

WENHUA SHI

# Paul's Message of the Cross as Body Language

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
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254

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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Wenhua Shi

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Mohr Siebeck

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Tübingen, Summer 2008

Wenhua Shi

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## Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Edited by Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase. Berlin, 1972-1982
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
BCE	Before the Common Era
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3d ed., Chicago, 2000
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford, 1907
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
CAAS	<i>Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CDP	Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DPL	<i>Dictionary of Paul and His Letters</i> . Edited by G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin. Downers Grove, 1993
EC	Epworth Commentaries
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>Herm</i>	<i>Hermeneia</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCE	<i>Journal of Christian Education</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JRH	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)

LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and H. Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996
LXX	Septuagint
2 Macc.	2 Maccabees
4 Macc.	4 Maccabees
m.	Mishnah
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTT	New Testament Theology
OEED	<i>Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary</i>
OT	Old Testament
OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York. 1983, 1985
OUP	Oxford University Press
OWC	Oxford World's Classics
PBSR	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
QJS	<i>Quarterly Journal of Speech</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SacPag	Sacra Pagina Series
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies
SE	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by G.W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964-76)
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
UBS	United Bible Societies
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

## Classical & Non-biblical Texts

Aristophanes  
Cl.

*Clouds*

Aristotle  
*Eth. nic.*  
*Rhet.*

*Ethica nicomachea*  
*Rhetorica*

<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politica</i>
Artemidorus <i>Oneir.</i>	<i>Oneirocritica</i>
Augustine <i>Civ.</i>	<i>De civitate Dei</i>
Callistratus <i>Dig.</i>	<i>Digesta</i>
Cassius Dio Cocceianus <i>Hist. rom.</i>	<i>Historia romana</i>
Cicero <i>Br.</i>	<i>Brutus</i>
<i>Cl.</i>	<i>Pro Cluentio</i>
<i>Deiot.</i>	<i>Pro Rege Deiotaro</i>
<i>Fin.</i>	<i>De Finibus</i>
<i>Inv.</i>	<i>De inventione rhetorica</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>De legibus</i>
<i>Off.</i>	<i>De Officiis</i>
<i>Opt.</i>	<i>De Optimo Genere Oratorum</i>
<i>Or.</i>	<i>De Oratore</i>
<i>Orat.</i>	<i>Orator</i>
<i>Part.</i>	<i>De Partitione Oratoria</i>
<i>Pis.</i>	<i>In Pisonem</i>
<i>Rab. Perd.</i>	<i>Pro Rabirio Perduellionis</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>De republica</i>
<i>Tusc.</i>	<i>Tusculanae disputationes</i>
<i>Verr.</i>	<i>In Verrem</i>
Clement of Alexandria <i>Paed.</i>	<i>Paedagogus</i>
Curtius Rufus, Quintus <i>Hist. Alex.</i>	<i>Historia Alexandri Magni</i>
Demetrius <i>Elo.</i>	<i>De Elocutione</i>
Dio Chrysostom <i>Or.</i>	<i>Orationes</i>
Diodorus, Siculus <i>Bibl. Hist.</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Historica</i>
Diogenes Laertius <i>Vit. Phil.</i>	<i>Vitae Philosophorum</i>

Dionysius of Halicarnassus <i>Ant. rom.</i>	<i>Antiquitates romanae</i>
Ennius, Quintus <i>Ann.</i>	<i>Annales</i>
Epictetus <i>Diss.</i>	<i>Dissertationes</i>
Eusebius <i>Hist. Eccl.</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>
Gaius <i>Inst.</i>	<i>Institutiones</i>
Gellius, Aulus <i>Noct. Att.</i>	<i>Noctes Atticae</i>
Gorgias <i>Hel.</i>	<i>Helen</i>
Homer <i>Il.</i> <i>Odyss.</i>	<i>Iliad</i> <i>Odyssey</i>
Horace <i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satirae</i>
Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch <i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistolae</i>
Isocrates <i>Antid.</i> <i>Panegyrr.</i>	<i>Antidosis</i> <i>Panegyricus</i>
John Chrysostom <i>Hom.</i>	<i>Homiliae</i>
Josephus <i>Ant.</i> <i>B.J.</i>	<i>Antiquitates judaicae</i> <i>Bellum judaicum</i>
Justin Epitomator <i>Dig.</i>	<i>Digest</i>
Justin Martyr <i>Apol.</i> <i>Dial. Tryph.</i>	<i>Apologia</i> <i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i>

Juvenal

*Sat.**Satirae*

Lucian

*Cat.**Cataplus**Dem.**Demonax**Dial. d.**Dialogi deorum**Dial. Mer.**Dialogi Meretricii**Fug.**Fugitivi**Gall.**Gallus**Iudic. voc.**Iudicium vocalium**Jup. Trag.**Juppiter Tragoedus**Peregr.**De morte Peregrini**Phil.**Philopseudes**Prom.**Prometheus**Sat.**Saturnalia**Somn.**Somnium*

Marcus Aurelius

*Med.**Meditationes*

Minucius Felix

*Oct.**Octavius*

Origen

*Cels.**Contra Celsum*

Petronius

*Satyr.**Satyricon*

Philo

*Cher.**De Cherubim**Flacc.**In Flaccum**Leg. All.**Legum allegoriae**Post.**De posteritate Caini**Quod Omn.**Quod Omnis Probus**Somn.**De somniis**Spec.**De specialibus legibus**Virt.**De virtutibus*

Philodemus

*De Rhet.**De Rhetorica*

Philostratus

*Vit. Apoll.**Vita Apollonii Tyanae*

Plato

*Apol.**Apologia**Cr.**Crito**Euthyd.**Euthydemus**Euthyph.**Euthyphro**Gorg.**Gorgias*

