in his preaching and teaching. Paul did not adopt the prevailing social values in Thessalonica, but lived according to an alternative set of social values based on honoring God. These social values do not, however, minimize concern for humans. In fact, Paul's behavior among the Thessalonians demonstrates that love for others is a crucial element of this social world. Paul describes his behavior among the Thessalonians with intimate and loving words. Controversy surrounds Paul's statement in 2:7. Did Paul claim to be 'gentle' or an 'infant' amongst the Thessalonians? Although all agree that the external evidence is overwhelmingly in support of the reading *νήπιοι* (infants), most decide to emend the text to *ἡπιοι* (gentle) on the basis of intrinsic judgments. The structure of the text is one of the main intrinsic features persuading commentators to emend the text. 'As apostles of Christ we could have made our weight felt. But [ἀλλά] we became [v]ηπιοι among you, like a

nurse tenderly caring for her own children.’ Clearly this structure favors ἡπιοι (gentle) over νήπιοι (infants), since it makes little sense to compare an infant with a nurse. However, Fee (1992) claims that ἀλλά should be understood as the second half of an antithetical statement in parallel with the previous antitheses (vv.3-4a, 4b). In that case the structure would be as follows: ‘As apostles of Christ we could have made our weight felt, but [ἀλλά] we became [ν]ηπιοι among you. Like a nurse ...’ In this case νήπιοι makes good sense and should be preferred to an emendation. Ultimately, however, this textual debate does not change the meaning of the text. On either reading, Paul emphasizes his love and compassion for the Thessalonians. Verse 9-12 expand this point.

In verses 9-12 the success of the mission is attributed to the charity and selflessness of Paul’s behavior among the Thessalonians. Noteworthy is the fictive kinship terminology that characterizes Paul’s behavior and the relationship that developed between him and his converts. The concentration of household language in this brief passage is striking: After introducing the section with the term ‘brothers’ (2:1), there is no such familiar terminology until verse seven, when household language becomes pervasive: ‘brothers,’ ‘father,’ ‘children.’ ‘God’ and ‘labor and toil’ might be described as household terms too. It is evident that Paul is presenting the new minority ingroup as a household. This has the effect of describing ‘a radically alternative form of kinship,’ a surrogate spiritual household in contrast to the physical household in which the converts lived.<sup>123</sup> It is likely that the natural households of the converts had been thrown into some degree of confusion and shame.<sup>124</sup> The situation would have adversely affected the attitudes and conduct of those householders. There would have been

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<sup>123</sup> Bartchy 1990: 70.

significant pressure placed on the deviant member, who was causing this shame and disgrace, to conform to the standards and values of the household. Paul's contrastive presentation of the ingroup fictive household is one of harmony, care, and efficient labor. In the alternative (supernatural) household, then, God becomes a rich source of honor for all the members. In this household, Paul functions as the 'father' (2:11) or head. He is responsible for the continued success of the household. The purpose of this household is different from the typical household, however. Paul explains that as head of this household it is his responsibility to see that its members 'should lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory' (2:12). Thus, his function as the head of the household is that of a spiritual guide.

What holds these two sections (2:3-8 and 2:9-12) together is the 'witness' motif. Both God and the Thessalonians are witnesses on Paul's behalf (2:5, 10). In verse five Paul writes, 'As God is our witness . . .' And in verse ten he writes, 'You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright and blameless our conduct was towards you believers.' Four times Paul appeals to the Thessalonians knowledge as witness to what he says and does (2:1, 2, 5, 11). The purpose of the witness terminology is to call for a positive response from the Thessalonians to Paul's reconstruction in 2:1-12. Paul wants the Thessalonians to acknowledge that his view is the correct view. This acknowledgement of Paul's identity as their spiritual guide and of the value of the reconstructed social system will make salient the Thessalonians identity as faithful followers of Jesus.

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<sup>124</sup> It is possible that some whole households had become Christian households, but it is unlikely that this would be typical (Meeks 1979: 13).

## Conclusion

In 1 Thessalonians Paul presents himself as an apostolic spiritual guide whose leadership can direct the Thessalonians successfully through the spiritual battle with their former ingroup members. God initiated Paul's role as an apostolic spiritual guide, sending him to the Thessalonians, and he will continue to use Paul in that capacity until the day Jesus returns. Paul's behavior described in 1 Thessalonians 2 is commensurate with and flows from his identity as an apostolic spiritual guide. By following Paul's guidance the Thessalonian believers will be able to maintain their identity as followers of Jesus and resist social pressures to conform to former identities and behavior. 1 Thessalonians clarifies Paul's understanding of his apostolic self-identity by revealing that Paul thought of himself as a spiritual guide for the ingroup of Jesus-followers in Thessalonica. We will now consider Paul's apostolic self-identity as it is revealed in the Corinthian correspondence.

## Chapter Nine

### The Apostolic Self-Identity of Paul in 1 & 2 Corinthians

#### Paul the Spiritual Guide whom the Lord Commends

##### Introduction

The exigence in Corinth concerned opposition, as it did in Thessalonica, but there are few other similarities between the two situations. In Thessalonica opposition took the form of an outgroup of unbelievers persecuting the ingroup of believers; however, in Corinth the ingroup splintered and there were subgroups, some in opposition to others, each with its own leadership. 'I follow Paul; I follow Apollos; I follow Cephas; I follow Christ' (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4). While one or some of the splinter groups recognized Paul's apostolic authority, others did not and mounted a serious challenge to his leadership in the community. Paul wrote to them, asking,

Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? Even though I am may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

But some were not convinced and the challenge grew fiercer. Paul received reports and discovered that some charged, 'his letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech is contemptible' (2 Cor. 10:10) and some were asking for 'proof that Christ is speaking in me' (2 Cor. 13:3).

Thus, Paul was faced with two related problems in Corinth: the disunity of the community and the challenge to his apostolic identity. This exigence is especially evident

in the final section of the correspondence, 2 Corinthians 10-13. In his concluding statements, after claiming that he will indeed provide powerful proof that Christ is speaking in him, he challenges the Corinthians to examine themselves to discern whether or not Christ is in them (2 Cor. 13:5), and he commands them to remain united in Christ: ‘Finally, brothers, rejoice. Be restored [καταρτίζεσθε]. Be supportive [παρακαλεῖσθε]. Be of one mind [τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖτε]. Be at peace [εἰρηνεύετε]. And the God of love and peace will be with you’ (2 Cor. 13:11).

The social identity perspective recognizes that such situations demand a deft handling of the issues, lest fractures are deepened and schism results. Sani and Reicher identify two related factors that push the process toward either consensus or dissensus: the topics chosen for discussion and conceptions of what constitutes the essence of a group’s identity.<sup>1</sup> Topics are chosen because they are highly relevant to group identity. While discussing such topics, divergent opinions regarding the core elements of ingroup identity are often revealed. If these issues are not resolved, then schism follows. In Corinth, the issues under discussion, at least in Paul’s reconstruction, revolve around the nature of unity within a diverse group of people and leadership styles, particularly Paul’s leadership style. This discussion leads Paul to question his opposition’s understanding of the gospel itself, which results in a stirring challenge, ‘examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith—prove yourselves!’ (2 Cor. 13:5). In the following analysis we will identify the categories Paul used to reconstruct the social situation and the relevant identities within that situation, focusing ultimately on his own identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Sani and Reicher 1999: 280. See the section ‘social change and schism’ in chapter five of this thesis.



### Category Construction in 1 & 2 Corinthians

The Corinthian correspondence reveals similarities and differences with the categories found in 1 Thessalonians. The same basic temporal framework is used to orient the situation in Corinth and give meaning to relevant identities. However, despite the similarity in framework, the situation and identities constructed in Corinth have little resemblance to 1 Thessalonians.

#### Temporal Categories

Essentially the same three-fold Christ-oriented temporal framework is evident. The situation begins when the Corinthians were 'called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ' (1 Cor, 1:9) through the preaching of Paul (1 Cor. 4:15; 2 Cor. 10:14). The present situation is a threat to the reality or continuation of their identity as faithful believers (2 Cor. 13:5). The reality of their identity as faithful believers will be revealed in the end of time on the day of the Lord when God judges each person's work (1 Cor. 3:10-15; cf. 1 Cor. 1:7-9; 4:5; 15:51-58; 2 Cor. 1:14; 4:14). This orientation gives content to Paul's own identity. He is their 'father' in the faith, because they first heard the gospel through his preaching (1 Cor. 4:15; 2 Cor. 10:14). He is their spiritual guide, responsible to present them to Christ as mature and holy; he explains, 'I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ' (2 Cor. 11:2). His own identity—either positive or negative—will be revealed on the day of judgment (1 Cor. 3:10-13). Once again the temporal framework finds continuity in the activity of God. God began the process: 'God is faithful—by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son' (1 Cor. 1:9). He will conclude it: 'He will also

strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 1:8). He maintains its continuity through the present distress by means of an inner spiritual guide (the Holy Spirit) and an outer spiritual guide (Paul): 'It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and who has anointed us, putting his seal on us and giving us the down-payment of his Spirit in our hearts' (2 Cor. 1:21-22). Nevertheless, Paul fears that some of the Corinthians may reject the apostolic spiritual guide that God has sent to them—Paul himself—and be taken captive by a false guide (2 Cor. 11:3-4). Thus, Paul constructs the present situation in Corinth as embedded in this Christ-oriented temporal framework.

### Identity Categories

Identity categories in the Corinthian letters are far more complex than the sometimes unreal, stereotypical, black and white, categories Paul created in 1 Thessalonians. Paul's reconstruction of the relevant identities is controversial, seemingly anomalous, and critically important in his attempt to persuade the Corinthians to unify around his guidance as their Lord-commended leader. At times Paul does relate stereotypical ingroup and outgroup categories; however, his purpose in doing so is to heighten the anomaly of behavior among ingroup members that is shockingly similar to that of outgroup members (1 Cor. 5-6, 10). For example, in unconfused clarity, Paul describes the ingroup as consisting of all believers, both in Corinth and elsewhere (1 Cor. 1:2). They are called saints and believers (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:2), and they are characterized by the spirit (πνευματικὸς, 1 Cor. 2:12-15). This ingroup is described as 'one body' having 'many members' (1 Cor. 12). Similarly the outgroup is sometimes reconstructed in

expected and typical terms. This group consists of all unbelievers. They are ‘the outsiders’ (τοὺς ἔξω), who are characterized by the flesh (σαρκινός, 1 Cor. 3:1). Satan is identified with this group (1 Cor. 5:5). Paul can also present these two groups in antithetical terms, similar to his construction in 1 Thessalonians, stating, for example, ‘the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing [outgroup], but to us who are being saved [ingroup] it is the power of God’ (1 Cor. 1:18).

However, when Paul describes his own gospel message as ‘foolishness’ (μωρία) in this verse, the stereotypicality of his categories begins to fade and the complexity and controversial nature of his identity construction is revealed. We expect that ingroup identities and characteristics will be described with positive and honorable terminology, yet Paul launches on a campaign to describe the ingroup with decidedly negative terms. Ingroup members are the fools of the world (τὰ μωρὰ τοῦ κόσμου), the weak of the world (τὰ ἀσθενῆ τοῦ κόσμου), the low and despised of the world (τὰ ἀγενῆ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὰ ἐξουθενημένα, 1 Cor. 1:27-28). The gospel itself is described as folly (μωρία) to the Greeks (1 Cor. 1:18, 21) and a scandal to the Judeans (σκάνδαλον, 1 Cor. 1:23). In bold and anomalous contrast, the outgroup members are the wise (σοφοὶ) and powerful (δυνατοί, 1 Cor. 1:26-28) of this world. Such categorization is unexpected and strange indeed, but Paul explains—or, tries to defend—this oddity by claiming that it serves to emphasize the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor 1:18-31). In a stunning reversal of human expectation, God’s power and wisdom are revealed by using weak fools as instruments to destroy human wisdom and thwart human power: ‘God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the 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 nothing, to

reduce to nothing things that are, so that no human would boast in God's presence' (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

Paul's reconstruction of the ingroup is intrinsically related to the construction of his own identity, for he presents himself as an exemplar of the ingroup, worthy of being imitated and followed: 'I exhort you, imitate me!' (1 Cor. 4:16). In both letters he introduces himself as 'called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.' But it is not long before his self-description seems to call into question this identity. He describes himself as one who is weak, foolish, and shamed because of Christ (μωρός, ἀσθενής, ἄτιμος, 1 Cor. 4:10). He reminds them that when he came to Corinth to preach the gospel, he did not come with wisdom, but, rather, 'in weakness, fear, and much trembling' (1 Cor. 2:1-3). He describes his existence in pitiful terms: 'to this present hour we are hungry and thirsty, barely clothed, beaten, and homeless; we toil in manual labor, blessing those who revile us and enduring those who persecute' (1 Cor. 4:11-12). Paul states that if he must assert his own honor, he will do so by revealing his weakness (εἰ καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μου καυχίσομαι, 2 Cor. 11:30). It is this weakness that has caused some in Corinth to question Paul's apostolic status (1 Cor. 9:1; 2 Cor. 13:3). But Paul claims that it is in such a weak state that he manifests God's wisdom and power, for such are available to Paul through the indwelling Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:6-16). In Paul's attempt to legitimize his apostolic status in Corinth he returns to the basic question 'what is an apostle?' By reconstructing the identity of a true apostle of Christ, Paul hopes to legitimate his own apostolic status. In so doing he reveals his understanding of his role as an apostle of Jesus.

The oddity of Paul's construction of identity continues as he formulates the identity of the believers in Corinth. He opens the letter by praising them, saying, 'in every way you have been enriched in Christ, in speech and knowledge of every kind . . . so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 1:5-7). Later he writes, 'I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you' (1 Cor. 11:2). But shortly thereafter he writes, 'In giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse' (1 Cor. 11:17). And he sharply criticizes them for being carnal (1 Cor. 3:1). This oddity can be explained in two ways. First, the ingroup has splintered and there are various subgroups. Second, for Paul, the ingroup has become infused with outgroup perceptions and behavior, which threaten the health and stability of the ingroup. Paul refers to some members of the ingroup as 'nominal brothers' (ἀδελφός ὀνομαζόμενος, 1 Cor. 5:11) and demands their removal and replacement to the outgroup.

### Spatial Categories

The basic spatial categorization is the same as in Thessalonica; that is, the ingroup, and all its subgroups, and the outgroup shared the same social space. The difference between Corinth and Thessalonica is that the absence of physical boundaries has become a picture of the failure of some persons in Corinth to maintain ingroup boundaries. Behavior and perception among ingroup members is sometimes no different than outgroup members, and sometimes it is even worse! 'I have heard there is immorality in the group; indeed, a kind of immorality that is unheard of even among the

Gentile—someone “has” [ἔχειν] his father’s wife’ (1 Cor. 5:1). Paul demands that this person be exiled from the ingroup and sent into Satan’s territory (1 Cor. 5:5). Likewise, some have engaged in sexual relations with prostitutes. Paul exclaims, ‘can members of the body of Christ become members of a prostitute?! God forbid! (1 Cor. 6:15). Within the ingroup, not only are there no physical boundaries, but perceptual and behavioral boundaries have become confused, at least by some members, rendering their identity questionable.

Having revealed these basic categories we can now proceed to examine how Paul constructs the situation and relevant identities using these categories. As before, we will begin by analysing Paul’s reconstruction of the situation and then move to his reconstruction of his own apostolic identity within that situation.

#### Constructing the Social Situation in Corinth—Disunity and Opposition to Paul

In 1 & 2 Corinthians Paul offers his own interpretation of the situation in Corinth in contrast to and in refutation of other interpretations, which threaten to destroy the unity of the ingroup and overthrow Paul’s leadership in the community. Paul’s construction is based on reports received and his impression of those reports. He has learned that there is disunity in the community and that there are certain persons who oppose Paul’s leadership. In the following construction we will offer a brief chronology of Paul’s correspondence with the Corinthians and the changing relationship it describes. Following this we will attempt to contextualize Paul’s visits by examining Corinthian society. The social conditions prevailing provide insight into the Corinthians’ attitudes toward Paul and the source of his problems there.

### The Corinthian Correspondence: The Revelation of a Complicated Relationship

Paul's relationship with the Corinthians is a complex affair, stretching over several years and encompassing several visits, letters, and reports. Sorting out the complexities is highly conjectural and it is unlikely that there will ever be a consensus on the matter. The New Testament canon contains two letters from Paul to the Corinthians, 1 & 2 Corinthians. However, 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 refers to a previous letter in which Paul instructed the Corinthians not to associate with immoral members of the ingroup, 'so-called brothers.' Likewise 2 Corinthians 2:4 refers to another letter written in great heartache and with many tears. This suggests Paul wrote at least four letters, but it is possible that our present 1 & 2 Corinthians incorporate these other two letters, since the two canonical letters betray a fragmentary quality. For example, it has been noted often that 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 is an obvious and ragged fragment, breaking up the continuous flow of thought from 6:13 to 7:2.<sup>2</sup> More importantly, the change in attitude and tone between chapters 1-9 (friendly and conciliatory) and 10-13 (aggressive and antagonistic) in 2 Corinthians is dramatic enough to cause some scholars to see these as two different letters, written at different times and under different circumstances. Some have suggested that 2 Corinthians 10-13 is the letter written in heartache referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:4.<sup>3</sup> If this is true, then chapters 10-13 precede chapters 1-9, and the last document we have reveals a positive relationship between Paul and the Corinthians.

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<sup>2</sup> Although the contents seem similar, it is risky to suggest that 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 preserves a fragment of the previous letter mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9. For discussion see Hurd 1965: 135-37; Taylor 1991: 71, 75-79; Duff 1993; and Horrell 1996: 89. On the possibility that 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 represent two separate letters, see H. D. Betz 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Watson 1984, Welborn 1995, Horrell 1996: 298-302. Against this theory, see Murphy-O'Connor 1991.

However, if the chapters fall in the canonical order, then chapters 10-13 reveal that Paul's relationship with the Corinthians has worsened; opposition has become more openly hostile.

In addition to sending letters, Paul also returned to Corinth one time after his initial eighteen month visit (Acts 18:11; 1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 1:15-2:1). The Corinthians also wrote to Paul (1 Cor. 7:1). Members of the Corinthian community visited Paul and reported to him activity in the church (1 Cor. 1:11; 16:17). Finally, Paul sent Timothy to Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:1). It is evident, then, that there has been a good amount of communication between Paul and the Corinthians and that relations between the two have been unstable.

#### Corinth: A Strategic Greek and Roman City

The victory of Roman forces over Greek cities is well known. In 146 B.C.E. the Roman general Mummius defeated Corinth, slaughtered the men, enslaved the women and children, and torched the city, razing it to the ground. In addition to the physical violence of destroying the Achaean League, heavy taxation and racketeering by Roman officials led to the ruin of the Greek mainland and its once great cities, reducing its population and condemning those who remained to grinding poverty. While in exile in Greece Cicero visited the ruins of Corinth and described the meager population living amidst the debris (*Tus. Disp.* 3.53; cf. *Ad familiares* 4.5.4). A little more than one hundred years after it was destroyed, Corinth would rise from the ruins to become a great city again. In 44 B.C.E. *Colonia Laus Julia Corinthiensis*, named in honor of its founder Julius Caesar, was re-established, and in 27 B.C.E. became the capital of the Roman



province of Achaëa and the home of the Roman proconsul. Corinth was a strategic city for both Romans and Greeks, but for different reasons.

For Greeks Corinth was important because it was one of few cities in ‘Old Greece’ to return to its former glory under Romanization, surpassing even Athens, which had become little more than a tourist stop (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1; Strabo 8.6.20; Thucydides 1.13.5).<sup>4</sup> Even during the first century C.E., when Corinth had grown large and powerful, the other Achaean cities lingered.<sup>5</sup> Seneca moaned, ‘Do you not see how in Achaëa the foundations of the most famous cities have already crumbled to nothing, so that no trace is left to show that they ever existed?’ (*Epistles* 91.10). It was left to Corinth to maintain the pride and dignity of classical Greece. So it was that sophists and rhetors praised Corinth for upholding the classical traditions. The thirty-seventh *Oration* of Dio, which is actually a speech by the famous Attic orator Favorinus, praised Corinth as the ‘stem and stern of Hellas’ (37.36). The equally famous second century Attic rhetor Aelius Aristides praised Corinth as ‘the common city meeting place and festival of the Greeks, which they crowd into, not every two years, as for the present festival, but every year and every day. It is . . . the common city of the Greeks, . . . their

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<sup>4</sup> Alcock (1997: 103) describes the decline: ‘Measured by all the usual standards of success (urbanization, economic productivity, demographic increase), “Old Greece”, the Roman province of Achaia, is a disappointment in its early imperial incarnation. The number of populated and functioning cities in the province declines, a phenomenon deplored by contemporary authors. Rural settlement dwindles—in some regions by as much as 80 percent from the preceding period—as does evidence of other forms of human activity in the countryside.’ Pausanias’ descriptions of the ruins of many classical Greek sites reveals the decline. On Pausanias’ descriptions of Greece and their relevance for discerning Greek identity, see the excellent article Elsner 1992. It is difficult to estimate population size, but in the mid-second century C.E. in his *Isthmian Oration* 46(3) Aristides described Corinth as the largest city in Greece.

<sup>5</sup> For a study of other Roman colonies in Greece see Alcock 1993.

metropolis', 'still commemorated as the most brilliant in peace and war', 'the most conspicuous in deed and accomplishments' (*Isthmian Oration* 46[3]. 23-31).<sup>6</sup>

For Romans Corinth was important because of its strategic location. Strabo explains,

Corinth . . . is situated on the Isthmus and is master of two harbors, of which the one [Cenchrea] leads straight to Asia, and the other [Lechaeum] to Italy. It makes easy the exchange of merchandise from both countries that are far distant from each other. (*Geography* 8.6.20)

Corinth grew even greater as a result of Claudian redevelopment in the first century C.E., when the city may have doubled in size, from its originally intended population of 40,000, becoming a vital economic link to all cities in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>7</sup> The harbor district was redeveloped and commercial construction increased dramatically in the market district. C.K. Williams suggests that this development was a response to the famines of the 40s. He writes,<sup>8</sup>

We recall that in 41 Rome had been left with a supply of only 8 days of grain, to remedy which Claudius began his new harbour installations at Portus in 42. There was a period of famine in 42, and one affected Judea between 45 and 48 (Acts 11.28 records a world wide famine at this time); then a severe famine was felt

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<sup>6</sup> We must forcefully disagree with Colin Kruse, then, when he claims (1987: 15), 'The Corinth of Paul's day should not be envisaged as a Greek city, rather as a Roman colony, probably quite cosmopolitan in character.'

<sup>7</sup> Engels 1990: 84 claims, 'an urban population of 80,000 and a rural population of 20,000 does not seem unreasonable.' Archaeological study of Roman Corinth indicates that the forum in Corinth was four times larger than in Pompeii, whose population is estimated at 10,000. This suggests that the original plans for Corinth were for a city of approximately 40,000 people. The ancient architect Vitruvius (5.2.1) explains, 'The size of a forum should be proportionate to the number of inhabitants, so that it may not be too small a space to be useful, nor look like a desert waste for lack of population. To determine its breadth, divide its length into three parts and assign two of them to the breadth. Its shape will then be oblong and its ground plan conveniently suited to the condition of shows.' For more on these foundations of the Roman city, see Romano 1994 and Hoskins Walbank 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Williams 1994: 46. On the growth surge during the Claudian period, see too Grant 2001: 16; König 2001: 141; Wiseman 1978 and 1979: 502-508; Romano 2000; Rizakis 1997.

throughout Greece in 51. Keeping the empire fed may well have been one of the main problems for Claudius in the first 11 years of his reign. Encouraging and facilitating the circulation of foodstuffs, especially grain, around the Mediterranean must have been of utmost importance for maintaining stability within the cities.

Nero, too, was a benefactor, promoting Greek culture in the Greek East. Thus, the greatness of Corinth is found in two different realms—as a Roman port city uniting East and West and keeping the Empire fed and as a Greek city maintaining the glory of Greece’s classical tradition. Jason König has described Corinth as occupying ‘an unusual—in many ways unique—position between Greek and Roman identity.’<sup>9</sup> It is this unique identity that must be considered in order to understand better Paul’s difficulties in the city.

Corinth’s unique identity as both Greek and Roman created a certain tension for the city and its inhabitants. Although modern scholars sometimes speak of an ancient ‘Greco-Roman’ culture, it would be wrong to think that this suggests a homogenized blend of the two cultures. Certainly there was mutual influence, but the two remained distinct and not entirely complementary.<sup>10</sup> Simon Swain points out, ‘So far as the Greeks of our period were concerned, there was indeed just one culture: that culture was Greek and Greek only.’<sup>11</sup> It is well known that while the Romans admired the classical Greeks

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<sup>9</sup> König 2001: 141.

<sup>10</sup> When I say ‘two’ I am of course speaking in generalities, since there was not just one way of being Greek or one way of being Roman. Indeed, I will argue in this chapter that Greek identity in Corinth was not the same as Greek identity in Asia Minor. My point is simply that Greeks and Romans remained distinct. In recent years there have been many publications on the notion of Greek identity in the Roman Empire. Among these, see the excellent volume edited by Goldhill 2001 for discussion.

<sup>11</sup> Swain 1996: 9. Geoffrey Horrocks (1997: 78, 79) opines, ‘many Greeks felt a profound sense of alienation: continuity with the past was correspondingly highlighted, and Roman literature and education largely ignored. ... the overall outcome of Greco-Roman cohabitation, even after several centuries, could hardly be called harmonious. ... [The Romans made] a sharp distinction between the Greeks of old, who were believed to

for what they had achieved, they considered their descendants, the contemporary Greeks of the Roman Empire, lazy, immoral and contemptible. Caesar famously sneered at the Athenians, 'how often will the glory of your ancestors save you from self-destruction?'<sup>12</sup> The Greek response to such sneers, beginning in the first century C.E., was to reassert and rebuild its classical heritage and reclaim that glorious identity for itself. This assertion is known as the Second Sophistic. As the chief city in 'Old Greece' Corinth played a vital role in this resurgence of classical Greek identity. Thus, the city of Corinth in the first century, during the time that Paul visited the city, was experiencing a rapid expansion as it became a crucial commercial and economic center for the Roman administration, and, at the same time, was reasserting its classical Greek identity. These were two potent identities and they suggest that a certain tension prevailed in the city. Susan Alcock has described the relationship as a careful dialogue and negotiation of identity, writing, 'in the case of Achaia, as well as a dialogue between imperial power and subject people, we must also listen for, and look for material traces of, a dialogue between Roman and Greek.'<sup>13</sup> She states that development of the city and province depended upon not only geography, economics, and administration, but also 'upon negotiations over identity, over the mutual perception of conqueror and conquered. In other words, the provincial landscape of early imperial Achaia was what it was, not just because of its size, terrain and geographical position, but because of its historical and cognitive position as the homeland of the Greeks.'<sup>14</sup>

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have had "true" civilization, and the Greeks of the contemporary world, who were increasingly seen as frivolous and insincere.'

<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed explanation of this attitude, see Woolf 1994 (esp. p. 135).

<sup>13</sup> Alcock 1997: 109.

<sup>14</sup> Alcock 1997: 112. She points out that Achaia was unique in this aspect. There were, of course, other regions and other cities of the Greek East (e.g., Crete, Anatolia) in

### Constructing a Positive Greek Identity in Corinth

Simon Swain states that the objective of first and second century C.E. Greek cultural development 'lay primarily in constructing their own identity.' This project was motivated in part by the Romans' negative perceptions of contemporary Greek identity in contrast to their positive perceptions of the classical Greeks. The project, then, centered on reviving that glorious classical ideal. The attempts to revive that ideal manifested itself in a wide variety of cultural pursuits, including language, literature, oratory, art, and architecture. One of the most important features of Greek identity in the Roman Empire was use of the Greek language. Latin was the official language of administration and commerce in Corinth, as is seen by the Corinthian coinage, but Greek remained the common language of the people.<sup>15</sup> During the first century, however, the impulse grew to restore the classical Greek of centuries past, Attic Greek. Swain writes, '*koine* was supplanted by a language which appeared—and that was often all—to mimic exactly the language of classical authors. . . . "atticism" was the only viable description of the process because the Athenian classics were the only completely acceptable models.'<sup>16</sup> This atticized Greek or 'language purism' avoided all contamination with non-Attic elements, such as colloquialisms and especially latinisms. 'The Atticists demanded no less than a return to the vocabulary and to the range of sounds and forms of the Attic

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which Greeks confronted Romans, but they did not have the same cultural identity as the Achaians, who upheld the honor of classical Greece. She notes, for example, that the province of Asia was also dominated by Greeks and Greek culture, but, she says (p. 113), it 'was not "Old Greece" in terms of its specific cultural identity. To be "Greek" clearly meant no single, uniform thing under the early Empire, and that flexibility should be expected in the Greek response to Roman rule.'

<sup>15</sup> On Latin as the official language in Corinth, see Frank 1938: 4.446; Grant 2001: 19; Murphy-O'Connor 1983: 5.

language of three to four hundred years earlier in the written-literary usage, which was to be entirely different from the oral variety.<sup>17</sup> In Greece ‘an ability to use the classical language came to be regarded as a conspicuous and exclusive badge of class membership.’<sup>18</sup> In order to promote this movement it was necessary to reorient education. By the second century C.E. lists of model authors and orators had been created, and lexica and grammars of Attic Greek had been produced.<sup>19</sup> The meaning of being cultured or educated (*παιδευμένος*) took on a particularly Attic mood.<sup>20</sup> The Corinthians particularly favored the Attic style of Herodes, the Athenian sophist and patron of Corinth who built the theatre in Corinth and who was associated with Favorinus, whom the Corinthians honored with a statue.<sup>21</sup> The ‘thoroughly hellenized’ Corinthians (Dio Chrysostom *Discourses* 37.25) may well have judged Paul’s oratory on the basis of these standards. In stark contrast to the regal Attic being championed in Achaia, a more florid and vibrant style of Greek was being taught in the Greek cities of Asia Minor, which probably had much greater influence on Paul. These two schools of rhetoric were rivals in the first century. In order to understand the difference between these two schools, and the importance of the difference in Corinth, it will be helpful to survey the history of the use of the Greek language in rhetoric and oratory.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Swain 1997: 168-69.

<sup>17</sup> Dihle 1994: 54.

<sup>18</sup> Horrocks 1997: 81.

<sup>19</sup> Horrocks 1997: 83-86.

<sup>20</sup> For example, there was much discussion over a canon of Attic orators. On this see O’Sullivan, 1997. An example of an Attic grammar is Phrynichus’ second century text *The Atticist*.

<sup>21</sup> On the Corinthians’ and Herodes, see Plutarch *Lives* 490, 573.

Excursus On Greek Rhetoric: Its History and Development to the First Century C.E.

The origins of Greek rhetoric can be traced back to Gorgias, the fifth century B.C.E. ‘father of rhetoric,’ whose attempt to understand and explain the persuasive power of poetic speech resulted in the emergence of rhetoric, the study of persuasive speech. Gorgias visited Athens in 427 B.C.E. and amazed the citizens with his oratorical skills. They requested that he remain in the city and explain the source of his skills. He established a school and taught others. Perhaps his most famous student was Isocrates, but his influence is seen in several other Greeks, including Antiphon and Thucydides.<sup>23</sup> The Gorgian style was clearly identifiable. ‘The seductions of his antithetical manner, with its balancing clauses and rhymes: antithesis, homoeoteleuton and parisosis became known as σχήματα Γοργεία.’<sup>24</sup> Thus, rhetoric—the study of persuasive speech—originates with Gorgias.

For Gorgias the key to persuasive speech is found in the poets. Poetry was a gift, a supernatural χάρισμα, inspired by the Muse. Thus, inspiration was the source of persuasive speech.<sup>25</sup> Gorgias’ explanation of rhetoric cannot be understood apart from his concept of *καιρός*. The term *καιρός* refers to a specific type of time, a time in which something significant occurs or should occur. Such a time was ‘momentous’ or ‘pregnant.’ *Καιρός* is sometimes translated as ‘the opportune moment.’ For Gorgias persuasive speech contains three kairotic events. The first kairotic event is the moment of inspiration, when the idea, or what Gorgias called the *λόγος*, is created, infused, or discovered in the mind of the speaker. Josef Pieper explains, ‘we are dealing not with

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<sup>22</sup> Wardy 1996 provides an excellent survey.