<i>Leg.</i>	<i>De Legibus</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Meno</i>
<i>Phaed.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
<i>Phaedr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Protag.</i>	<i>Protagogas</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>De Republica</i>
<i>Resp.</i>	<i>Respublica</i>
<i>Soph.</i>	<i>De Sophista</i>
Plautus	
<i>As.</i>	<i>Asinaria</i>
<i>Aul.</i>	<i>Aulularia</i>
<i>Bacch.</i>	<i>Bacchides</i>
<i>Cap.</i>	<i>Capitivi</i>
<i>Cas.</i>	<i>Casina</i>
<i>Cur.</i>	<i>Curculio</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epidicus</i>
<i>Mil.</i>	<i>Miles gloriosus</i>
<i>Most.</i>	<i>Mostellaria</i>
<i>Per.</i>	<i>Persa</i>
<i>St.</i>	<i>Stichus</i>
Pliny the Elder	
<i>Nat.</i>	<i>Naturalis historica</i>
Pliny the Younger	
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
Plutarch	
<i>Caes.</i>	<i>Caesar</i>
<i>Cat. Min.</i>	<i>Cato Minor</i>
<i>Cons. ad Apoll.</i>	<i>Consolatio ad Apollonium</i>
<i>Mor.</i>	<i>Moralia</i>
<i>Per.</i>	<i>Pericles</i>
<i>Vit.</i>	<i>Vitae illustrium virorum</i>
Ps. – Quintilian	
<i>Decl.</i>	<i>Declamationes</i>
Quintilian	
<i>Inst. orat.</i>	<i>De Institutio Oratoria</i>
<i>Rhet. ad Her.</i>	<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>
Seneca	
<i>Apoc.</i>	<i>Apocolocyntosis</i>
<i>Beat.</i>	<i>De vita beata</i>
<i>Ben.</i>	<i>De Beneficiis</i>
<i>Clem.</i>	<i>De Clementia</i>
<i>Cons.</i>	<i>De consolatione ad Marciam</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae Morales</i>
<i>Ir.</i>	<i>De Ira</i>



*Prov.*                      *De Providentia*

Suetonius

*Aug.*                      *Augustus*

*Cal.*                      *Caligula*

*Claud.*                      *Claudius*

*Gal.*                      *Galba*

*Jul.*                      *Julius*

*Ner.*                      *Nero*

Tacitus

*Ann.*                      *Annals*

*Hist.*                      *Historiae*

Terence

*Eun.*                      *Eunuch*

Tertullian

*Apol.*                      *Apologeticus*

*Pat.*                      *De Patientia*

Virgil

*Aen.*                      *Aeneid*

Xenophon

*Ages.*                      *Agesilaus*

*Cyr.*                      *Cyropaedia*

*Eph.*                      *Ephesiaca*

*Mem.*                      *Memorabilia*

## Introduction

The study to follow is concerned with body language: the message of the cross as body language in Paul's Corinthian polemics as an inversion of the Greco-Roman social ethos. Within the English language, 'body language' may broadly be defined as 'the process of communicating through conscious or unconscious gestures and poses.'<sup>1</sup> However, the focus on 'body language' here is how it may be understood in the ancient Greco-Roman world.<sup>2</sup> Body language in crucifixion, for instance, was conveyed not only through gestures and poses, but also in powerful and effective symbols. The body of the crucified victim was symbolic of the worst of human suffering and pain, humiliation and degradation. Similarly, the physical pain that Paul endured through floggings, lashes and beatings (2 Cor. 11.23–25) also conveys vivid and poignant body language. The same is also true in regard to Paul's bodily presence, which was considered to be weak by his critics (10.10). It almost goes without saying that one of the clearest forms of body language was communicated through the various gestures and poses of the Greco-Roman orator. A powerful and impressive self-presentation on their part, as of any agent, also carried with it signs and traits of masculinity which were vital to a man's status in Greco-Roman society.

The message of the cross refers not only to the content of Paul's gospel, but also to the manner of his proclamation and delivery as well as his apostolic life. This is because, as far as Paul is concerned, the message he carried could hardly be separated from his manner of presentation and his *modus operandi* as Christ's apostle. Indeed, Paul decided to know nothing among the Corinthians except Jesus Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2.2), a decision which governed the content of his gospel. Moreover, his proclamation was 'not with plausible words of wisdom' (2.4), as his whole life, including his personal tribulations, was characterised by 'weakness' (2 Cor. 11.30). These three aspects of body language – the message of the cross, its presentation and Paul's own personal life – become particularly apparent in Paul's Corinthian polemics and may be seen to invert the current social ethos.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> JUDITH PEARSALL, *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* (New York: OUP, 1995), 158.

<sup>2</sup> See D. L. CAIRNS (ed.), *Body Language in the Greek and Roman World* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2005)

<sup>3</sup> The word 'body' or 'body language' also appears in other contexts in the Corinthian correspondence, for example, with reference to the Christian's body as 'a temple of the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. 6.19); the Corinthian congregation as 'one body' (10.17), which was

Three specific areas concerning body language in Paul's Corinthian polemics may be identified with special reference to their socio-historical contexts and relevant passages in the Corinthian correspondence. The three areas which constitute the three divisions of this study are: (1) Crucifixion and noble death in antiquity; (2) Greco-Roman rhetoric with special emphasis on its delivery; and (3) *Peristasis* catalogues, or tribulation lists, which may be perceived both positively and negatively. Body language is the vital link between these three. On the basis of socio-historical studies of these three areas it may be argued not only that Paul was conscious of his intentions, but also that there is consistency in his inversion of the current social ethos in each area. Consequently, the following key questions shall be dealt with as well as minor questions related to them: (1) Why did Paul decide to know nothing among the Corinthians except Jesus Christ crucified' (1 Cor. 2.2)? (2) Why did Paul decide not to proclaim 'the mystery of God' in 'lofty words or wisdom' when he came to Corinth (2.1)? Why did he come to Corinth 'in weakness and in fear and in much trembling' (2.3)? (3) After providing the whole list of personal tribulations (*peristaseis*) in 2 Cor. 11.23–29, why should Paul conclude by saying that 'if I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness' (11.30), instead of strength, like his Greco-Roman counterparts did?

## 1. Corinthian Studies: The General Situation and Approach

The study of Paul's Corinthian letters is among the most fascinating and yet at the same time the most complex in New Testament studies. As early as the 1830s Ferdinand Christian Baur already held that the early church was largely divided into two camps led by Paul and Cephas. For many decades, this position was dominant in the study of early Christianity.<sup>4</sup> Although Baur's view has often been criticized and abandoned by many, its influence and support remain considerable to this day.<sup>5</sup> In the early 20<sup>th</sup>

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Christ's body (12.12, 27) in the contexts of the Lord's Supper as well as in Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts (12.12–31). But in all these and similar cases 'body' or 'body language' are used symbolically or as signs or metaphors in the contexts of Paul's teaching, and not as inversion of current social ethos.

<sup>4</sup> F. C. BAUR, *Paul, The Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine* (Edinburgh/London: Williams & Norgate, 1875), 1.267–320.

<sup>5</sup> M. Y. MACDONALD, 'The Shifting Centre: Ideology and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians', in E. ADAMS and D. G. HORRELL (eds.), *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline church* (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 2004), 273–94, at 277. J. D. G. DUNN, 'Reconstructions of Corinthian Christianity and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians', in *Christianity at Corinth*, 295–310. M. GOULDER, 'Sophia in 1 Corinthians', *NTS* 37 (1991), 516–34.

century, the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* was initiated by scholars who put the study of both Jewish and Christian religions in a much broader context and in close connection, even on *par*, with other religious traditions, thereby challenging the unique status which the Judeo-Christian tradition enjoyed for centuries. In addition, the category of 'Gnosticism' was also characteristically used to interpret Corinthian Christianity or theology by scholars such as Walther Schmithals<sup>6</sup> and Ulrich Wilckens.<sup>7</sup>

Critical of Gnosticism as the appropriate background of Corinthian studies, Richard Horsley advocates the perspective of 'Hellenistic Judaism' to interpret Corinthian theology.<sup>8</sup> Under Baur's influence, in the 1950s and 60s Corinthian studies tended to be Paul-centred, focusing merely or predominantly on Paul's thought rather than on 'a full understanding of the Corinthian community as a whole.'<sup>9</sup> Pauline scholarship between the 1960s and 70s may be regarded as Christianity-centred since 'the *ekklesia* of 1<sup>st</sup> century Corinth' was quite commonly perceived as being representative of Christianity.<sup>10</sup> This was followed by the historico-sociological movement, which has gradually shifted to become society-centred, using the Greco-Roman social context to interpret the Corinthian correspondence.<sup>11</sup> This shift has serious implications for the following ap-

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<sup>6</sup> W. SCHMITHALS, *Gnosticism in Corinth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971).

<sup>7</sup> U. WILCKENS, 'Sophia', *TDNT* 7.519–22. Cf. R. A. HORSLEY, 'Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth', *CBQ* 39 (1977), 224–39; B. A. PEARSON, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians: A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and its Relation to Gnosticism* (SBLDS 12; Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 27–43.

<sup>8</sup> HORSLEY, 'Gnosis in Corinth: I Corinthians 8.1–6', *NTS* 27 (1981), 32–52. J. A. DAVIS, *Wisdom and Spirit: An Investigation of 1 Corinthians 1.18–3.20 against the Background of Jewish Sapiential Traditions in the Greco-Roman Period* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984). HORSLEY, 'Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos: Distinctions of Spiritual Status among the Corinthians', *HTR* 69 (1976), 269–88; DUNN, *1 Corinthians*, 37–38. R. MCL. WILSON, 'How Gnostic Were the Corinthians?' *NTS* 19 (1972–73), 65–74.

<sup>9</sup> MACDONALD, 'The Shifting Centre', 280. Cf. C. K. BARRETT, 'Christianity at Corinth', *BJRL* 46 (1964), 269–97. K. STENDAHL, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976). N. A. DAHL, 'Paul and the Church at Corinth', in *Christianity at Corinth*, 85–95.

<sup>10</sup> MACDONALD, 'The Shifting Centre', 285. SCHMITHALS, *Gnosticism in Corinth*. HORSLEY, 'Gnosis in Corinth: I Corinthians 8.1–6', 32–52.

<sup>11</sup> E. A. JUDGE, *The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1960). JUDGE, *Rank and Status in the World of the Caesars and St Paul* (Christchurch, N. Z.: University of Canterbury Publications, 1982). G. THEISSEN, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Philadelphia: T. & T. Clark, 1982). S. C. BARTON, 'Paul and the Cross: A Sociological Approach', *Theology* 85 (1982), 13–19. W. A. MEEKS, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University, 1983). B. HOLMBERG, *Sociology and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). J. K. CHOW, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in*

proach, with its focus on the message of the cross in relation to the prevailing social ethos.

Feminist approaches have also developed and play an important role in Corinthian studies. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's book, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, published in 1983, is representative of this concern. Her work has aroused considerable interest in interpreting the role or status of women in the Corinthian church.<sup>12</sup>

More recently, new interest in Greco-Roman rhetoric has emerged with special reference to the Corinthian context.<sup>13</sup> The approach taken here recognizes the importance and value of both the socio-historical approach and more recent rhetorical studies.

Andrew Clarke contends that the Pauline corpus alone does not provide sufficient evidence to reconstruct the situation as it existed in Corinth. Multi-disciplinary approaches and perspectives are thus necessary.<sup>14</sup> Current Corinthian studies have been well summarised by Edward Adams and David Horrell:

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*Corinth* (JSNTS 75; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992). D. B. MARTIN, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). MARTIN, *The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983). D. G. HORRELL, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996). HORRELL (ed.), *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1999). D. F. WATSON, 'Paul's Boasting in 2 Corinthians 10–13 as Defense of His Honour: A Socio-rhetorical Analysis', in A. ERICKSSON, *et al.* (eds.), *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 260–75.

<sup>12</sup> E. S. FIORENZA, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983). A. C. WIRE, *Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). FIORENZA (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures. Vol 2: A Feminist Commentary* (London: SCM, 1995). A.-J. LEVINE, *A Feminist Companion to Paul* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2004). J. ØKLAND, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space* (London: T & T Clark, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> G. A. KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); L. L. WELBORN, 'On the Discord in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 1–4 and Ancient Politics', *JBL* 106 (1987), 85–111; WATSON, 'The New Testament and Greco-Roman Rhetoric: a Bibliography', *JETS* 31/4 (1988), 465–72; S. M. POGOLOFF, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); D. LITFIN, *St Paul's Theology of Proclamation: 1 Cor 1–4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); M. MITCHELL, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> A. D. CLARKE, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1–6* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 6.