<sup>23</sup> See Too 1995 for an important study of rhetoric and identity in Isocrates.

<sup>24</sup> Russell 1970: 471.

<sup>25</sup> See the helpful treatment in Sullivan 1992.

self-governing human genius, but with something bestowed by another, a higher, a divine power.<sup>26</sup> The second kairotic event is the moment of stasis, which occurs in the mind of the (future) auditors. Stasis refers to a mental state in which a person is seized by opposing opinions (δόξαι) and cannot decide between the two, 'so that the consequence is an abandonment of action.'<sup>27</sup> These δόξαι are conflicting rational opinions. However, since both seem reasonable, they prevent the person from choosing between them. The person is frozen in indecision. This stasis is finally broken by the third kairotic event. The moment of power (δύναμις) occurs when the previous two kairotic events come into contact; that is, when the speaker's καιρός of inspiration meets the auditor's καιρός of stasis through the delivery of a speech. In this moment, the audience's indecision is overpowered by the revelation of the speaker's inspiration. Gorgian or kairotic rhetoric, then, is that rhetoric or persuasive speech which overwhelms the auditor's rational indecision by an irrational or divine power. Sullivan illustrates: '... an orator cannot argue a person into acknowledging the presence of God; the orator can, at best, create a *kairos* which unleashes the glory of God.' He continues, 'Such rhetoric is not characterized by rational arguments, for its end is not judgment (*krisis*) but belief (*pistis*).'<sup>28</sup> Kairotic rhetoric describes the rhetoric of the ancient poets and religious enthusiasts of the ancient world.

Plato was not satisfied with Gorgias' explanation of rhetoric as 'kairotic.' His study takes rhetoric in a new direction. For Plato, and many others, the irrational persuasive appeal of poetry was regarded as a deceptive power, capable of tricking the auditor against rational decision. He believed that the persuasive power of speech needed

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<sup>26</sup> Pieper 1964: 56.

<sup>27</sup> Untersteiner 1954: 122.



to be harnessed by rational thought. Speech could then be taught and used beneficially by others. Philosophers and politicians could use those rational persuasive powers to influence others for the benefit of civilization. As a result, beginning with Plato and developing further with Aristotle, rhetoric was divorced from poetry and was regarded as a technique (τέχνη) that could be learned rather than a gift (χάρισμα) that was supernaturally bestowed.<sup>29</sup> Technical rhetoric was regarded as an acquired skill that harnessed the power of rational persuasion. Grimaldi explains that for Aristotle a τέχνη was an art 'grounded in a rational principle.' 'Consequently art is always able to explain what it is doing. As a *technê*, rhetoric certainly consists of a body of rules and general principles which can be known by reason.'<sup>30</sup> The goal was to learn those rules and principles and use them in speech in order to persuade others. Technical rhetoric could be analyzed, understood, and controlled. As a result of this move 'from mythos to logos,' rhetoric came to be more closely associated with philosophy and politics than with the poetic speech that gave it birth.<sup>31</sup>

As an example of how kairotic rhetoric differs from technical rhetoric, consider the different views of how speech originates. Whereas kairotic rhetoric speaks of the kairos of inspiration as the originating event of a speech, technical rhetoric speaks of the technique or art of 'invention,' the process by which a speaker creates or develops his

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<sup>28</sup> Sullivan 1992: 326, 327.

<sup>29</sup> De Romilly 1975.

<sup>30</sup> Grimaldi 1980: 4.

<sup>31</sup> The idea that a definite line of triumphal progress from myth to reason can be traced in the history of ancient Greece was once widely held, not least due to Wilhelm Nestle's influence (Nestle 1940), assisted by Bruno Snell (Snell 1960: 191-226). But the stark simplicity of this straight-line thesis has been shown to be inadequate by Richard Buxton (Buxton 1999). The inadequacy of the thesis is evident in the history of ancient rhetoric, for philosophical rhetoric did not supplant kairotic rhetoric; rather, the two diverged and ran in separate courses.

argument. Another difference between the two concerns the purpose of speech. Whereas kairotic speech seeks to persuade the auditor to believe, technical rhetoric seeks to persuade the auditor to make a judgement. Sullivan explains, 'Aristotle's rhetoric privileges the rational over the non-rational in another way. If non-rational rhetoric calls for auditors to either believe or reject the *logos* being presented, rational rhetoric calls the auditors to make a judgment; it is a rhetoric aimed at *krisis* (judgment) rather than at *pistis* (belief).'<sup>32</sup> Kairotic rhetoric and technical rhetoric were distinguished by their very different styles of delivery too. The former was more animated, dramatic and fluid, appealing to the emotions; the latter was more considered, deliberate, and stilted, appealing to the mind. The two oratorical styles remained separate and not entirely equal in classical Athens, for in the *zeitgeist* of the *polis* the more rational rhetorical *logos* rose in prominence and the more mystical poetic *mythos* became isolated and associated with the oracular religions. Technical rhetoric, then, developed into a clearly identifiable oratorical form in the Athenian political assemblies and law courts.

Following the demise of Periclean Athens and the Roman rise to power another important shift took place. The locus of Greek culture shifted from Athens to the cities of Asia Minor (e.g., Ephesus, Smyrna). Greek education and culture took on an Asiatic color. The result was that rhetorical forms and styles current in Asia Minor overtook Athenian or Attic oratory. Hegesias of Magnesia (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E.) is usually identified as the chief exponent of the Asiatic style of rhetoric. The Magnesian school of rhetoric produced many popular orators, and the old school in Athens, now weak and lacking influence, simply could not compete. Other major centers of Asiatic rhetoric included

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<sup>32</sup> Sullivan 1992: 323-24.

Ephesus, Smyrna, and Miletus.<sup>33</sup> Asiatic rhetoric was stylistically much like Gorgian kairotic rhetoric. It was dramatic, bombastic, and emotion-laden, and it was often characterized by a striking use of antitheses. To the old school in Athens this style was irrational and dangerously similar to the deceptive rhetoric of the poets. Cicero (*Brutus* 51), with obvious sympathies for the Athenian school, described the two schools,

Once eloquence sailed out of Piraeus [an Athenian port], it visited every island and travelled all around Asia, with the result that it sullied itself with foreign customs and lost, as it were, all the soundness and health of Attic style, and almost forgot how to speak well. From here arose Asiatic orators, not to be disparaged in swiftness or fluency but lacking in comprehension and too overflowing.

With the hegemony of Attic rhetoric broken, several other forms and schools of rhetoric were free to assert their values. By the first century C.E. a diversity of schools and styles of rhetoric appeared across the Empire. Quintilian relates a story that illustrates this diversity. A man was asked to which rhetorical school he belonged. Quintilian continues, ‘when asked whether he was a Theodorean or an Apollodorean, he replied, “Me?, I’m a Parmularian!”’ (*Institutes* 2.11.2). Older styles of rhetoric experienced a revival, including the Socratic use of question and answer in dialogue and the dialectical method of testing hypotheses attributed to Zeno (*Diog. Laert.* 9.25). The Dialectical School was founded by Clinomachus of Thurii. Diogenes Laertius informs us of minor variations in schools, such as the separation of the Megarian School from the Dialectical School (*Lives* 2.106-112). Newer styles of rhetoric were also developed. Philosophical schools revised their rhetorical styles. Philodemus developed a specific form of speaking for Epicurean

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<sup>33</sup> For example, the sermons of Melito, the second century bishop of Sardis, reflect this Asiatic style of rhetoric, as do the letters of Ignatius of Antioch. On Asiatic rhetoric flourishing in Ephesus see Philostratus *Lives* 2.18.

oratory in his *Rhetoric*, while Diogenes of Babylon produced a style of Stoic rhetoric.<sup>34</sup> In addition to rhetorical developments within philosophical and sophistic schools, Galen developed a method he called 'demonstration.'<sup>35</sup> One could also make use of authoritative quotations from Homer or other poets, a practice popular among the Stoics.<sup>36</sup>

During the first century C.E., the debate concerning the merits of Attic and Asiatic rhetoric heated up.<sup>37</sup> It was conducted throughout the Roman Empire, with prominent Roman orators offering their opinion on the matter. However, the debate had a very different quality when argued by Greeks and in Greece.<sup>38</sup> This is because, for Greeks, the essence of the debate concerned their identity as revealed by their use of Attic Greek. For Romans speaking Latin, this concern was irrelevant; the debate for them had become an argument about style and, to a slightly lesser degree, about appreciation for the gifts of Greek culture. We saw above that Cicero had taken the side of Attic rhetoric, but his statement must be understood in this Roman context. Cicero writes in Latin and,

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<sup>34</sup> On Philodemus' *Rhetoric* see Robert Gaines 1982 and David Blank 1995. On Diogenes of Babylon see Dirk Obbink and Paul A. Vander Waert 1991.

<sup>35</sup> The dialectical method is exemplified in Plato's works *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*, and *Sophist*. It was validated in *Parmenides* when Socrates welcomed a lesson in Zenonian dialectics. On rhetoric among the Hellenistic philosophers, see David Sedley 1977. Galen wrote a fifteen book study *On Demonstration*, which is unfortunately lost, but in *De Placitis* 2.3 he does contrast his method of demonstration with dialectic, rhetoric, and sophistry. For a helpful discussion of Galen's method, see G.E.R. Lloyd 1996 and Barnes 1991.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Veyne (1988: 62) characterizes the situation, writing, 'In order to prove something or persuade someone of a truth, a person could proceed in at least three ways: develop a line of reasoning reputed to be rigorous, touch the listeners heart by the use of rhetoric, or refer to the authority of Homer or another ancient poet.'

<sup>37</sup> For an interesting and illuminative example of the first century C.E. debate read Tacitus' *Dialogue on Oratory*.

<sup>38</sup> The difference between the debate among Greek speakers and among Latin speakers is very important and should not be confused, but is sometimes overlooked in summary accounts of the matter.

therefore, is not offering an opinion about the kind of Greek that is appropriate. Furthermore, his comment may be little more than an appreciative nod to the classical orators of ancient Athens. It should be remembered that Brutus and Calvus attacked Cicero for his Asiatic tendencies (Quintilian, *Inst.* 12.10.12). In Corinth the debate was not merely about style but about identity. As such it was very personal, very heated, and very important.

### Constructing Paul's Reputation in Corinth

This brings us to Paul's Corinth. Intragroup differentiation led to the recognition of a diverse expression of spiritual gifts among the ingroup members and to a hierarchical structure in the community—apostle, prophets, teachers, etc. (1 Cor. 12). Intragroup comparison led to positive and negative evaluations of leadership, worship, and behavior. This situation threatened to dissolve the homogeneity of the ingroup. Intragroup comparison included evaluations of Paul's leadership in the group. Although some in Corinth recognized and submitted to Paul's authority as an apostolic leader, others challenged that authority and challenged Paul to vindicate himself (2 Cor. 13:3). During Paul's absence from Corinth he received letters and reports from and about the Corinthians, describing the disunity and revealing some negative attitudes toward Paul's leadership. In 2 Corinthians 10-13 Paul quotes one of those negative reports about himself in 2 Corinthians 10:10. 'It is said, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech is contemptible"' (2 Cor. 10:10).<sup>39</sup> We will examine each of these elements in turn.

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<sup>39</sup> The third person singular verb 'he/she/it says' (φησιν) presents some difficulties. Does it suggest the report of one particular person, as C.K. Barrett thinks

### *His Letters are Weighty and Strong*

The report, the earliest documented commentary on Paul's writing,<sup>40</sup> appears to begin gently, contrasting a positive remark with a negative statement: 'on the one hand his letters are weighty and strong, on the other hand, his bodily presence is weak and his speech is contemptible.' The meaning of 'weighty and strong'—βαρεῖται καὶ ἰσχυραί—is not immediately evident, however, and could be taken either positively or negatively and either rhetorically or non-rhetorically. Bruce Winter, for example, focusing on the word βαρὺς ('weighty') sees this as a positive comment on Paul's rhetorical ability. He cites Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* 373 in support of his understanding of βαρὺς. Hermes says to the rhetorician, 'throw away your endless loquacity, your antitheses, balanced clauses, periods, foreign phrases, and everything else that makes your speeches so βαρὺς.' Winter properly notes that all these terms refer to rhetoric; however, he assumes too quickly that the term βαρὺς points to a positive or 'impressive' quality of speech.<sup>41</sup> Peter Marshall agrees that βαρὺς suggests a positive quality and attempts to bolster this

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(1973: 260)? Furnish (1984: 468) disagrees, writing, 'the singular is probably used with reference to "anyone" of the group of Paul's critics and rivals in Corinth (cf. "certain persons," vv.2, 12).' He points out the same feature in 2 Corinthians 10:7 ('someone') and 10:11 ('such a person'), and notes that 'This usage of φησιν is frequent in Hellenistic Greek; see, e.g., Epictetus 3.9.15; 4.1.11, 151, 158; 9.6.7 and cf. BDF § 130 (3); GNTG 3:293; BAG s.v. φημι, 1c; Bultmann, 192; Plummer, 282.'

<sup>40</sup> Other early comments on Paul's letters include 2 Peter 3:15-16 and Polycarp's Philippian 3:2. The 14 epistles in the apocryphal correspondence between Paul and Seneca also comment on Paul's writing style, but its date is difficult to determine (generally dated 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century; see Malherbe 1991).

<sup>41</sup> Winter 1997: 207. So too Martin 1986: 311; Thrall 2000: 630. Forbes interprets 'weighty and strong' as non-rhetorical terms, which focus on the boldness of Paul's demeanor in his letters in contrast to the meekness of his demeanor when present in Corinth; for Forbes the terms indicate that Paul's letters reflect 'righteous indignation' (1986: 16).

view with texts from Dionysius of Halicarnasus, who uses the terms ‘weighty and strong’ (βαρεῖται καὶ ἰσχυραί) ‘to describe commendable virtues or qualities which an orator should possess.’<sup>42</sup> But there are problems for this view. Reflection on Lucian’s statement suggests both have erred in reading this text. In the *Dialogues* Lucian presents the humiliated Philosopher saying to Menippus, ‘off with your independence, plain speaking, cheerfulness, noble bearing, and laughter’, to which Hermes responds, ‘do nothing of the sort, but keep them Menippus; they are light and easy to carry ... But you rhetorician, throw away your endless loquacity, your antitheses, balanced clauses, periods, foreign phrases [βαρβαρισμούς], and everything else that makes your speeches so βαρύς.’ It is clear that Hermes is contrasting two types of speech, one that is ‘plain’ and ‘light’ against one that is ‘heavy.’ It is equally clear that Hermes does not appreciate rhetorician’s βαρύς style. This is an obvious reference to the debate between the Attic and Asiatic style of oratory, in which the Attic style was distinguished by the ideals of clarity of content, purity of language, and lightness of tone, whereas the Asiatic style was distinguished by frequent use of antitheses, attempts to integrate epigrammatic balance in its clauses and periods, and ‘barbarisms’ (impurity of language, using foreign terms). When Hermes describes this type of speech as βαρύς he means that it is weighted down with meaningless ornamentation. He certainly does not mean that the style is impressive. But a non-rhetorical interpretation may be preferable.