Thus the task of reconstructing earliest Christianity at Corinth will continue in diverse ways. While some branches of New Testament scholarship may eschew historical reconstruction ... others will continue to make use of the wide range of ancient evidence in order to reconstruct a setting in ancient Corinth with which to better understand Paul and the Corinthians.... One general area in which there does seem to be a convergence of opinion, unsurprising, perhaps, given the general collapse of the illusion that scholarship can ever be simply objective and disinterested, is in recognizing the need for critical and theoretical reflection, on the ways to use and interpret ancient evidence (Meggitt), on the ways to employ social-scientific resources (Holmberg), and on the interests and ideologies that shape scholarship (MacDonald).<sup>15</sup>

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the German New Testament scholar Adolf Deissmann came up with a view which later came to be known as the 'Old Consensus'. In this view New Testament writers belonged to the lower classes of society on the basis of their use of the vulgar *koinē*, except for Paul whose social status was rather ambiguous.<sup>16</sup> This was also thought to be the case of the Pauline congregations, including the Corinthian church. A very different view is put forward by Edwin Judge, who believes that 'Christianity was a movement sponsored by local patrons to their social dependents'.<sup>17</sup>

Gerd Theissen and Wayne Meeks, who agree with many of Judge's finding (a position now dubbed as the 'New Consensus'), have also asserted that the Pauline communities comprised a cross-section of society, including some from the higher strata. Based on 1 Cor. 1.26, they argue for the existence of affluent groups within the Corinthian communities.<sup>18</sup> John Chow also suggests that patronage played a vital role in the Corinthian church, so that the few powerful patrons who possessed outstanding social status and wealth not only associated themselves with other powerful people in the colony, but also were dominant figures who 'through lawsuits, marriage or social fellowship with the powerful leaders in the colony, constantly sought to gain more, including possessions, power and honour'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> ADAMS, *Christianity*, 42–43.

<sup>16</sup> A. DEISSMANN, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1926), 29–51. See J. J. MEGGITT, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> JUDGE, 'The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community', *JRH* 1 (1960–61), 4–15, 125–37, at 8.

<sup>18</sup> THEISSEN, *The Social Setting*, 72–92; MEEKS, *The First Urban Christians*, 54–73.

<sup>19</sup> CHOW, *Patronage*, 166. See also R. P. SALLER, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). A. WALLACE-HADRILL (ed.), *Patronage in Ancient Society* (Routledge: London, 1990). A. C. MITCHELL, 'Rich and Poor in the Courts of Corinth', *NTS* 39 (1993), 562–86. L. SCHOTTRUFF, "'Not Many Powerful': Approaches to a Sociology of Early Christianity', in D. G. Horrell (ed.), *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1999), 275–87.

Theissen's work provides valuable insights into the social situation of the Corinthian church, especially its class membership and the nature of its conflicts. John Schütz, the editor and translator of Theissen's essays, writes that Theissen's work is not only marked by 'bold hypothesis', but is also 'balanced with exegetical insight and patience for detail.'<sup>20</sup> Clarke criticizes the imbalance in Pauline studies between theological perspective and social approach: 'either they are too narrowly constructed on the theological ideals of the Pauline material; or they are too strongly dictated by modern social theory without taking sufficient cognizance of the socio-historical context.'<sup>21</sup>

The approach taken here seeks to keep a necessary balance between social study and exegetical insight. On this particular point, Judge's critique of Bengt Holmberg's work is worth noting:<sup>22</sup>

It couples with New Testament studies a strong admixture of modern sociology, as though social theories can be safely transposed across the centuries without verification. The basic question remains unasked: What are the social facts of life characteristic of the world to which the New Testament belongs? Until the painstaking field work is better done, the importation of social models that have been defined in terms of other cultures is methodologically no improvement on the 'idealistic fallacy' [of the theologians]. We may fairly call it the 'sociological fallacy'.<sup>23</sup>

The Corinthian church situation in Paul's day was in a state of serious crisis, both in matters of faith and conduct. One of the most serious crises was that of church 'quarrels' (1 Cor. 1.11) or 'jealousy and strife' (3.3). Otherwise, Paul would not have singled it out at the very beginning of 1 Corinthians. The matter became more serious and complex when Paul himself was personally caught in the controversy. There was evidently a highly organized and formidable force in Corinth that was working against Paul so that a great deal of the content in the two letters was interspersed with heated polemics between the apostle and his critics. The following endeavour seeks to show that Paul's polemics were conducted intentionally and consistently from the perspective of the cross, which turned out to be a drastic inversion of the current Greco-Roman social ethos.

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<sup>20</sup> J. H. SCHÜTZ (trans.), *The Social Setting*, Introduction.

<sup>21</sup> CLARKE, *Leadership*, 129.

<sup>22</sup> See B. HOLMBERG, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Lund: Liberlaromede/Gleerup, 1978).

<sup>23</sup> JUDGE, 'The Social Identity of the First Christians, A Question of Method in Religious History', *JRH* 11 (1980), 201–17, at 210. Moreover, J. M. G. BARCLAY has also pointed out: 'Sociological study of Paul's churches should investigate not just social status but also social interaction and should cease generalizing about "Pauline Christians."' Abstract of 'Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrast in Pauline Christianity', *JSNT* 47 (1992), 49–74. The crucial question seems obvious: How to make good use of the studies and findings of the various disciplines critically.

Clifford Geertz defines a people's ethos in terms of the tone, character, and quality of their lives as well as the style and mood of morals, aesthetics and their worldview. He helpfully describes the religious belief and practice of a group's ethos as 'rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to present a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world-view describes, while the world-view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well arranged to accommodate such a way of life.'<sup>24</sup>

Bruce Malina, following on from Geertz's views, suggests that social ethos is 'a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in people, formulating conceptions of value-objects, and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations are perceived to be uniquely realistic.'<sup>25</sup> Malina's concept of social ethos helps in understanding the Corinthian context and some of the basic problems of the Corinthian church.

The Corinthian correspondence will be read within its social context to determine if the Corinthian crises were actually linked to the Greco-Roman social ethos with which the Corinthians were accustomed, especially in regard to the society's perception of honour, status, prestige and power. In regard to power, one needs to note the emphasis on human wisdom and eloquence which find concrete expression in Greco-Roman rhetoric. Why was the message of the cross such foolishness to Gentiles and a stumbling block to Jews (1.23)? Was the Corinthians' preoccupation with wisdom and eloquence largely responsible for their apparent failure to understand the message of the cross and its implications for their life and witness?

Horrell argues that the Corinthian correspondence 'not only offers rich material for a study of the social ethos of early Christian teaching, but also ... enables a focus on a specific community and on change over time.'<sup>26</sup>

Stephen Chester writes that, at least in terms of social setting, the study of the Corinthian correspondence may be more precise than other Pauline documents. He contends that Paul sends the Corinthian correspondence during the sixth decade of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. As such, one may situate the 'Corinthian understanding of conversion more precisely within the wider context of the Graeco-Roman culture than would otherwise be possible'.

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<sup>24</sup> C. GEERTZ, 'Religion as a Culture System', in M. BANTON (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966), 1–46, at 3.

<sup>25</sup> B. J. MALINA, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1993), 23. See also GEERTZ, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Fontana, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> HORRELL, *The Social Ethos*, 4.



Given the vast archaeological record on hand for studying 1<sup>st</sup> century Corinth, there is considerable evidence for such a study.<sup>27</sup>

It is with this recognition of the importance of the social setting of Corinth that more than half of this work is devoted to socio-historical studies on context, which may demonstrate a consistent pattern in all three distinct parts. Each part begins with socio-historical background studies before the exegesis of the relevant Corinthian passages is undertaken.

## 2. Crucifixion and the Message of the Cross in Socio-historical Perspective

The social perspective here is indebted to the findings and insights of several modern scholars in Corinthian studies, particularly Kathy Coleman, Raymond Pickett, Michael Gorman, David Horrell, Timothy Savage and several others.<sup>28</sup> However, a balance is sought between socio-historical studies and exegesis of the relevant Corinthian passages. The findings and insights of socio-historical studies provide the context for reading Paul's theology.

When it comes to the socio-historical study on crucifixion in antiquity, special acknowledgement is owed to Martin Hengel's research, which serves as a helpful introduction to much of the relevant primary literature. The common practice of crucifixion as a form of capital punishment in the ancient world leads Hengel to conclude that 'it is crucifixion that distin-

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<sup>27</sup> S. J. CHESTER, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul's Theology and the Corinthian Church* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 32.

<sup>28</sup> K. M. COLEMAN, 'Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments', *JRS* 80 (1990), 44–73. R. PICKETT, *The Cross in Corinth: The Social Significance of the Death of Jesus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). M. GORMAN, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001). HORRELL, *The Social Ethos*. T. B. SAVAGE, *Power Through Weakness: A Historical and Exegetical Examination of Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996). A. R. BROWN, *The Cross and Human Transformation: Paul's Apocalyptic Word in 1 Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). A. J. DEWEY, 'A Matter of Honour: A Social-Historical Analysis of 2 Corinthians 10', *HTR* 78 (1985), 209–17. D. L. BALCH, 'Paul's portrait of Christ Crucified (Gal. 3.1) in Light of Paintings and Sculptures of Suffering and Death in Pompeian and Roman Houses', in D. L. BALCH and C. OSIEK (eds.), *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 84–108. C. EDWARDS, 'The Suffering Body: Philosophy and Pain', in J. I. PORTER (ed.), *Constructions of the Classical Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 252–68. J. PERKINS, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995). T. G. WEINANDY, *Does God Suffer?* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000).

guishes the new message from mythologies of all other peoples' and that 'the death of Jesus by crucifixion was one of the main objections against his being the son of God.'<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Hengel perceptively summarises: 'the reason why in his letters he [Paul] talks about the cross above all in a polemical context is that he deliberately wants to provoke his opponents, who are attempting to water down the offence caused by the cross. Thus in a way the "word of the cross" is the spearhead of his message.'<sup>30</sup> In some ancient writings 'madness' (μανία) was also used – such as by Justin Martyr<sup>31</sup> and some pagan authors – to describe the Christian message about the cross alongside the description 'folly' (μωρία).<sup>32</sup> While indebted to Hengel's initial work, this research depends on a fresh reading of primary sources related to crucifixion and focuses on its main features, especially as it relates to body language.

Coleman's research seeks to link ancient writings on crucifixion with some modern scholars' views on execution and punishment in the Roman world. Coleman agrees with Harding and Ireland that 'the history of punishment is not seen as a chronological development from "primitive" to "civilized" but rather as a constantly adjusting balance of techniques of social control determined by the physical resources, moral basis, and belief system of any given society.'<sup>33</sup> Agreement is found with Coleman's point that 'penalties of degradation', which sometimes entailed a public spectacle of punishment, were a 'pervasive penal practice' in the ancient world.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the execution of crucifixion as a 'public spectacle of punishment' also made its body language particularly powerful and effective.

Consequently, demonstrating that a human being could not have suffered any greater pain, agony and humiliation than being publicly put on a cross, and quite often completely naked, merits further investigation. The public nature of Roman execution seems to have been designed to alienate the victim from his social context, so that the spectators, regardless of class, were united in a feeling of moral superiority as they ridiculed him, as was the case of Jesus. To achieve such a desired goal in Roman society, 'the mockery of a condemned person was sometimes performed spontaneously by parties other than the legal adjudicators. The best-known example from our period is the soldiers' mockery of Jesus ... the humiliation of the offender seems to be an integral part of the punishment, and it is obvious

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<sup>29</sup> M. HENGEL, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1977), 1.

<sup>30</sup> HENGEL, *Crucifixion*, 89.

<sup>31</sup> Justin, *Apol.* 1.13.4.

<sup>32</sup> Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.4–8; Horace, *Sat.* 2.3.79; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44.3.

<sup>33</sup> COLEMAN, 'Fatal Charades', 45. See C. HARDING and R. W. IRELAND, *Punishment: Rhetoric, Rule, and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>34</sup> COLEMAN, 'Fatal Charades', 45.

that this feature is going to bulk large in the context of executions performed in the course of spectacular enactments in the arena.<sup>35</sup>

Paul's message of the cross and its foolishness is viewed from this perspective of crucifixion. The inquiry on the subject also seeks to learn if, and to what extent, the execution of crucifixion was inseparable from the very rigid social class distinction in Roman society. Coleman endorses Peter Garnsey's suggestions and holds that 'a crucial factor in the Roman penal system was the evolution of differentiated penalties for offenders of different status: *humiliores* and *honestiores*. This is a phenomenon that is characteristic of societies with a strongly differentiated class – or caste-system, and it follows that, when the upper classes are equated with true humanity, the lower classes are sub-human and therefore legitimately liable to cruel treatment.'<sup>36</sup> It is also for this reason that Roman citizens were particularly horrified by any attempt to have any of their members crucified.