It is also possible that the term has reference to the force or boldness of Paul’s literary style; that is, to the authoritative tone he takes. βαρύς may refer to the presence of Paul created by the literary style. The letters create the figure of a bold and authoritative leader who issues commands with force. So Bultmann writes, ‘Clearly, the reference is

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<sup>42</sup> Marshall 1987b: 385.

not only to a general self-consciousness as expressed in the letters, but especially to the admonitions and prescriptions.<sup>43</sup> The immediate context offers evidence for this interpretation. Consider the manner in which Paul introduced the Corinthian report: ‘Even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it. I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you with my letters. For it is said, “His letters are weighty and strong ...”’ (2 Cor. 10:8-10). Here Paul connects the ‘weighty and strong’ charge with the charge that he boasts ‘too much of our authority.’ The contrasting phrase ‘but his bodily presence is weak’ further supports this reading, for it points to Paul’s lack of an authoritative presence in person. Thus, Paul admits that he can appear exceedingly bold and authoritative in his letters, including perhaps boasting a little too much; and he associates this boldness with the charge that his letters are weighty and strong. Additionally, the wider context of 2 Cor. 10:1-11 also suggests this interpretation. Paul begins by reflecting the Corinthians’ construction of his identity: ‘I, Paul, ... I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold [θάρρῶ] towards you when I am away’ (10:1). The nuance of θάρρῶ is clarified by the continuation, where Paul warns that he will ‘demonstrate boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards’ (10:2), and where he colors his language with metaphors of warfare (10:3-5). Such boldness ‘when I am away,’ which can only mean the boldness of his letters, includes the readiness and authority to discipline and punish the opposition (10:6; cf. 1 Cor. 5:5). Thus Paul, again, reflecting on the Corinthians’ charge against him, equates the boldness of his letters with their authoritative tone. The Asiatic style was a more forceful and bold style of speaking. The Elder Seneca notes that Turrinus had

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<sup>43</sup> Bultmann 1985: 190. See too Best 1973: 260, and Martin 1986: 314.



sacrificed ‘force’ (*gravis*) and ‘strength’ (*vires*) by following the particular Attic style of Apollodorus.<sup>44</sup>

Ernst Käsemann has highlighted the ‘selbstlob’ motif in 2 Corinthians, drawing attention to the lack of measure (*κανών*) in Paul’s claims from the Corinthians’ perspective: he boasts ‘beyond measure’ (10:13).<sup>45</sup> Käsemann points to a contrast between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles. Paul lacked an apostolic commission from the earthly Jesus, confirmatory signs of an apostle, and commendatory letters from churches. His boasting, then, lacked an objective standard (*κανών*). As a consequence, some of the Corinthians could not grant approval (*δόκιμος*) to Paul’s claim of honor. Paul was in danger of being judged a braggart or imposter (*ἀλαζών*). If Paul could provide evidence to substantiate his boasts, then the Corinthians’ might throw their approval to Paul, but even his comportment spoke against his bold claims. Thus, it is best to see the Corinthians’ description of Paul letters as ‘weighty and strong’ as a negative judgment. To those who appreciate the light Attic rhetoric, Paul’s style appears overbearing. To those who know other apostolic leaders, his tone appears unjustifiably bold. His boasts seem vacuous and inappropriate.

### ***But his physical presence is weak***

This description has also been interpreted as a judgment on his presence as an orator. Thus, Winter again, ‘The judgement of Paul’s opponents that “his bodily presence was weak” was rendered according to the canons of rhetoric. It meant that his presence

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<sup>44</sup> *Controversies* 10. Preface 15.

<sup>45</sup> Käsemann 1942: 36. He finds this theme to be prominent in such texts as 2 Corinthians 1:12-14; 3:1-6; 4:2, 5; 5:12; 6:4; 7:14; 9:3; 10:8, 13-18; 11:10, 16, 21, 30; 12:1, 6, 9.

constituted such a liability as to all but guarantee his failure as an effective public orator.’ It is certainly true that public orators were judged on their appearance, as Winter points out. But the importance of physical display was not limited to the orator; it was necessary for every man to display his masculinity and for every leader to manifest confidence, strength and self-control. Dio Chrysostom explains that even the stride of a Hellenic man displays his honor and does more to win him reputation than his city’s monuments (*Orations* 31:162-63):

That indeed is the reason why you are admired for such characteristics – and they are regarded by all the world as no trifling matter – your gait, the way you trim your hair, that no one struts pompously through the city streets, but that even foreigners visiting here are forced by your conventional manners to walk sedately; ... for all these customs you are admired, you are loved, more than by your harbours, your fortifications, your shipyards, are you honored by that strain in your customs which is antique and hellenic.

Leaders in particular had to demonstrate their abilities by an impressive physical presence. On giving advice to young men entering politics, Plutarch emphasizes the importance of comportment, noting that when Pericles entered political life his physical features displayed his leadership qualities: “Pericles also changed his personal habits of life, so that he walked slowly, spoke gently, always showed a composed countenance, kept his hand under his cloak, and trod only one path’ (*Prae* 800C). 2 Corinthians 10:1 supports this interpretation of Paul’s meager physical presence. Here again Paul reflects the Corinthians’ judgement on himself and describes his physical presence (κατὰ πρόσωπον) as ‘lowly’ or ‘humble’ (ταπεινός) in stark contrast to the bold and authoritative tone in his letters. Evidently Paul’s physical presence was not the comportment of a strong leader. The wider context of 2 Corinthians 10-13 also supports this understanding of Paul’s ‘weakness,’ especially in the light of his own discussion of

weakness in connection with the hardship lists (11:16-33), which will be discussed in detail later.

Timothy Savage has argued that the Corinthians had responded positively to a strong show of authority in the past, and so likely desired Paul to demonstrate such strong leadership qualities. He writes, 'the Corinthians are eager for Paul to become more assertive in his dealings with the church. They would welcome a heavier hand and applaud more violent behaviour.'<sup>46</sup> He points out, for example, they responded positively to Paul's 'severe letter' (2 Cor. 7:5-13); also, in Paul's words, they 'put up with it when someone makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or gives you a slap in the face. To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!' (2 Cor. 11:20-21). He further notes that Dio praises people who accept admonishment rather than flattery, who are 'more eager to submit to correction and to be set right than to be courted and to live luxuriously' (*Oration* 51.5). 'How far superior, then, are you, who submit yourselves to instruction, yes, even demand it' (*Oration* 51.8). But Savage's argument goes too far. Rather than desiring a strong show of force, it is more likely that the Corinthians simply expected a reasonable correspondence between Paul's authority and his physical demeanor. Paul's overbearing display of boldness and authority in his letters stood in stark contrast to his actual presence, so much so that he appeared to be at best ambiguous and at worst a hypocrite and a fool, pretending to be what he is not. Consistency between his epistolary presence and his bodily presence was lacking, calling into question Paul's integrity.<sup>47</sup> Such consistency is the point of Dio comments above. He

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<sup>46</sup> Savage 1996: 69.

<sup>47</sup> Epistolary theorists emphasize the importance of such consistency. Seneca's letters offer examples. In one letter he writes, 'my letters should be just what my conversation would be if you and I were sitting in one another's company or taking walks

says that the leader to whom they submit must prove worthy of such honor (*Oration* 51:8):

I myself see that the task that lies before him with regard to you is a great one. For when an entire city and people voluntarily entrusts itself to a man for instruction and chooses him as supervisor of its public morals and gives him the supreme authority over temperance and orderliness and the right conduct of the individual, is that man not confronted by a mighty task, the task of not being found in any way inferior to your opinion of him?

It appears that in the Corinthians' eyes, or the eyes of some of them, Paul had not lived up to the reputation of a leader worthy of honor. He lacked the commanding physical presence of a strong leader, although his letters boast of such in abundance.

### ***His speech is contemptible***

Maud Gleason has well-said that 'the encounter between orator and audience was in many cases the anvil upon which the self-presentation of ambitious upper-class men was forged. ... rhetorical performers were repeatedly called upon to vindicate their competence in public.'<sup>48</sup> Clearly Paul failed to display competence as an orator before the Corinthian audience. The reasons for the failure are not immediately obvious, however. For Ralph Martin, however, the problem is obvious: 'Paul's rhetorical ability was nonexistent and his public presentation of the message moved them to contempt and scorn.'<sup>49</sup> The issue is more complex than Martin realizes, however, for one cannot so easily deny Paul's rhetorical skills. The claim that Paul's rhetorical ability was 'nonexistent' flies in the face of the evidence of his letters and goes beyond the charge in the text. There are at least three other possibilities. First, Paul may have displayed some

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together' (*Ep.* 75.1-2). See also Cicero *Ad Fam.* 12.30.1. The most helpful study remains Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*. SBL/SBS 19; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.

<sup>48</sup> Gleason 1995: xx.

skill, but not enough in the eyes of the Corinthians to justify his vaunted claims to apostolic authority. Less skillful orators were often mocked for their efforts. For example, Lucian, a talented Attic orator himself, in his chiding work *A Professor of Rhetoric*, mocks the attempts of less skillful orators:

I shall tell you the rules that you must follow in order that Rhetoric may recognize and welcome you. ... First, you must pay special attention to the graceful set of your cloak. Then cull from some source or other fifteen, or perhaps not more than twenty, Attic words, drill yourself carefully in them, and have them ready at the tip of your tongue. ... Whenever you speak, sprinkle them in with relish. Never mind if the rest is inconsistent with them, unrelated and discordant. Make sure your purple stripe is bright and handsome, even if your cloak is but a blanket of the thickest sort.

Second, it is also possible that Paul was a skilled rhetor, but not in the style that the Corinthians approved. The popularity of rhetorical styles varied significantly across the Empire, between Rome and Greece and Asia Minor, and a travelling speaker might quickly discover that the locals had no taste for his brand of oratory. Finally, it is even possible that Paul was a skilled orator in a style approved by the Corinthians. In this case their charge would be taken as an invective against a rival. Again Lucian offers an example of this possibility. Although he was regarded as an excellent orator, Lucian was once judged very harshly because he had used one word in an improper way.<sup>50</sup> He responded energetically and angrily in the apologetic treatise, *The Mistaken Critic*. In light of the frequency of rhetorical contests in that time and place it would be possible to list scores of examples of talented rhetors being criticized with severity, such as

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<sup>49</sup> Martin 1986: 312.

<sup>50</sup> Lucian had used the feminine form of a noun in reference to a man, which his attacker decried as a mark of ignorance and barbarism. C.P. Jones (1986: 154) aptly comments, 'The ferocity of Lucian's reply shows how keenly such charges were felt and how purity of language was seen as a mark of culture and status.' Lucian is perhaps one of the best avenues into the culture of the 'Second Sophistic.' In addition to his already mentioned works, see also his *The Sham Sophist* and *Philosopher for Sale*.

Demonax' attack on Favorinus (Lucian *Demonax* 12), or the famous rivalry between Polemo and Favorinus, but the point has been made.<sup>51</sup> The Corinthians' harsh criticism of Paul need not demand that Paul lacked all rhetorical skills, as Martin claims. He may have achieved a fairly high level of skill in oratory. Another nearby passage sheds light on this topic. This point will be clarified when we examine Paul's construction of his rhetorical skills.

### Constructing the Oppositions' Identity

Paul indicates that some of the Corinthians have attacked his apostolic authority on the grounds that his boasts are unjustified, his comportment reveals him to be weak, and his speech is contemptible. Paul considers this evaluation not only wrong, but indicative of the spiritual condition of those making such claims. They are evaluating the situation not as spiritual persons, but as carnal humans. He writes (1 Cor. 3:1-4):

Brothers, I am not able to speak to you as spiritual persons [πνευματικῶς] but rather as worldly persons [σαρκίκοις], as infants in Christ. ... As long as there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly [σαρκικοί], behaving according to human standards [κατὰ ἄνθρωπον]? For when one says, "I follow Paul" and another says "I follow Apollos" are you not humans [ἄνθρωποι]?

Not only is their evaluation of Paul wrong, but it is wrong in principle. The standards it establishes for determining honor are not based on an understanding of Christ, whose triumph over evil powers through death reveals the proper standards for the followers of Jesus (2 Cor. 2:14-16). According to human standards the death of Christ reveals the weakness, foolishness, failure and defeat of Jesus (1 Cor. 1:21-23). But for the follower of Jesus the death of Christ reveals the power and wisdom of God, because it wins freedom from sin and reconciliation with God (1 Cor. 1:24).

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<sup>51</sup> On the rivalry between Favorinus and Polemo see Gleason 1995.

In 1 Corinthians Paul acknowledges that those who oppose him are believers in Jesus—they are members of the ingroup in God—but their understanding of Jesus is so shallow that he describes them as unable to think and evaluate with spiritual understanding. They need to grow. Paul explains that the spiritual person is able to evaluate all things, but he cannot be evaluated by the human standards of others (1 Cor. 2:15). The spiritual person who evaluates Paul will recognize in him the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor. 6-13), rather than challenge him to vindicate himself on the basis of human standards. The situation changes, however. In 2 Corinthians 10-13 Paul addresses an opposition group, but their ingroup status is unclear. Paul can describe them as ‘false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ’ in league with Satan (2 Cor. 11:14-15). He suggests that they proclaim a different Jesus, manifest a different spirit, and preach a different gospel (2 Cor. 11:4). This clearly places them in an outgroup. Nevertheless, Paul recognizes that the Corinthian believers do not place them in an outgroup. To the Corinthians these men are servants of Christ (2 Cor. 11:23). It is possible that these persons have only recently arrived in Corinth. They may have been sent from another church, bearing letters of commendation (2 Cor. 3:1) and questioning Paul’s lack of such commendation;<sup>52</sup> hence, the emergence of derogatory uses of the title ‘apostles’ in 2 Corinthians 10-13. The situation in Corinth has deteriorated and the possibility of schism has reached a crucial point.

#### Constructing Identity in Corinth: The Spiritual Guide Whom the Lord Commends

Paul believes that an opposition group has attacked his apostolic authority on the grounds that his boasts are unjustified, his comportment weak, and his speech

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<sup>52</sup> Baird 1961, Belleville 1989.

contemptible. He believes that the standards used to evaluate him are based on flawed human reasoning. He responds by correcting the opposition and establishing his true apostolic identity as the spiritual guide whom the Lord commends to the Corinthians.

#### Are Paul's Boasts Unjustified and Excessive? Paul Claims Honor in the Lord

The Corinthians have identified Paul as one whose boast (καύχησις) is unjustified and excessive. His letters are 'weighty and strong' (βαρεῖται καὶ ἰσχυραί). The question arises, can Paul legitimate his claims? Käsemann has shown that Paul was sensitive to the charge of 'selbstlob' and that he concentrated his attention in 2 Corinthians 10-13 on establishing the proper criteria for claiming honor and thereby refuting the charge that he boasts without warrant.<sup>53</sup> According to Käsemann Paul sought to establish his credentials for boasting by changing the criteria of apostolic authority from objective verifiable standards (*objectiv kontrollierbare Merkmale*), to subjective heavenly standards, which are not subject to human evaluation, but can only be discerned spiritually by those 'in the Lord.'<sup>54</sup> Those who cannot discern these heavenly standards reveal themselves to be 'false apostles' (2 Cor. 13:5).<sup>55</sup> There is much to commend Käsemann's analysis, and his view is now widely accepted. However, there are problems that must be recognized. Not only did Käsemann leave unclear the heavenly standards by which the Corinthians should have recognized Paul's authority, but he himself admitted that Paul—in contradiction to his own views—sought commendation on the basis of objective criteria.<sup>56</sup> He noted that Paul believed that the conversion of the Corinthian believers through his preaching

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<sup>53</sup> Käsemann 1942. He points out the frequency of the self-praise theme: 1:12-14; 3:1-6; 4:2, 5; 5:12; 6:4; 7:14; 9:3; 10:8, 13-18; 11:10, 16, 21, 30; 12:1, 6, 9.

<sup>54</sup> Käsemann 1942: 61.

<sup>55</sup> Käsemann 1942: 56-60.



should commend him to them (2 Cor. 3:2). He also recognized that Paul claimed that his miraculous deed commended him: the 'signs of a true apostle . . . signs and wonders and miracles' (2 Cor. 12:11-13). Perhaps Paul was not wholly against objective standards after all.

Scott Hafemann has rightly noted the inadequacy of Käsemann's answer, but his attempt to clarify the situation is also insufficient. He states that Paul recognized one objective norm by which his apostolic authority could be determined, which is 'the simple fact that he was the one through whom the Gospel came to Corinth and by whom the Church was founded.' 'Paul's arrival in Corinth and the ensuing birth of the church are thus the *divinely* appointed indication and objective evidence that Paul's claim to authority in Corinth is valid. Paul alone can boast in this divine accreditation.'<sup>57</sup> This answer is true, but also insufficient. It does not account for Paul's claim that the Corinthians should have commended him because they witnessed the sign, miracles and wonders ('signs of an apostle') he performed in their presence (2 Cor. 12:11-13). Paul has other objective claims to commend him. He believes that his perseverance through physical hardships in the service of the Lord is a legitimate claim to honor: 'if I must claim honor, I will claim honor by appealing to my weakness' (2 Cor. 11:30). He also points to his visions and revelations (2 Cor. 12:1-10). Furthermore, Paul expects that his powerful oratory will destroy their contrary claims and convince them of the truth (2 Cor. 10:4-6); he will be vindicated in Corinth (11:10), when he returns (10:2, 11), if not before (13:10).

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<sup>56</sup> Käsemann 1942: 59.

<sup>57</sup> Hafemann 1990b: 79.

The usual response to this argument is that such boasting was ironic or facetious.<sup>58</sup> After all, he himself calls such claims ‘foolishness’ and asks that his readers ‘bear with me in a little foolishness’ (2 Cor. 11:1, 16-18). Therefore, according to this view, the reader should not take Paul seriously and view these as legitimate claims to honor. But this retort misses the point of Paul’s argument. Immediately before mentioning the negative charge that he boasts excessively (‘his letters are weighty and strong’), Paul clearly states that even if he does make excessive claims (περισσότερόν), he cannot be shamed (οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσομαι) by this practice (2 Cor. 10:8). The reason he cannot be shamed is clearly stated: because such authority was given to Paul by the Lord for building them up. It is not that the claims he makes are shameful or illegitimate—indeed, his weaknesses do reveal the power of Christ in him, and his visions and revelations do reveal his unique identity as a spiritual guide—it is, rather, that he should not have to make such claims when God’s verdict has already been clearly revealed to the Corinthians. Similarly, Paul can say that ‘if I do want to boast, I will not be foolish, because I will be speaking the truth’ (2 Cor. 12:6). His boasts are in fact legitimate precisely because they are true—God did give Paul his authority. What is ‘foolish’ is Paul’s need to continue claiming such authority, but he has been compelled to do so by the Corinthians’ failure to commend him. The Corinthians’ belief that Paul’s claims are overbearing and excessive is the result of their own failure or inability to evaluate such claims in a Christ-oriented manner. The fact that Paul speaks ironically and calls such claims ‘foolishness’ does not mean his claims are illegitimate. They are ironic and foolish for another reason: they should not have been necessary. Paul should never have been put

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<sup>58</sup> See especially Holland 1993.

in the place where he had to make the claims himself. The Corinthians should be commending him, having witnessed the clear evidence of his apostleship (2 Cor. 12:11).

The heart of Paul's response to the charge is contained in his use of a text from Jeremiah. Twice Paul quotes Jeremiah, saying, *καθὼς γέγραπται, ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω* (1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17).<sup>59</sup> When he quotes this saying for the first time, his point is that the message of the cross reveals human wisdom and human power to be foolishness and weakness (1 Cor. 1:18-31). The gospel shames (*κατασχύνω*) and negates (*καταργέω*) human standards: God chose the foolish to shame the wise, the weak to shame the strong . . . so that he might negate these things . . . 'so that no one would boast [*καύχησις*] in the presence of God' (1 Cor. 1:27, 28). The gospel reveals that true wisdom and strength are found in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). For that reason, it is written, *ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω* (1 Cor. 1:31). There is a legitimate kind of *καύχησις*. It is *καύχησις ἐν κυρίῳ*. The meaning of *ἐν κυρίῳ* here is determined by the repeated emphasis on the Lord and his cross (1 Cor. 1:18-31). It is legitimate to claim honor if that claim is made in the light of Jesus' death. To continue evaluating one another on the basis of human standards is to reveal that one has not fully grasped the significance of the gospel in reorienting social standards and community life. It is not that there are no objective standards; it is that the standards have changed. The standards are now rooted in the wisdom and power of God as revealed in the concrete event of the cross. This is

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<sup>59</sup> The quotation does not conform to any known LXX text, so it appears that Paul has quoted freely for his own purposes. It is interesting, however, that both of his quotations are exactly the same.

why Paul can claim that sufferings commend him. We explore this further in the next section. DeSilva sees this accurately, writing,<sup>60</sup>

Human strengths are merely a veil that blinds worldly eyes to the temporary and fading nature of this present age and all that belongs to it. The only boast that has any lasting value is a boast 'in the Lord,' in the knowledge that God's power is at work within, preparing one for the coming age and a share in God's honor. This can clearly be known, however, only in those places where displays of human 'strength' do not interfere with one's view: 'I am content, then, in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions and calamities, on behalf of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong' (12:10).

When he quotes the saying a second time his point is that his claim to have authority in Corinth is based on God's appointment, not on his own assertions of honor. Therefore, he has no need to compete with others for recognition. Those who seek to engage him in such a contest do not understand the basis of his authority. 'We dare not classify or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they lack understanding' (2 Cor. 10:12). He has not overstepped the limits of his authority; he is fully within the limits that God has assigned (2 Cor. 10:13-15): ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος οὗ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρον. Paul's claim to authority, then, is properly based on the Lord's appointment.<sup>61</sup> So he again quotes the saying, ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω and warns, 'it is not the one who commends himself that is approved [δόκιμος], but the one whom the Lord commends' (2 Cor. 10:17-18). What differentiates Paul from his opponents, as Paul presents the situation, is the ground or source of the claim. Who bestows such authority? For Paul it is the Lord, for his opponents it is other humans. While Paul has been given an authoritative position in Corinth by the Lord, they are seeking to win that position from

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<sup>60</sup> De Silva 1999: 133-34.

Paul by a contest in which humans will act as judges, determining the victor on the basis of worldly standards. They wish to engage Paul in an honor contest, not recognizing that such a contest is meaningless when the Lord has already commended Paul. Paul is not denying altogether the value of comparison. He is denying the value of an honor contest when the Lord has already assigned honor. He is also denying the value of comparison when the evaluative norms are based on human wisdom rather than on the cross.

### Is Paul Weak? Paul is Strong in the Lord

The Corinthians have identified Paul as one whose physical presence is weak (ἀσθενής), which reveals the truth of his authority. In a society that prizes physiognomic evaluation of human presence, Paul rates poorly. His physical presence is unimpressive. Paul quickly and quietly takes the sting out of this charge, while revealing its mistaken basis, when he writes, ‘Now I, Paul, exhort you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold when absent’ (2 Cor. 10:1). This charge, like the previous one, is based on a mistaken standard of judgment. When seen in the light of Jesus’ death, physical weakness is not a negative characteristic, but the pathway of salvation for humans. To point out Paul’s physical weaknesses does not dishonor Paul, but honors him! Indeed, Paul will demonstrate this by listing all of his physical hardships as his badge of honor (2 Cor. 11:16-33). Spiritual discernment reveals that the power of God is manifest in his body, thereby demonstrating divine approval or ‘the Lord’s commendation.’ Paul can boast about his weaknesses because they establish his credentials as an apostle of Christ.

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<sup>61</sup> Helpful on this point is Hafemann 1990b: 79 and Lambrecht 2001: 115.

11:22-33 is an impressive list of hardships. They offer a picture of a man impossible to defeat. What is the significance of these hardships for Paul? According to Scott Andrews their significance concerns social status. Paul identifies himself with those of low status.<sup>62</sup> Christopher Forbes agrees, saying, “Weakness” is the state of those without power or status, and “strength” is the state of those who do have status. “Weakness” connotes humiliation in the eyes of others, rather than inadequacy in one’s own.<sup>63</sup> Peter Marshall likewise describes this hardship list as ‘a parade of shame.’<sup>64</sup> But the equation between weakness and low social status misses the point on two counts. First, it fails to recognize that Paul’s aim is to transform human standards of evaluation, not adopt them. Second, it fails to notice that it is not simply those who undergo such trials and hardships that obtain a low social status, but only those who are beaten by such circumstances and cannot endure them. One’s response to the trials is crucial. Consider these examples.

Seneca states, ‘The good man will hasten unhesitatingly to any noble deed; even though he be confronted by the hangman, the torturer, and the stake, he will persist, not regarding what he must suffer, but what he must do’ (*Moral Epistles* 66.21). Dio Chrysostom has only contempt for the person who, when confronted by hunger, thirst, beatings, and exile, ‘avoids them by flight and never looks them in the face’ (*Discourses* 8.15-18; cf. 16.1-5). Physical weaknesses—scars—were often displayed as badges of honor by ancient men. Josephus tells of at least two men that boasted of honor in this way. Niger, a Pereaean who had fought with the Judeans against the Romans, sought approval by ‘pointing to his scars’ (*Wars* 4.359). Antipater ‘stripped off his clothes and

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<sup>62</sup> Andrews 1995.

<sup>63</sup> Forbes 1986: 19.

exposed his numerous scars. His loyalty to Caesar needed, he said, no words from him; his body cried it aloud, were he to hold his peace' (*Wars* 1.197). Such accounts are not unusual in the ancient literature. For example, Plutarch tells of the man who 'parted his garments and displayed upon his breast an incredible number of wounds. ... "You laugh at these scars, but I glory in them before my fellow citizens, in whose defense I got them, riding night and day without ceasing' (*Aemilius Paulus* 31.8-9); Cicero tells of the skill of a defense attorney who 'did not hesitate to call forward the defendant and tear open his tunic and display to the tribunal the scars on the old general's breast' (*Orat.* 2.28.124). Sallust, upon being honored by high office, states, 'To justify your confidence in me, I cannot display family portraits or the triumphs and consulships of my forefathers, but if occasion requires I can show spears, a banner, trappings, and other military prizes, as well as the scars on my breast. These are my portraits, these my patent of nobility, not left me by inheritance as theirs were, but won by my own innumerable efforts and perils' (*War* 85.29-30). Finally, such scars of battle can overturn a negative portrait of identity, as in the case of Livy's unnamed veteran. He had all the marks of shame—his physical appearance was grotesque; he had been thrown in debtors prison, unable to pay taxes, after his flocks had been driven away and his belongings plundered; finally, he had been thrown into the Forum for sport—nevertheless, he was recognized as an honored soldier and his positive identity was restored to him Livy recounts the story (*Livy* 2.23.3-5):

Old and bearing the marks of all his misfortune the man rushed into the Forum. His dress was covered in filth and the condition of his body was even worse, for he was pale and half dead with emaciation. Besides this his straggling beard and hair had given a savage look to his countenance. He was recognized nevertheless, despite the hideousness of his appearance, and the word went round that he had commanded companies. Other military honours were openly ascribed to him by

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<sup>64</sup> Marshall 1987: 352.

the compassionate bystanders, and the man himself displayed the scars on his breast which bore testimony to his honourable service in various battles.

Fitzgerald has shown that ‘*peristasis* catalogues serve to legitimate the claims made about a person and show him to be virtuous because *peristaseis* have a revelatory and probative function in regard to character.’ He further states, ‘For both Paul and the sage, what enables this victory over adversity is power. *Peristaseis* provide the occasion for displaying this power, and with this display comes the victory and the vaunting that goes with it.’<sup>65</sup> But there is one problem in all of this—it is an evaluation of honor based on human standards. For Paul, his hardships reveal his strength only because they reveal Jesus at work in him: ‘always carrying about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body’ (2 Cor. 4:10). Paul does not avoid discussing the objective evidence of his sufferings, but he does not evaluate them using human standards, but the standard of Christ. Fitzgerald’s analysis fails to consider this point adequately.

Interestingly, Andrews does recognize this point, noting, ‘Those who overcome hardships have *dignitas* and deserve respect from others below. Those who fail to endure difficulties are *ταπεινός* and *ἀνδραποδώδης* and are powerless against others above them.’<sup>66</sup> Why, then does he claim that Paul’s hardships associate him with the lowly? He believes that Paul failed to overcome such adversities; he did not endure them and thereby win honor, citing 2 Corinthians 11:29 as proof: ‘Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is entrapped (*σκανδαλίζω*) and I am not burnt up (*πυρόω*)?’ He explains,<sup>67</sup>

In summary, 11.29 is filled with status implications that result from Paul’s inability to master his difficult circumstances. The apostle is in essence saying to

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<sup>65</sup> Fitzgerald 1986: 203, 205.

<sup>66</sup> Andrews 1995: 266.

<sup>67</sup> Andrews 1995: 271-72.



the Corinthian Christians, “Find those among you who are weak and lowly and have no power. My inability makes me just like these people. Find those among you who are entrapped by the strong. Like these persons, I also fail to survive in the fiery hardships.”

He finds confirmation of Paul’s desire to be seen as lacking status in the account of Paul being lowered down the Damascus wall (11:32-33). He claims, ‘The apostle’s reaction in 11.33 is that of a coward who neither faces troubles nor endures the difficult circumstances but rather escapes Damascus by hiding in a basket that was lowered from the city wall. Here Paul admits that he lacks the virtue manifested by courage (*ἀνδρεία* or *fortitudo*) in times of danger.’<sup>68</sup>

To claim that Paul was not able to endure these trials and that he failed to survive these hardships goes well beyond the evidence of the text, however. Fitzgerald rightly points out that ‘the emphasis falls on Paul’s superiority to suffering and his triumph over it.’<sup>69</sup> Indeed, Paul’s continual testimony is that he does endure these trials and that he is victorious over them. He states forthrightly ‘We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be visible in our bodies’ (2 Cor. 4:8-10). At one point, however, Paul does say that his sufferings had nearly beaten him: ‘we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself.’ He quickly adds, however, that God brought triumph in this trial: ‘He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again’ (2 Cor. 1:8, 10). And that is just the point. Paul is weak and should have been defeated by his trials, but God’s power is at work in him, overcoming the disasters and pushing him on. There is no need to interpret the Damascus

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<sup>68</sup> Andrews 1995: 272-73.

wall incident as a shameful act. The account is retold in Acts 9 without connotations of shame. It is more likely that the story points to God's power to rescue Paul against great human powers.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, Paul does not boast in his weakness *per se*. His point is not that such weaknesses demonstrate his lowly status or shame, whereby he is able to associate with those of low status, as Andrews and Marshall assert. Rather, Paul's weakness is associated instead with the sufferings and death of Christ. He reveals in his own body the death of Jesus *so that* the resurrection of Jesus might also be visible in his life and ministry (2 Cor. 4:10). Paul's body and life is a dramatic picture of the good news. Paul boasts that because of these weaknesses God power is revealed. 'We are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh' (2 Cor. 4:11).<sup>71</sup> DeSilva correctly perceives Paul's point.<sup>72</sup>

The only true claim to lasting honor is the transformation at work within the believer, the conforming of the believer to the image of Christ—and it is Paul, not the rivals, who bears that image in his body, who allows God's transforming power to be recognized (1 Cor 2:1-5; 2 Cor 1:8-9; 3:1-6; 4:7). The rivals mask God's power by holding up their own strengths, which are really no strengths at all since they are powerless in the face of death.

But this suggests that Paul's opponents did not make the connection between Paul's suffering and Paul's weak physical presence. In the light of other hardship lists and their evident tendency to reveal a person's honor, it seems unlikely that the

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<sup>69</sup> Fitzgerald 1986: 204.

<sup>70</sup> E.A. Judge (1966: 44-45) introduced the 'shameful' interpretation of the Damascus Wall incident. He reads the story in the light of the Roman military honor, the *corona muralis*, awarded to the first soldier who scales the walls of an enemy city. In this light, the contrasting picture of Paul's flight down the walls of the city under the cover of dark are shameful. See Furnish 1984: 542 for further details.

<sup>71</sup> Furnish (1984: 284) states, 'the distinctiveness of Paul's thought is seen further in the purpose-clause of v.11b which, like the one it parallels in v.10b, refers to the manifestation of the resurrection life of Jesus (and thus of the incomparable power of God), precisely in and through the weakness, suffering, and death of Jesus borne by the apostles.'

Corinthians introduced these hardships as a means of questioning Paul's leadership ability. More likely is the possibility that his Corinthian opponents had boasted about their own sufferings. Paul's use of comparison suggests this picture: 'Whatever anyone dares to boast about ... I also dare boast about. ... greater labors, more imprisonments, beaten innumerable times, often in danger of death' (11:23b). This indicates, then, that the attack on Paul's weak presence (2 Cor. 10:10) was not directed at highlighting his physical sufferings, but more likely directed at his inability to command respect and attention with his body, particularly when he addressed the assembly of believers. Following this line of thought, it is possible that Paul introduced the hardship lists as a response to his opponents' attack on his weak bodily presence (2 Cor. 10:10). Any inability Paul might have in displaying his body in an impressive, authoritative and commanding fashion is the result of the physical battering he has taken in his apostolic service. If Paul does not compare well with the impressive comportment of his opponents, it is only because in his service for Christ he has endured far more physical violence than they have suffered. These beatings have left him permanently wounded and unable to appear impressive. This is a brilliant strategy for overturning his negative reputation and winning a positive reputation at the expense of his opponents. He kills two arguments with one stone: he claims greater honor due to his more impressive endurance of physical sufferings when compared with his opponents, which explains why he looks less impressive in person. He creatively redefines the meaning of his unimpressive comportment so that he wins honor, not only on the basis of spiritual criteria (Paul imitates the sufferings of Christ) but even according to human standards (triumphing over physical torture). Paul's argument is devastating, and it is not surprising that he

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<sup>72</sup> DeSilva 1999: 135.

elaborates this point rather long, asking his readers to ‘bear with me in a little foolishness’ (2 Cor. 11:1, 16). ‘So I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. . . . for whenever I am weak, then am I strong’ (12:9-10).