As the primary emphasis is on body language, effort is made to show that what happened at the scene of crucifixion was not just events and actions, but also a demonstration of the power and impact of body language which was vividly and graphically conveyed through the suffering victim and had serious social implications.

Pickett's sociological analysis of the Corinthian situation in a Greco-Roman context has much to commend it, and he has largely succeeded in putting the Greco-Roman and Christian socio-ethical values in clear and pointed contrast.<sup>37</sup> This helps to explain the mystery of the cross of Christ in paradoxical and dialectical terms. Pickett's use of the cross as 'symbol' is highly relevant. The cross is indeed a very powerful symbol; however, it should be borne in mind that for Paul it was the historical event and reality of the cross of Christ that gave true meaning to the symbol.

Gorman, who coined the term 'cruciformity', describes that 'conformity to the crucified Christ' is 'central to Paul's theology and ethics.'<sup>38</sup> Gorman's primary concern is the experience of the Christian: 'the purpose of Paul's letters generally ... is not to teach theology but to mould behaviour, to affirm or – more often – to alter patterns of living, patterns of experience. The purpose of his letters, in other words, is pastoral or spiritual before it is theological.... It is appropriate, therefore, to consider Paul first and foremost as a pastoral or spiritual writer, rather than as a theologian

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<sup>35</sup> COLEMAN, 'Fatal Charades', 47.

<sup>36</sup> COLEMAN, 'Fatal Charades', 55. See P. GARNSEY, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: OUP, 1970).

<sup>37</sup> PICKETT, *The Cross*.

<sup>38</sup> GORMAN, *Cruciformity*, 4. See GORMAN, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 115–30.

(or ethicist).<sup>39</sup> It may be ventured that Paul himself would likely object to such one-sided thinking, since Christian life and practice could hardly be artificially separated from sound teaching or theology. The New Testament shows serious interest in wrong Christian behaviour or practice, which is often expressed as the direct or indirect result of wrong teaching or theology.

Savage notes that at the very core of Paul's position in 2 Corinthians lies an important paradox 'which finds expression in a number of different antitheses and which drives to the very heart of what it means to Paul to be a minister of Christ.'<sup>40</sup> He convincingly concludes that 'the Corinthian church was embroiled in a conflict between two opposing viewpoints: the worldly outlook of the Corinthians and Paul's own Christ-centred perspective, the so-called "wisdom of this age" and the "wisdom of God" ... it was precisely this conflict which seems to have evoked Paul's paradoxical teaching of power through weakness.'<sup>41</sup>

### 3. The 'Rediscovery' of Greco-Roman Rhetoric, Self-presentation and Masculinity

Although wisdom is an important issue in both Greco-Roman and Jewish traditions, it is beyond the present scope of this research to investigate it as fully deserved. While the issue of wisdom occupies a prominent place in Corinthian polemics, as was the case in the first two chapters of 1 Corinthians, discussion on the issue is confined to the context of Paul's message of the cross.<sup>42</sup> This is because, in the final analysis, Paul's interest is not in the usual wisdom speculation as such, but rather in the demonstration of divine wisdom in and through the cross of Christ. Moreover, it is also argued that in much of Paul's inversion strategy, human wisdom and divine wisdom are placed in the sharpest possible contrast in his Corinthian polemics.

The following statements in the Corinthian correspondence convey a simple but crucial point in regard to the relevance and importance of rhetoric for polemics: 'Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power' (1 Cor. 1.17). 'Where is the debater of this age' (1.20)? 'Not ... in lofty words or wisdom ... and my speech and my message were not in

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<sup>39</sup> GORMAN, *Cruciformity*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> SAVAGE, *Power*, Introduction.

<sup>41</sup> SAVAGE, *Power Through Weakness*, 188.

<sup>42</sup> See P. LAMPE, 'Theological Wisdom and the "Word about the Cross": The Rhetorical Scheme in 1 Corinthians 1-4', *Interpretation* 44/2 (1990), 117-31.

plausible words of wisdom' (2.1–4). 'They say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account"' (2 Cor. 10.10).

For about two or three decades now Greco-Roman rhetoric has been generally recognized as an essential key to understanding a number of intriguing issues in the Corinthian letters, especially in 1 Cor. 1–4. This is demonstrated in the works of modern scholars such as Laurence Welborn, Stephen Pogoloff and Duane Litfin among many others.<sup>43</sup>

Pogoloff attempts a fresh reading of 1 Cor. 1–4 and stresses the importance of the 'rediscovery of and renewed appreciation for ancient rhetoric.'<sup>44</sup> This rediscovery now shows that rhetoric affected virtually all Greco-Roman culture and a whole host of different aspects of society.

Litfin contrasts the Corinthian orators' style and goal with Paul's *modus operandi*: 'The Apostle Paul's view of a preacher contrasted sharply with that of the Greco-Roman orator.'<sup>45</sup> While the Greco-Roman orators exploited rhetorical skill to achieve their self-seeking and self-promoting goal, Paul as a faithful preacher of Christ crucified refuses to follow that kind of style and goal. Bruce Winter points out that Paul's letters to Corinth contain evidence of the 1<sup>st</sup> century sophistic movement. He suggests that the apostle's language is essentially 'anti-sophistic'.<sup>46</sup> In Litfin's view, the reason why the Corinthians were not impressed by Paul's public speaking is because 'he came far short of the polish and sophistication in word choice, in diction, in voice, physical charm and self-possession that was indispensable to impress and move a Greco-Roman crowd.'<sup>47</sup>

Studies on Greco-Roman rhetoric in the discussion to follow seek to demonstrate that the art of rhetorical training and practice was an essential part of ancient Greco-Roman education for males. Detailed instructions about rhetoric, especially its delivery<sup>48</sup> which involved the whole human body (literally from 'head to toe'), were repeatedly given in the writings of: Aristotle (*De arte Rhetorica*), Cicero (*De Oratore*), Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria*) and the work of an unknown author believed to be a contemporary of Cicero (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*).