### Is Paul’s Speech Contemptible? Paul as Kairotic Rhetor

The Corinthians have identified Paul as one whose speech is contemptible. We have already said that this does not necessarily indicate that Paul had little or no rhetorical skills, only that some of the Corinthians ridiculed and despised whatever skills he might have possessed. In this section we will demonstrate that Paul claims to be a highly skilled rhetor, but not according to the worldly standards of the Corinthians. Before examining two passages that reveal Paul’s rhetorical style and skill (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 10:3-6), we should consider one passage that seemingly contradicts this claim.

#### Paul as ἰδιώτης τῶ λόγῳ: 2 Corinthians 11:6

Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 11:6 may shed light on Paul’s rhetorical ability. Paul here acknowledges that he is ἰδιώτης τῶ λόγῳ. This is often translated ‘unskilled’ or ‘unlearned’ in speech. But the meaning of ἰδιώτης is unclear, for it is used in a wide-variety of ways.<sup>73</sup> Previous discussion of ἰδιώτης has often floundered because of a failure to recognize the significance of the specific context of the classicizing movement

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<sup>73</sup> Paul’s use of ἰδιώτης in 1 Corinthians 14:16, 23, 24 does not help in determining its meaning in 2 Corinthians 11:6, because the context is entirely different. Whereas the context of 2 Corinthians 11 is clearly rhetorical (τῶ λόγῳ), the context of 1 Corinthians 14 concerns group membership. The variety of uses are discussed in Pogoloff 1992: 148-51 and Winter 1997: 213-18.

in the Greek East and Corinth.<sup>74</sup> Typically, the term referred to a person as private rather than public (e.g., one who had retired from political life to live in the country), or to a person without professional knowledge or skill (e.g., a layman). For example, Lucian contrasts one who is *ιδιώτης* with the *πεπαιδευμενος*. The *πεπαιδευμενος*, when faced with the magnificence of cultural artifacts (e.g., art) responds with an eloquent speech, rather than with simple enjoyment in silence (*Domo* 2). Nevertheless, the word was frequently adapted for rhetorical contexts in specific ways. Philodemus (2.134), for example, described as *ιδιώτης* the philosopher or dialectician who chose to display his speech in a style other than one of the standard rhetorical styles. Isocrates used the term to describe a person that had been trained in oratory but chose not to practice it professionally (*Antidosis* 201). Philo used the same term to identify a variety of persons who should not engage in a rhetorical contest, the *ἀγών λογών* (*Agr.* 159-65): the novice, because he lacked experience; the learner, because his skills were incomplete; and the professional who lacked virtue.<sup>75</sup> Finally, one could use the term to suggest humility, as when Dio Chrysostom referred to himself as *ιδιώτης* in speaking (*Orat.* 42.3). It is clear, therefore, that 2 Corinthians 11:6, which uses *ιδιώτης* in a rhetorical context, need not mean that Paul was without developed knowledge or skill in speaking. The uses found in

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<sup>74</sup> E.A. Judge 1968 made overtures in this direction, but his discussion lacks cohesion and seemingly fails precisely at the crucial point: He claims (p.41), 'it is beyond doubt that Paul was, in practice at least, familiar with the rhetorical fashions of the time. As Norden has contended, the rhetoric he fought and by which he was himself found wanting will not have been the classical (Attic) style, but the more florid "Asiatic" version, which enjoyed a heady vogue precisely in that age and in those areas through which Paul moved, and which was as far from paying court to the traditional canons of fine speech as was Paul himself.' If, with this very confusing statement, Judge is claiming that Paul was an Atticist, then he has clearly misread Paul, and Norden as well.

<sup>75</sup> Such rhetorical contests are well known throughout the Roman Empire, both in the East and West. G.W. Bowersock has an excellent discussion of 'professional

Philodemus, Isocrates, and Philo suggest ways in which the term might have been used with the Corinthians. They suggest that Paul may be regarded as one with evident skills in speaking, but who did not display them in an appropriate manner and/or who refused to engage in a rhetorical contest with his challengers.

An important contextual clue to the meaning of *ιδιώτης τῶ λόγῳ* is found in Paul's description of his behavior toward his opponents. 'And what I do I will continue to do in order to deny an opportunity to those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about' (2 Cor. 11:12). It is customary to interpret 'what I do' as referring to manual labor, following the discussion in 11:7-11.<sup>76</sup> But I believe this view errs on two counts. First, and most obviously, Paul's manual labor does not deny an opportunity for his opponents to be recognized as his equals; to the contrary, it is possible that they took this as an opportunity to assert their superiority (11:7, 20). On the other hand, if Paul refused to engage in a rhetorical contest, they would be denied the opportunity to reveal their superiority. Favorinus, the early second century C.E. rhetor whom the Corinthians honored with a statue, explains, 'There is no other way to obtain first rank than by competing with those who are first' (Dio Chrysostom *Discourses* 64.17). Barton rightly notes that 'one looked for the contest when one professed one's nomen or identity.'<sup>77</sup> It is possible, then, that what Paul 'will continue to do' is deny his opponents an opportunity to establish their reputation by means of a contest, specifically an oratorical contest (*ἀγών λογῶν*). He will not be a contestant for rhetorical honor,

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quarrels' in his study of Greek sophists (1969: 89-100). Diodorus Siculus (20.2.1) offers an entertaining example.

<sup>76</sup> See the discussion in Thrall 2000: 690-92.

<sup>77</sup> Barton 2001: 57, n.119.

because such competitions encourage intragroup comparison. For Paul intragroup comparison is unwise and those who promote it are without understanding (2 Cor. 10:12).

We dare not classify or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by each other, and compare themselves with each other, they lack understanding.

Intragroup comparison leads to divisions as persons champion one rhetor over another. Followers of Jesus should not imitate those who cry out, 'I follow Apollodorus; I follow Theodorus' (Seneca *Controv.* 10.pref.15; cf. Quintilian *Inst.* 2.11.2). Yet this is the cry Paul hears in Corinth: 'I follow Paul; I follow Apollos; I follow Cephas; I follow Christ! (1 Cor. 1:12). Second, the 'manual labor' interpretation fails to notice that 11:7-11 is a parenthesis within the larger section of 10:12-12:13 in which the comparison between Paul and his detractors is examined, and that, therefore, 11:12 is best read as a continuation of the thought in 11:6, where Paul is identified as an ἰδιώτης; that is, one who displays speeches inappropriately and/or refuses to accept a challenge to an ἀγών λογών. Paul begins this larger section by refusing to engage in the type of comparison practiced by his opponents (10:12); nevertheless, he admits that he is jealous to win recognition as rightful leader against the claims of the interlopers (11:2), who are compared with the wicked serpent that deceived Eve (11:3-5). This eagerness to be recognized by the Corinthians is illustrated in his willingness to humble himself through manual labor to prevent himself from being a burden to them financially (11:7-11). Paul then restates his refusal to allow his opponents an opportunity to be recognized as his equal (11:12), and again compares them with the wicked One, Satan, who disguises himself as an angel of light (11:13-15). In this reading the thought of 11:12 is parallel with 10:12, just as 11:3-5 is parallel with 11:13-15. Thus, 11:12 continues the thought of

11:6 and helps to explain it. We conclude, then, that when Paul admits to being ἰδιώτης τῶ λόγῳ he is saying that he refuses to engage in rhetorical contests that would allow his opponents an opportunity to win recognition as Paul's equal. He will not admit their equality by giving them such opportunity.

Furthermore, engagement in the contest would serve only to lessen Paul's honor, for in Paul's eyes his opponents are 'false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ' (11:13). Bruce Malina has well said,<sup>78</sup>

It is very important to note that the interaction over honor, the challenge-response game, *can take place only between social equals*. Hence the receiver must judge whether he is equal to the challenger, whether the challenger honors him by regarding him as an equal as is implicit in the challenge, or whether the challenger dishonors him by implying equality where there is none, either because the receiver is of a higher status or a lower status.

But there may be more to Paul's refusal than his unwillingness to grant them equality. One might think that this strategy would suggest itself to Paul in view of his desire 'to be all things to all people' (1 Cor. 9:22). If 'to the Judeans I became a Judean' why not 'to the rhetors I became a rhetor'? According to the social identity perspective, if Paul knew that he was unlikely to win in a rhetorical contest, then he would want to avoid this arena and search for a more advantageous avenue. Paul's response, then, might be seen as a strategy to avoid losing honor in a contest he is unlikely to win. Two elements, one negative and one positive, are necessary for this strategy to succeed. The negative aspect involves finding a way to refuse to engage in the rhetorical contest without losing honor. The positive aspect involves challenging the opponents in a different arena, where Paul is likely to win. Paul accomplished the negative aspect by his invective, portraying his opponents as absolutely evil ('false apostles, deceitful workers', 'ministers of Satan'), so

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<sup>78</sup> Malina 1993: 45.



that his only honorable response was to refuse the challenge, for to accept would only bring dishonor to himself.<sup>79</sup> Paul accomplished the positive aspect by his boast to superior γνῶσις, an arena in which he believed himself superior and one in which he expected that they would compete (cf. 1 Cor. 1:5). So Paul says, ‘I am ἰδιώτης τῶ λόγῳ, but I am not τῆ γνώσει (2 Cor. 11:6). Or to paraphrase: ‘I may refuse the rhetorical contest, but I will compete in the arena of knowledge.’ In this reading, 11:7-11 becomes a crucial volley in this ἀγών for recognition. If Paul is successful in shifting the grounds of the contest, then he is confident that ‘this boast of mine will not be silenced’ (11:10); that is, if the contest for recognition be shifted to a comparison of knowledge, Paul’s assertion of honor will not be defeated. What Paul meant by knowledge is probably his knowledge of the cross of Christ, as he said earlier, ‘I determined to know [εἰδέναι] nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified’ (1 Cor. 2:2). All of this suggests another question. If Paul did possess certain rhetorical skills, why would he think that he would lose in a rhetorical contest? We turn now to answer that question.

### Paul as Rhetor

Can we determine Paul’s style of speaking? It is likely that Paul had an identifiable style. He probably did not reject all contemporary styles and create his own

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<sup>79</sup> Marshall (1987b) helpfully discusses the exaggerated tone of an invective. He points out that ‘Invective provided one of the most common forms of shaming an enemy publicly. It had two objectives—to dispose the hearers favourably to oneself and to humiliate and shame the enemy. ... Invective did not have to be true. Much of it was exaggerated or invented. The objective was to amplify or depreciate according to the encomiastic topics’ (p.362). If this is the case, then Paul’s invective need not suggest two different groups of opposition: one that he acknowledges to include true servants of Christ (2 Cor. 11:23) and the other that he castigates as servants of Satan (2 Cor. 11:15). Margaret Thrall (1980) also sees only one group in opposition to Paul, but for different

style. While this might appeal to a modern person, it would probably not have been the choice of an ancient person. Nils Lund reminds us of an important feature of ancient oratory when he writes, 'Though the modern man may boast of what he calls individual style, antiquity knew nothing of it. To be a writer then meant to conform to some kind of style. Difficult though it may be to fit Paul into any of the Greek schools of style, there are traces of Greek form in his epistles.'<sup>80</sup> For this reason, the modern quest to read Paul's letters in the light of ancient rhetorical strategies is praiseworthy. However, this quest has failed to recognize the diversity of rhetorical styles in Paul's social world and consequently has failed to discover the most appropriate models of comparison for studying Paul's rhetoric.<sup>81</sup> Modern biblical scholars have narrowly focused on technical rhetoric, that is, the handbook rhetoric taught to young boys in the schools (e.g., Quintilian) and the philosophical rhetoric of the professionals (e.g., Aristotelian). J. Paul Sampley's comment on Pauline rhetoric is typical. He writes,<sup>82</sup>

In the Greco-Roman world, all rhetoric could be divided into three classes. *Judicial rhetoric*, the most common, addresses questions of culpability regarding the past. *Deliberative rhetoric* attends to questions of what person or group will do in the (perhaps imminent) future. *Epideictic rhetoric* focuses on praise and

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reasons. Her view is based on the story that Peter was deemed both servant of Christ and servant of Satan after the Caesarea Philippi confession (Mt. 16:16-23).

<sup>80</sup> Lund 1942: 15.

<sup>81</sup> It is unfortunate that the Attic-Asiatic style dispute has received so little attention in English language journals and books. The two best treatments of this rhetorical dispute are Cecil Wooten 1975 and Wilamowitz-Möllerndorff 1900. Norden 1898 remains critically important as well. This issue was of crucial importance for orators in the first century Roman Empire of the Apostle Paul, yet it is virtually ignored by Pauline scholars, even by those who claim to study Paul's rhetorical techniques. Nigel Turner treats this question only briefly in the volume on 'Style' in Moulton's *Grammar of the New Testament* (Turner 1976: 80-100). He states (p.80), 'It is true that the Paulines and Hebrews are not wholly spontaneous in style, inasmuch as they show some influence of the rules of rhythm current in Asian Hellenistic circles, especially the influence of Polybius.' This conclusion is in accord with Moulton and Howard's statements in volume 2 of the same series (1920: 21).

<sup>82</sup> Sampley 2000: 32.

blame, usually of a person, though events may also be the subject. All of Paul's letters are deliberative, at least in part if not completely, because each of them at some point calls for the hearers to reflect on their comportment and to consider emending their current practices. Both letter fragments contained in 2 Corinthians do that, though 2 Corinthians 10-13, with its rehearsal of Paul's past behavior and its preparations for a confrontational showdown, may at times also be judicial. Both letter fragments, insofar as they shower praise or cast blame, engage in some epideictic rhetoric as well.

This statement is woefully inadequate, as we have already demonstrated in the previous survey of ancient rhetoric. The idea that 'all rhetoric could be divided into three classes' places the Pauline letters in a straitjacket and prevents the reader from hearing Paul accurately. Amos Wilder's cautionary note written back in 1964 has been completely ignored. In his study of early Christian rhetoric he correctly stated that 'the whole compendium of Israel's literature is built upon peculiar rhetorics that find no place in the textbooks of Aristotle or Quintilian.'<sup>83</sup> Although he was not able to locate the source for this 'peculiar' rhetoric, at least he recognized that it was not technical rhetoric. The scholarly community has neglected the Attic-Asiatic debate and non-technical forms of ancient oratory, most importantly kairotic rhetoric, which were of much greater consequence for Paul.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Wilder 1964: 15.