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<sup>43</sup> See above n. 13.

<sup>44</sup> POGOLOFF, *Logos*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> LITFIN, *Proclamation*, 247. See also M. JONES, *St Paul as Orator: A Critical, Historical and Explanatory Commentary on the Speeches of St Paul* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910).

<sup>46</sup> B. W. WINTER, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 148.

<sup>47</sup> LITFIN, *Proclamation*, 162.

<sup>48</sup> T. H. OLBRICHT, 'Delivery and Memory', in S. E. PORTER (ed.), *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period (330 B.C.–A. D. 400)* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 159–67.

Closely connected with the subject of rhetoric is the concern for masculinity in Greco-Roman society. Here the contributions of scholars such as Maud Gleason, Jennifer Larson and Jennifer Glancy are duly acknowledged.<sup>49</sup> Of importance is to question whether Paul's physical unattractiveness, including the possibility of a physical disability or handicap, was the main reason for the Corinthians' low esteem of him and prejudices against him. Did the Greco-Roman concept of masculinity have any direct bearing on a man's authority in society, including the apostolic authority of Paul? How crucial was this in the Corinthian controversy?

Gleason's work aims 'to refocus our attention on the social dynamics of rhetoric as an instrument of self-presentation, and in the process refine our appreciation of the functional aesthetics of a profoundly traditional performance genre.'<sup>50</sup> Gleason's conclusions are particularly helpful for a clear understanding of the ethos of rhetoric, especially the crucial issue of masculinity in Greco-Roman society.

Rhetorical training in the Greco-Roman society was a necessary process through which upper-class men were 'made'. In the end, education (παιδεία) for both Greek and Roman gentlemen became a valuable form of capital investment. Greco-Roman rhetoric was an ongoing, life-long process and discipline in a society which was seriously preoccupied with male socialization and also in which gender identity, social status and the self-esteem of men were all interconnected.

In an article on the masculinity of Paul, Larson suggests that despite all the attention given to the historical setting of the Corinthian controversy, one crucial aspect of the invective of the apostle Paul's opponents has been neglected, namely: 'How the criticisms of Paul engaged cultural expectations about manliness and its relationship to authority (cf. 2 Cor. 10–13).'<sup>51</sup> Larson's view that Paul and his opponents were functioning within a context of Greco-Roman social values and expectations is indeed convincing. The ultimate clash between two diametrically opposed sets of values and expectations was, in the end, inevitable.

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<sup>49</sup> M. W. GLEASON, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). J. LARSON, 'Paul's Masculinity', *JBL* 123/1 (2004), 85–97. J. A. GLANCY, 'Boasting of Beatings (2 Cor. 11:23–25)', *JBL* 123/1 (2004), 99–135. See also D. J. A. CLINES, 'Paul, the Invisible Man', in S. D. MOORE and J. C. ANDERSON (eds.), *New Testament Masculinities* (Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies 45; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 181–92. R. WARD, 'Pauline Voice and Presence as Strategic Communication', *SBLSP* (1990), 283–92. C. A. WILLIAMS, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> GLEASON, *Making Men*, xx.

<sup>51</sup> LARSON, 'Masculinity', 85–86.

With regard to the perceptions of gender in the Greco-Roman society, Larson elaborates:

Personal dignity, bodily integrity, and specific details of one's appearance were all factors in individual self-assessment and in men's evaluation of one another's masculinity. Elite men of the day were constantly concerned with the maintenance of their masculinity, because it both displayed and justified their positions of power. Unlike noble birth, which was immutable, masculinity was a matter of perception. While elites always represented their masculinity to outsiders as innate, among insiders it was implicitly recognized that masculinity was a performance requiring constant practice and vigilance.<sup>52</sup>

One need hardly make the case that body language was conveyed by such a constant performance.

Given the socio-historical context of Paul's time, especially in relation to ancient rhetoric, it is not at all surprising that he should be judged by his critics according to current convention. In 2 Cor. 10.10, Paul's opponents openly challenge his skills as a public speaker. 'Proper tone of voice, posture, gestures, dress, personal adornment, and other less concrete qualities', says Larson, were 'routinely cited by professionals as requirements for success. We have good reason to believe that Corinthians of the first century, even those with a lesser education, would have been experienced with regard to the evaluation of speakers.'<sup>53</sup> If that were truly the case, criticisms against Paul and deep dissatisfaction with him might not be confined to a few leaders, but rather shared among a much larger group.<sup>54</sup>

Larson's study reveals a great deal about a speaker's self-presentation. Since the performance of a speaker was also gender performance, a man's deficiency in self-presentation could easily create an opening for his rivals to ridicule him as 'effeminate' (*mollior*). Paul's bodily presence was described as weak. It remains to be seen if, and to what extent, the Greco-Roman perception of self-presentation has to do with the opponents' criticism against Paul. John Harrill suggests that 'attacks against one's outward appearance and speaking ability, as in 2 Cor. 10.10, must be interpreted in light of these cultural beliefs about deportment as a system of signs that reveal both one's self-control and one's fitness to rule others.'<sup>55</sup> The serious-

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<sup>52</sup> LARSON, 'Masculinity', 86.

<sup>53</sup> LARSON, 'Masculinity', 87.

<sup>54</sup> Plutarch has a list of important figures, including an orator, a poet, a general, a rich man and a king who were regarded as 'handsome, gracious, liberal, eminent, rich, eloquent, learned, philanthropic', in strong contrast to those who were 'ugly, graceless, illiberal, dishonoured, needy ... unlearned, misanthropic' (*Mor.* 472A, 485A).

<sup>55</sup> J. A. HARRILL, 'Invective against Paul (2 Cor. 10.10), the Physiognomics of the Ancient Slave Body, and the Greco-Roman Rhetoric of Manhood', in A. Y. COLLINS and M. M. MITCHELL (eds.), *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on His 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2001), 189–213, at 204.

ness of 2 Cor. 10.10 together with its profound implications should be perceived in this particular context. In this connection, an important question deserves further investigation: Was Paul deficient in masculine virtues or did he willingly allow them to be abrogated? According to the Greco-Roman concept of masculinity, a real man did not cede power or control to another, as slaves and women did. As masculinity was closely tied to concepts of personal freedom and power over others, only the fool would abrogate them. Was Paul a 'fool' and if so in what sense?