<sup>84</sup> The reason for this neglect is to be found in the influence of Hans Dieter Betz. Biblical scholars have been side-tracked by Betz' narrowly focused rhetorical program. His work (1975, 1979), while helpfully reminding biblical scholars of the importance of rhetoric for biblical interpretation, unhelpfully turned attention away from rhetorical style (Attic versus Asiatic style) and toward rhetorical arrangement and invention (the concern of technical Attic rhetoric). This is a turn away from the first century concern, however. Betz' rather self-serving and inaccurate views on the history of the rhetorical interpretation of the Bible (1986: 16-21) have apparently become the accepted view (e.g. Peterson 1998: 7-15 is typical of several PhD theses). In brief, he attacks Eduard Norden, claiming that Norden is responsible for putting an end to the rhetorical study of the New Testament. Unfortunately, Betz' attack on Norden serves to turn attention away from Norden's important work on New Testament rhetoric, which correctly focuses attention on the Asiatic-Attic debate. Betz claims (1986: 19), 'The monumental work of Eduard Norden, *Die Antike Kunstprosa*, published in 1898, clearly helped to put a stop to this

It is clear from his letters that Paul did not attempt to write Attic Greek or imitate the Attic rhetoric. If Paul did use rhetoric, it was not Attic rhetoric. In his monumental study of ancient rhetoric Eduard Norden noted Paul's frequent use of antitheses ('Dass die Antithese dominiert, ist sehr begreiflich') and concluded that Paul was influenced by the Asiatic school tradition of rhetoric, which ignored classical Attic style and made much use of antithetical formulas.<sup>85</sup>

Aber das Angeführte genügt, um daraus mit Sicherheit zu schliessen, dass der Apostel trotz seiner souveränen Verachtung der schönen Form dennoch oft genug von den -- in den Evangelien fehlenden -- geläufigen Mitteln zierlicher griechischer Rhetorik Gebrauch gemacht hat, freilich -- das hebe ich, um Missverständnissen zuvorzukommen, ausdrücklich hervor -- nicht von solchen, die er sich aus der Lektüre von griechischen Schriftstellern angeeignet hat, sondern vielmehr von solchen, die in der damaligen 'asianischen' Sophistik geläufig waren: von den Rhetoren, die dieser Richtung angehörten, ist aber oben gerade im Gegenteil nachgewiesen, dass sie die Litteratur der Vergangenheit ignorierten, was zu beherzigen ich dringend alle die bitte, die sich einbilden, Paulus habe, weil er die Waffen der Rhetorik gelegentlich so schneidig zu

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sort of research [i.e., rhetorical study of the New Testament]. Norden acted as if he had been appointed to protect the territory of classicists from the intrusions of New Testament scholars. He fiercely attacked Wilke and Blass, ... [and] the learned New Testament scholar Carl Friedrich Georg Heinrici ...'. Betz goes on to tell us that Norden's attack 'backfired' as 'major scholars came to Heinrici's defense.' Betz then states, 'Norden retracted much of what he had said, but it appears that few New Testament scholars paid attention to this appendix, so that Norden's verdict continued to impress the theological world.' Unfortunately, this theory appears to be self-serving, promoting his own unique (at that time) approach to New Testament rhetorical study, and wholly without historical support. The logic of his historical account is unbelievable (Betz has NT scholars anxiously rushing to Heinrici's defense, then ignoring Norden's retraction and allowing Norden to win the day!). More importantly, however, there is a better explanation for the demise of rhetorical studies by New Testament scholars in the twentieth century. Betz completely ignores the impact of papyri discoveries on New Testament scholarship. The major reason for the lack of New Testament rhetorical studies in this period is that most scholars working in the area concentrated their attention on comparing the New Testament text with the newly discovered non-literary papyri (see Jennrich 1948). Furthermore, Betz use of the Church Fathers as evidence is controverted by the Fathers themselves. Betz claims that Augustine and Chrysostom both support his view that Paul should be studied using the canons of classical rhetoric, yet Augustine (*De Doct. Chr.* 4.6.9f.) and Chrysostom (*De Sacer.* 4.5f.) actually say the opposite.

<sup>85</sup> Norden 1898: 507 and 507-508.

handhaben versteht, den Demosthenes studiert, eine ungeheure Perversität der Anschauung, beleidigend für Demosthenes nicht weniger als für Paulus.

Later T.S. Duncan demonstrated with extensive examples from 1 Corinthians that Paul's similarity to the Asiatic style was not limited to antitheses, but included several other rhetorical features, such as homoioteleuton, anaphora, synonymia, paronomasia, asyndeton, polysyndeton, pariosis and paromoiosis, cyclosis, epanastrophe, antistrophe, and figura etymologica. He concluded,<sup>86</sup>

Again, it seems most likely that his rhetorical training was received from the Asianic schools and probably not from a comprehensive schooling in the works of the ancient orators. In any case, he was not bound slavishly by Greek technique. What he did, however, was to give the overwrought manner of the Asianic schools a theme worthy of its flowers of speech and to breathe into it a spirit that made it vital.

Paul's Asiatic tendency has more recently been affirmed by the classicist Janet Fairweather (1994), who states, 'In terms of the literary criticism of his day he would surely have been regarded as an *Asianus*.' If these authors are correct, then the Corinthians' contempt for Paul's rhetorical skill is evident. He was an Asiatic rhetor whereas the Corinthians championed Attic rhetoric. Can this suggestion be validated by an analysis of the Corinthians correspondence?

#### Pauline Rhetoric in Corinth

Paul's self-identity as a rhetor appears in a few brief sections of 1 and 2 Corinthians. After revealing that he had heard reports from Chloe's household about divisions among believers in Corinth over preferred leaders (1:11-12), Paul expressed thanks that he baptized only a few of the Corinthians (1:14-16), and then states (1:17),

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<sup>86</sup> Duncan 1926: 143.

Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with the wisdom of words, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

He then contrasts the message about the cross with the wisdom of the world (1:18-31).

The cross up-ends the values of the world; weakness is power and foolishness is wisdom:

‘We proclaim Christ as crucified, a stumbling block to Judeans and foolishness to

Gentiles, but those who are the called, both Judeans and Greeks, Christ is the power of

God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom and

God’s weakness is stronger than human strength’ (1:23-25). He then reiterates his method

of proclaiming the gospel (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on the power of God.

When Paul returns to the issue of his oratorical skills in 2 Corinthians, the discussion has become decidedly more intense. He is now defensive and he shapes his response by military metaphors (2 Cor. 10:3-6).

Indeed we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards, for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.

We will examine these two passages to understand better Paul’s attempt to construct the positive identity of a rhetor in Corinth.

### ***1 Corinthians 2:1-5***

Duane Litfin has shown that the ‘eloquent wisdom’ Paul stood against in Corinth was not a form of Gnosticism or Jewish Wisdom traditions, but rather a form of Greek

rhetoric.<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately, however, he then concludes that Paul rejected rhetoric wholesale, not recognizing the possibility that Paul could reject the rhetoric the Corinthians prized without rejecting oratorical display entirely. He claims, 'Paul seemed to conceive of these two persuasive dynamics – that of the rhetor and that of the cross – as mutually exclusive. To utilize one was to abandon the other.'<sup>88</sup> Noting that the verbs Paul used to describe his preaching ('preach,' 'proclaim' or 'announce,' 'evangelize,' 'testify') 'are decidedly non-rhetorical,' Litfin states that 'no self-respecting orator could have used such verbs to describe his own *modus operandi*.' In fact, according to Litfin, such 'verbs describe a form of speaking that is at its core the antithesis of rhetorical behaviour.'<sup>89</sup> He then argues that Paul presented himself as a 'herald' in contrast to a rhetor.<sup>90</sup>

The principles of rhetorical adaptation are irrelevant for the κῆρυξ. His role is not to discover the persuasive probabilities inherent in his subject, or search the *topoi* for arguments that will carry weight with his listeners, much less to package the whole so that the message will be irresistible. That sort of thing belongs to the persuader. The herald's task is not to create a persuasive message at all, but to convey effectively the already articulated message of another. The matter of rendering that message persuasive is not his affair.

According to Litfin, in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 'Paul repudiates entirely the dynamic of rhetoric for the purposes of preaching and opts instead for its diametrical opposite.'<sup>91</sup> Whereas the rhetor shaped his message in order to create a persuasive argument and win adherents, Paul refused to manipulate the message and left the results of his preaching to God. In this way, whatever results accrued to Paul's preaching could be attributed to God

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<sup>87</sup> Litfin 1994: 187-92. See too Lars Hartman's 1974 argument for this position.

<sup>88</sup> Litfin 1994: 192.

<sup>89</sup> Litfin 1994: 195, 196.

<sup>90</sup> Litfin 1994: 196.

<sup>91</sup> Litfin 1994: 207.

only. Belief in Paul's gospel was therefore the result of God's power and not Paul's rhetorical skill.

This seemingly well-argued case is deeply flawed, however, primarily because Litfin adopts the standard approach to ancient rhetoric, which assumes that only technical rhetoric existed. We begin by assessing Litfin's claim that Paul refused to manipulate the message. While Paul may have regarded the message or content of the gospel as given, he did not regard his *modus operandi* in the presentation of that gospel as unalterable. Indeed, in the well-known defense of his *modus operandi* among the Corinthians he defends his variability: 'though I am free to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became as one under the law, so that I might win those under the law. ...' (1 Cor. 9:19ff.). Chadwick suggests the possibility that the language of this passage derives from an attack on Paul by his opponents. He states, 'Paul's practice of adjusting his teaching to his audience did not escape the attention of his numerous contemporary critics.'<sup>92</sup> Chadwick describes Paul's style as 'oscillating.' He considers Paul's adaptability in his treatment of a 'licentious party' (1 Cor. 6), his advice regarding marriage and celibacy (1 Cor. 7), his discussion of idolatry (1 Cor. 8), and his handling of the problem of charismatic gifts (1 Cor. 12-14).<sup>93</sup> He concludes, 'Paul had an astonishing elasticity of mind, and a flexibility in dealing with situations requiring delicate and ingenious treatment which appears much greater than is usually supposed.'<sup>94</sup> Such elasticity is perhaps due more to Paul's attempt to maintain a group identity among

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<sup>92</sup> Chadwick 1954/55: 263.

<sup>93</sup> Chadwick 1954/55: 265.

<sup>94</sup> Chadwick 1954/55: 275.



disparate persons in Corinth rather than to the opportunism that he is sometimes charged with. At any rate, there is enough evidence here against Litfin's claim.

In regard to Litfin's linguistic claims, it should be pointed out that Paul does in fact use the language of persuasion to describe his preaching: 'knowing the fear of the Lord, we are persuading [πείθομεν] men' (2 Cor. 5:11).<sup>95</sup> More importantly, Litfin's understanding of the role of the herald [κῆρυξ] in the ancient world is too narrow. He describes the herald serving political or civic institutions, but these were not the only heralds in the ancient world. Religious and philosophical societies also included heralds, and these men did utilize rhetorical conventions, though not necessarily Attic ones. For example, in the religious sphere, Alcibiades is described as a κῆρυξ of the Eleusinian mysteries (Plutarch *Alcibiades* 22; Xenophon *Hist. Graec.* 2.4.20). Even philosophers were considered heralds of the gods (κῆρυξ τῶν θεῶν), as is seen, for example, when Epictetus compares the κῆρυξ of the Eleusinian mysteries with the philosopher, who is κῆρυξ τῶν θεῶν (*Diss.* 3.21.13-16; 3.22.69). Friedrich (1965: 693) explains in detail,

The Stoic has a profound sense of having a special God given task among men. The deity has revealed the secret to him, and he must now bear witness to it. Through him God himself speaks. His teaching is revelation, his preaching the Word of God. To despise his word and refuse to follow his teaching is to do despite to God. It is with this claim to be heard that he comes before men. As κῆρυξ τῶν θεῶν he goes through the world and accepts all kinds of sufferings. He knows neither family, home, nor country. With only a scrip and a staff, he proclaims that there is no lack, comforting the weak, warning the wealthy, concerned for the salvation of all. On the streets and market-places he teaches men concerning good and evil, chiding errors and summoning to emulation. He even dares to compete with the imperial cult. The peace which the philosopher proclaims is higher than that which the emperor can grant.

The relationship between these preachers and early Christian missionaries has often been noted. Both are divine messengers. Both have a higher mission.

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<sup>95</sup> Pogoloff (1992: 147) points out that 'Paul's positive use of πείθω is reinforced by a metaphor in which the apostles act as ambassadors, since such roles were normally taken by professional orators.'

Both bring to men a new message which offers salvation. There is little distinction as regards the mode of their activity.

It is significant that the κήρυξ τῶν θεῶν was an intermediary figure, standing between heaven and earth, between god and humans, functioning as a spokesman for a god. As such the herald could and sometimes did function as a spiritual guide. Such religious and philosophical ‘heralds of the gods’ used oratorical techniques appropriate to their task. These were not the sophistic rhetorical techniques of Attic orators, but the specific oratorical styles devised by each philosophical or religious school. The styles of rhetoric used by religious heralds are more significant for our consideration. The Asclepian healing cult offers a helpful illustration.

Aelius Aristides was one of the most highly acclaimed rhetors of the Second Sophistic, renowned for the precision of his Attic oratory.<sup>96</sup> According to Behr, Aristides was ‘justly famous for the precision of his style,’ and ‘his efforts to conform to the highest canons of Atticism earned him the title “divine” among posterity and commanded him as a model to the theorists on composition, such as Hermogenes.’<sup>97</sup> But Aristides is also remembered for his debilitating illnesses and incapacitating physical weaknesses. These physical maladies forced him to withdraw from his successful rhetorical career and caused him to despair that he might never resume oratory. Incubation in Asclepian temples changed him and, more importantly, changed his style of speaking. In dreams gods encouraged him to continue with his rhetoric (*Sacred Tales* 4.14ff.). ‘He commanded me to go to the Temple Stoa, which is at the theatre, and to offer to him the very first fruits of these improvised and competitive orations’ (*Sacred Tales* 4.15). As he

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<sup>96</sup> See the 1973 Loeb Classical Library edition *Aristides* with introduction, notes, and translation by C. Behr. Horrocks (1997: 85-6) offers a brief but illuminating example of Aristides’ ‘hard-core Atticizing style.’

spoke, he sensed the presence of the god working in him (4.19). Behr writes, ‘this fusion of religion and rhetoric seems to have persuaded Aristides that his was a higher calling. Oratory became something sacred, his rivals profaners and debasers of a pure art.’<sup>98</sup> In these religious speeches Aristides regarded himself as a ‘herald of the gods [κῆρυξ τῶν θεῶν]—Apollo, Hermes and the Muses, but especially Hermes, whom he honours as “god of rhetoric.”’<sup>99</sup> When Aristides spoke on religious themes in the service of the gods he abandoned his technically excellent Attic rhetoric and adopted the more elaborate and dramatic Asiatic style. Behr describes this: ‘in moments of religious fervour or great excitement, Aristides found his Attic models insufficient and turned instead to an extreme form of Asianism, the prose hymn, which with its short rhythmical cola and plangent tone could not be more unlike the stately period of his epideictic compositions.’<sup>100</sup> By changing his style Aristides demonstrated the power of his god for healing or salvation and for inspiring his speech. In Aristides we see not only Asiatic rhetoric, but more specifically we see kairotic rhetoric—a man inspired by a god to break through rational strongholds with powerful words.

Having revealed the fallacy of Litfin’s argument and clarified the ancient notion of a herald as an intermediary who can function as a spiritual guide and who makes use of rhetorical forms—kairotic rhetoric in the case of Aristides—we can now return to 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in

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<sup>97</sup> Behr 1973: xiv.

<sup>98</sup> Behr 1973: xi.

<sup>99</sup> Behr 1968: 154.

<sup>100</sup> Behr 1973: xv. Notice that Behr avoids classifying these speeches as ‘epideictic’ simply because they are praise speeches.

much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with persuasive wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Paul here describes his proclamation in terms characteristic of inspired religious rhetoric, that is, kairotic speech.<sup>101</sup> Notice how the passage concludes with a grand climax of kairotic terms: ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως, ἵνα ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν μὴ ᾖ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ' ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ.

Paul describes his λόγος and κήρυγμα as 'in demonstration of the Spirit and of power' (ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως) as opposed to 'by persuasive wisdom' (πειθοῖς σοφίας). Like Aristides he rejects the arid style of Attic rhetoric (πειθοῖς σοφίας) when proclaiming the glory of his God. The term 'demonstration' (ἀπόδειξις), is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, but is a technical term in rhetoric denoting conclusive or absolute proof. Quintilian states, ἀπόδειξις *est evidens probatio*.<sup>102</sup> Paul contrasts ἀπόδειξις with πειθοῖ σοφίας to clarify the superiority of the one over the other in terms of their effect on the auditor. Such forceful proof is not typically found in technical rhetoric, where πειθοῖ σοφίας often cancel each other out and are inconclusive, leaving the auditor undecided. However, ἀπόδειξις leaves no questions remaining. The inspired λόγος overwhelms the auditor's hesitancy and indecision with powerful and decisive proof (ἀπόδειξις). Lars Hartman explains the difference between πειθοῖ and ἀπόδειξις. 'In rhetoric tradition, the latter term signified a compelling, irresistible conclusive demonstration, a proof which could be attained without shrewd or toilsome

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<sup>101</sup> See Sullivan 1992.

<sup>102</sup> Quintilian 5.10.7. See Hartman 1974: 116-17.

reasoning.<sup>103</sup> He goes on to show that the two differed in that *πειθοι* arguments were dependent on specific techniques, such as character development, inclusion of relevant details and vivid descriptions (time, place, actions, manner, emotions). All these were necessary to move the auditor to a positive response, but they could never guarantee success. In contrast *ἀπόδειξις* steps beyond these means by a supernatural demonstration through the spirit of God.<sup>104</sup> The result is that the auditor obtains a firm belief (*πίστις*) rather than a rational judgment (*κρίσις*).

The ‘weakness’ of Paul’s presence (‘in weakness and fear and much trembling’; 2:3) only highlights the Spirit’s powerful presence (2:4) and points unerringly to God as the source of the Corinthians’ faith.<sup>105</sup> Although it was typical for rhetors to boast confidently, such humble admissions of weakness were not entirely unknown among ancient rhetors. Dio famously claimed, ‘I am quite ordinary and prosaic in my utterance,

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<sup>103</sup> Hartman 1974: 116.

<sup>104</sup> Bruce Winter (1997: 159) correctly notes the rhetorical force of the term *ἀπόδειξις*, but then incorrectly claims that Paul here abandons all rhetorical style: ‘Paul does not merely substitute one form of oratory for another.’ He follows E.A. Judge, claiming that ‘Paul “plunders the Egyptians”, using important terms and proofs but evacuating them of rhetorical meaning’ (1997: 160). This view is based on the faulty assumption that if Paul attacks technical rhetoric or refuses to use technical rhetoric he must refuse all rhetoric, failing to recognize that rhetoric exists outside this narrow mould. This unfortunate view is deeply entrenched in biblical studies. That Paul used terms such as *ἀπόδειξις* differently than Aristotle does not mean he used them non-rhetorically (‘evacuating them of rhetorical meaning’), for the same terms were used and redefined by all the various rhetorical schools. Most significantly for our purposes, the terms employed by Gorgias in his kairoic rhetoric, including *δύναμις*, *λόγος*, *πίστις*, *καίρος*, and *ἀπόδειξις* were picked up by Plato and Aristotle in their rhetorical treatises, but then redefined in order to eliminate their inspired or magical qualities and instead infuse them with a technical quality.

<sup>105</sup> Hartman 1974: 117-18 shows that these terms (weakness, fear, trembling) derive from Greek rhetoric (Quintilian 12.5.1) and states that ‘Paul consciously puts his weakness and his anxiety into contrast with the confidence with which he and his addressees know that a good speaker ought to appear, and through this “anti-rhetor” God performed great things’ (p.118).

though not ordinary in my theme' (*Orat.* 32.39); he also said that he was ἰδιώτης in speaking (*Orat.* 42.3). Quintilian noted that there was a 'tendency among ancient orators to pretend to conceal their eloquence, a practice exceedingly unlike the ostentation of our own times' (4.1.10). He recommended this practice, saying, 'We shall derive some silent support from representing that we are weak, unprepared, no match for the powerful talents arrayed against us' (4.1.8). Paul's point is to emphasize the power of God to work through a weak vessel.

Paul concludes that the Corinthians' πίστις is the result of God's δύναμις, which was let loose in his λόγος. Rather than denying that he is a rhetor, Paul here claims to be a powerful kairotic rhetor, unleashing the power of God in his speech and thereby overcoming the opposition. Sullivan perceives this clearly.<sup>106</sup>

Instead of acknowledging his limited education in rhetoric, Paul is indicating that he has abandoned the codified *techne* he was most familiar with and has adopted impromptu speaking; thus he was placing himself in a situation that required a special inspiration for success, a success that would manifest itself in power, *dunamis*, the breaking out of God through a *logos*.

## **2 Corinthians 10:3-6**

The kairotic rhetoric continues in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6.

Indeed we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards, for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every mark of eloquence raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.

The warfare metaphor reveals Paul's bold expectation to destroy the rational arguments or worldly wisdom of his opponents. With conviction that is typical of a

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<sup>106</sup> Sullivan 1992: 326.

kairoic rhetor, Paul expects that his speech will be decisive. It will be decisive precisely because his weapons are not the weak weapons of humanity, but the powerful weapons of God. With four participles Paul claims that this empowerment from God will be manifest in four ways: (1) destroying strongholds (ὄχυρωμάτων), (2) destroying arguments (λογισμοὺς) and every mark of eloquence (ὑψώμα) raised up against the knowledge (γνώσις) of God, (3) taking captive every thought (νόημα), and (4) standing ready to punish every act of disobedience. As in 2 Corinthians 11:6, where Paul challenged his opponents to a contest of knowledge (γνώσις), Paul describes the conflict as between speech (λόγος) and the knowledge (γνώσις) of God. The abundance of rhetorical terms in this passage is striking. Many scholars have correctly noted that the term ὄχυρωμάτων ('strongholds') was used metaphorically by sophists to refer to the strength of their arguments, an impregnable fortress of logic.<sup>107</sup> So, for example, Antisthenes speaks of the wise man's defenses as his rational faculties: 'Phronesis is a most secure stronghold [ὄχυρωμά] for it does not crumble nor is it betrayed. We must build walls of defense with our impregnable reasonings [λογισμός]' (Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 6.13). Philo too speaks of 'strongholds' as fortresses built 'through persuasiveness of argument' (*Confusion of Tongues* 129). In support of this rhetorical and metaphorical use of the term ὄχυρωμάτων in 2 Corinthians 10 is the use of the rhetorical term λογισμός in synonymous parallelism: God's power destroys ὄχυρωμάτων and λογισμοὺς. Furnish rightly states, 'The *strongholds* which are "demolished" are the *reasonings* of those who would subvert the

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<sup>107</sup> Malherbe (1987: 101) writes, 'The popularity of the imagery, particularly that of the impregnable fortress, around the middle of the first century A.D., is evident in Epictetus and especially Seneca, and its use illustrates 2 Corinthians 10:3-6. For Epictetus see *Discourse* 4.6.14; 4.8.33; 3.22.13-19, 94-95. For Seneca see *Epistles* 59.6-8; 64.3-4; 113.27-28; 51.5-6; 74.19; 82.5; 65.18.

work of the Pauline apostolate.<sup>108</sup> The picture presented is exactly that of Gorgias' third kairotic event, the kairos of power, when the logos of the speaker demolishes the rational arguments that have confused the auditors.

There are two interpretations of the term ὑψωμα. Some think that what is elevated or heightened is arrogance and pride. So Margaret Thrall translates this phrase, 'every arrogant attitude raised in opposition.' C.K. Barrett likewise describes it as 'the highmindedness (cf. Rom. 12.16) which thinks itself superior not only to fellow-men but also (in this instance) to God.'<sup>109</sup> Others, however, prefer to continue the military metaphor and suggest that what is elevated is a wall or high tower. So Bultmann describes this as a rampart and furnish a bulwark.<sup>110</sup> But a third interpretation of ὑψωμα is more likely. In keeping with his consistent attack on the rhetoric used by the opposition, Paul here attacks their 'eloquence' or 'lofty speech.' The term ὑψωμα describes that perfection of eloquence that orators strive for but rarely achieve. Therefore, we translate this phrase in 2 Corinthians 10 as 'every mark of eloquence.' Paul claims that when he returns to Corinth, his words will be imbued with the power of God, destroying the impregnable fortresses of rational persuasion [ὄχυρωμα], the rational arguments used to construct such fortresses [λογισμός], and every mark of eloquence [ὑψωμα] raised against the knowledge of God. The last two participial phrases that illustrate God's power in Paul's speech also use military metaphors. The enemy is taken captive and subdued. Paul stands ready to punish every act of disobedience. Thus Paul's victory will be maintained.

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<sup>108</sup> Furnish 1984: 458.

<sup>109</sup> Thrall 2000: 613; Barrett 1973: 252.

<sup>110</sup> Bultmann 1985: 185; Furnish 1984: 458.



We conclude that in his letters to the Corinthians Paul presented himself as a powerful kairotic rhetor, whose logos unleashes the power of God, resulting in faith among the believers and destruction of his opponents. His opponents have attacked Paul, claiming that his speech is contemptible. Paul challenges them, by stating that when he returns to Corinth he will destroy their Attic rhetoric with a mighty display of kairotic rhetoric, in which the power of God is revealed, ending all confusion and argument about Paul's identity and status in Corinth. With this power unleashed, Paul will demonstrate conclusively that he is the spiritual guide whom the Lord commends.<sup>111</sup>

### Conclusion

Paul's identity as an apostle was challenged in Corinth. In his attempt to present a positive apostolic identity in his correspondence, Paul clarified the notion of apostolicity and revealed its connection with spiritual guidance. Paul presented himself as an apostolic spiritual guide commended by the Lord to the Corinthians. The Lord sent Paul to the Corinthians to guide them as they follow Jesus until the day of his return.

When Paul left Corinth troubles began. The group splintered and certain members rejected or questioned Paul's apostolic leadership. He was compared unfavorably with other apostles. In particular they found his epistolary boasts of authority to be unjustified when contrasted with his unimpressive physical comportment. Some described his oratorical abilities as contemptible. Paul responds to this negative portrayal by creating for himself an identity of a powerful apostolic spiritual guide who will not be

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<sup>111</sup> Morton Smith 1996 argues that the Corinthian letters contain many 'magical elements' (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:19ff.; 5:5; 2 Cor. 10:1ff.; 12:20ff. etc.). Much of his discussion is reminiscent of Gorgian kairotic rhetoric, although he is apparently unaware of the

overthrown. His opponents lack understanding and knowledge and Paul is ready to demonstrate his superiority when he returns. The Lord's commendation of Paul is evident, he claims, in those very areas that his opponents have seized upon. His weak physical presence points to the Lord's commendation because Paul could not have accomplished what he did among the Corinthians unless God had chosen Paul as His spiritual guide. Paul's oratorical abilities demonstrate the same. The Corinthians may not have approved of Paul's style, but they cannot deny the results of his logos. The Spirit of God was evident in Paul's preaching, as the Corinthians' faith demonstrates (1 Cor. 2:1-5). It will be evident again when Paul returns to overwhelm any opposition that remains (2 Cor. 10:3-6). Paul's preaching and physical presence identify him as the apostolic spiritual guide whom the Lord commends.

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similarities. He notes, for example, that the Corinthians' conversion occurs through miracles and the Spirit of God and not by persuasive speech.

# Epilogue

## The Argument Summarized and Concluded

I began this thesis with the question, when Paul identified himself as an apostle, who did he think he was? In order to answer that question I have had to explore a new method of reading ancient texts that enables the reader to discern how identity is constructed and revealed in discourse. We have seen that historical-critical scholarship does not provide an answer to this question much beyond the etymological reply that Paul believed that he had been sent on a mission by Jesus Christ. Attempts to probe further into Paul's apostolic self-identity to clarify his understanding of his role on that mission have been hindered by methodological problems, although these problems have often gone unnoticed. Exegetes have been thwarted by a hermeneutical inability to bridge the gap between function and identity. Certain scholars have claimed that intertextual allusions and comparisons suggest that at times Paul functioned like a prophet and at times like a philosopher. But missing from their interpretive method is a means of moving from function to identity. Nonetheless, some of these scholars have gone beyond the boundaries of their method and asserted that Paul identified himself as a prophet or a philosopher. Those assertions have been shown to be faulty by giving fuller attention to the importance of identity markers. We have seen that although Paul did at times function like a prophet, he did not identify himself by that role, because of the less-than authoritative nature of a prophet's proclamation. Paul refused to allow his gospel to be judged in the same manner that a prophet's message was considered in need of evaluation. Paul emphasized that he was called to his apostolic identity, whereas a

Christian prophet was not. We have also seen that although Paul did at times function like a philosopher, he did not identify himself by that role and it is highly unlikely that anyone in the ancient Mediterranean world would have perceived Paul in that role. Philosophers manifested well-defined identity markers. Their hair, clothing, deportment, and speech patterns identified them with their specific philosophical group. These identity features clearly differentiated Paul from the philosophers and sophists of his day and time.

I have claimed that Paul functioned like the ancient spiritual guides. The category of spiritual guide overlaps with that of prophet and that of philosopher; thus some prophets were spiritual guides and some philosophers were spiritual guides. I suggest that this overlap is responsible for some of the confusion in identifying Paul as a prophet or philosopher. However, the categories should be and can be clearly defined, by giving careful attention to an author's construction of identity categories. My assertion that Paul identified himself as a spiritual guide but not as a prophet or philosopher is validated by a method of reading his letters that recognizes how identity categories are constructed in discourse. Thus Paul's functional similarities with ancient spiritual guides is seen to be in harmony with the discursive construction of his identity in his letters to Thessalonica and Corinth, whereas Paul's functional similarities with prophets and philosophers is seen to contrast with identity markers for those categories.

When reading Paul's letters with the social identity perspective in mind, the interpreter can discern Paul's construction of various discursive categories. These categories reveal Paul's view of the social setting and the identities of its participants, including his own identity. In Thessalonica Paul views the situation as a spiritual battle in which outgroup unbelievers are persecuting ingroup believers, attempting to draw them

back to their former identities in the household and city. In an attempt to motivate continued faithfulness to Jesus among the persecuted believers, Paul highlights the identity of the ingroup as faithful followers of Jesus in the midst of distress. Furthermore he highlights his own identity within this situation as the one whom God has called and sent to Thessalonica to guide the spiritual progress of this ingroup through this spiritual battle until Jesus returns. Paul's function as a spiritual guide is in harmony with his identity as a spiritual guide. In Corinth Paul's ability to guide the believers was in jeopardy because of opposition. Again, Paul's discursive construction of identity categories harmonizes with his function as a spiritual guide.

The purpose of this thesis has been two-fold. First, I have attempted to clarify Paul's understanding of his apostolic self-identity. I have argued that when Paul identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ to the Thessalonians and Corinthians he conceived of that identity within the conceptual framework of a spiritual guide. Furthermore, in developing this argument, I have attempted to clarify a method of reading ancient texts through heuristic use of a social scientific discipline. I have demonstrated that it is not only possible to use the social sciences in biblical studies, but that at times it is necessary to use the social sciences in order to further our hermeneutical abilities in biblical studies.

#### Paul the Spiritual Guide in Thessalonica and Corinth

When the apostle Paul heard about troubles facing the Christ-followers in Thessalonica, he was moved to write to them. This inspiration came from his conviction that God had appointed him to be a spiritual guide to the Thessalonian believers. God had

earlier sent Paul to Thessalonica to preach the gospel and inaugurate a community of Christ-followers in the city. Paul understood his relationship with that community to be ongoing. He believed he was responsible to maintain and strengthen their new identity as followers of Jesus until the day Jesus returned. Therefore, when he heard about the troubles that threatened to disrupt and conclude their spiritual walk, and after his attempts to revisit the community were thwarted, Paul was compelled to write. His words are imbued with a conscious conviction that God had called him and appointed him as an apostle to the Thessalonians with the specific charge of guiding them on the journey through life that would end only when the Lord returned. As spiritual guide Paul served as an intermediary between God and the Thessalonian believers, providing authoritative instruction and counsel in a gracious and loving manner.

When Paul learned of the problems among the community of Christ-followers in Corinth he was again moved to revisit and write to the believers in that city. Whereas in Thessalonica Paul's apostolic status was not questioned and he was able to serve as their spiritual guide without ingroup hindrance, in Corinth Paul's apostolic status was increasingly questioned and his ability to serve as the apostolic spiritual guide for the whole community was in jeopardy. Not only was the unity of the community in jeopardy, but the honor of Paul's identity as their spiritual guide was under threat. Paul was forced to respond to a negative assessment of his apostolic identity circulating in Corinth and restore a positive regard for his apostolic leadership among the believers in order to fulfill his calling as an apostle sent by God to the Corinthians to maintain and strengthen their new identity as a united community in Christ. Called to the task of insuring their safe passage into the presence of Christ at his return, Paul was faced with the possibility of

failing in that task. Again Paul was compelled to write. His words flow from the conviction that God had called and sent him to the Corinthians and that God would work through him to regain his rightful honor among all the believers and restore unity to the community. Paul is not simply fighting for a title—apostle—he is zealous to regain his relationship with the Corinthian believers as a member of the ingroup in Christ, a relationship that identifies him as the apostolic spiritual guide of the whole group, because only as he maintains that identity and fulfills the responsibilities of that identity will he and the Corinthians be prepared for the return of Jesus. When Paul identified himself as ‘an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God’ at the head of each letter he understood that title to mean that God had sent him to the Corinthians to serve as their spiritual guide until the return of Jesus.

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