#### 4. *Peristasis* (περίστασις) Studies

Paul, in his *apologia*, refers to his tribulations for the sake of Christ, most notably in 1 Cor. 4. 8–13 and 2 Cor. 11.23–33. These references become all the more meaningful in the context of the use of *peristasis* catalogues among the Greco-Roman sages and philosophers. Therefore, the study of *peristasis* catalogues in Greco-Roman tradition, with special reference to Stoicism, is necessary.

Generally speaking, περίστασις, especially in the Stoic tradition, was perceived positively as an occasion for sages or philosophers to demonstrate their human virtues (e.g. courage, endurance, manliness). This positive attitude towards περίστασις in the Greco-Roman tradition has also been supported by modern scholars such as John Fitzgerald. He is convinced that his study of classical literature demonstrates that the Greco-Roman sage generally welcomed περίστασις. Fitzgerald infers that it is mainly for this reason that Paul in 2 Corinthians so often refers to the theme of his suffering and hardship.<sup>56</sup>

Fitzgerald's view, however, represents only one side of the coin. The other side, that is the mirror opposite view, was also current in Greco-Roman society, as the research of Glancy shows. It is reasonable to assume that it was this negative or derogative use of the *peristasis* catalogues which was the main concern of Paul who was trying to witness, paradoxically, to the divine power made manifest in and through his own weakness.

Glancy, in an article about 2 Cor. 11.22–25, contends that according to the social ethos of Paul's time the apostle's testimony concerning his own weakness and the abusing of his body was undoubtedly perceived by his opponents as a mark of servile submission and insignia of humiliation.<sup>57</sup> As such they were unworthy of a man of any social standing, dignity and

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<sup>56</sup> J. T. FITZGERALD, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 44.

<sup>57</sup> GLANCY, 'Boasting', 99–135



honour. Glancy makes an important point that 'it is the Christians ... that revolutionize these values wholly by their total inversion.'<sup>58</sup>

The conflict between Paul and his critics in matters of social ethos and values deserves attention with regard to the physical body of a man in Roman society. Glancy agrees with Harrill that 'social status was somatically expressed', and since Paul's bodily appearance was weak (1 Cor. 2.3; 2 Cor. 10.10; 11.30) his critics naturally questioned his manhood and right to authority.<sup>59</sup>

Welborn describes that 'Paul was governed by a social constraint in his discourse of the cross and in his account of the sufferings of the apostles of Christ.' Like his contemporaries Horace and Seneca, 'Paul employs the language and imagery of the mime, when he speaks about these socially shameful subjects.'<sup>60</sup> Welborn also writes that 'Paul's exposition of the folly of the message of the cross is best understood in the context of an intellectual tradition which, for want of a better term, we have designated the "comic-philosophic tradition."<sup>61</sup> The term suggests that 'a common cultural perspective connects Socrates, satire, and the mime.'<sup>62</sup> The wise fool, according to this tradition, was the hero Aesop of the folk-tale. For the intellectuals, however, Socrates was the model of the wise man whose wisdom was hidden in apparent foolishness. Welborn believes that 'Paul participates fully in this tradition in his discourse about the folly of the word of the cross.' The major points of Paul's argument in 1 Cor. 1–4, such as the divine reversal of wisdom and foolishness, 'find their closest analogies in the tradition that valorizes Socrates, Aesop, and the mimic fool.'<sup>63</sup>

Welborn's contributions and insight are noteworthy; nonetheless, the parallels drawn may at times be over-stretched. On the one hand, there seems to be a significant difference between the fool in the Greco-Roman comic-philosophic tradition and the apostle Paul. For instance, while the fool of the mime is an enacted figure on a stage, although he could be reflective of people in real life, he remains fictitious. On the other hand, Paul as a fool of Christ is completely personal and existential in real life, and is absolutely inseparable from his whole *modus operandi* as an apostle of Christ.

Paul's tribulations may not be confined only to the wounds and scars inflicted by others on his body, but also may be partly due to his manual labour as a tentmaker. As Ronald Hock observes, Paul's tentmaking profes-

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<sup>58</sup> GLANCY, 'Boasting', 126.

<sup>59</sup> GLANCY, 'Boasting', 127–28.

<sup>60</sup> WELBORN, *Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1–4 in the Comic-Philosophic Tradition* (London: T & T International, 2005), 3

<sup>61</sup> WELBORN, *Fool*, 12.

<sup>62</sup> WELBORN, *Fool*, 12.

<sup>63</sup> WELBORN, *Fool*, 12–13.

sion (1 Cor. 4.12; cf. Acts 18.3) is often taken quite innocently and even positively as his ability (and pride) to support himself, thus making the gospel free to others. Hock's discussion helps demonstrate that Paul's manual labour was very much the trade of a slave or person of very low social status.<sup>64</sup> As such, Paul's choice of manual labour and decision to remain in this lowly esteemed trade, even as an apostle of Christ, could also be regarded as an inversion of the current social ethos.

Paul's hunger and thirst, mentioned in the Corinthian correspondence, may be indications that this trade did not always provide sufficiently for him. Paul's tentmaking labour was also a serious social σκάνδαλον in this status-conscious society. The social prejudice and stigma that his manual labour brought would have added further suffering to Paul besides the daily chores and physical pains that the manual labour itself brought. Yet, the apostle was not ashamed to stay in such a dishonourable profession for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. On the whole, the study on περίστασις indicates that Paul's physical suffering caused another σκάνδαλον in terms of the Greco-Roman social ethos in which human virtues, masculinity and social status were greatly cherished.

## 5. Aim, Limits and Structure

It should not be underestimated what an important feature the body is in ancient understandings of crucifixion and noble death. This is the case in Greco-Roman rhetoric, especially its preoccupation with delivery and masculinity, as well as in the Greco-Roman concept of *peristasis* (i.e. a catalogue of suffering). The socio-historical studies of the three areas provide the necessary contexts for the exegesis of the relevant passages in Paul's Corinthian polemics. There is a deliberate attempt on the part of Paul to invert the current social ethos in his dealings with these areas. The choice of these three areas sets a limit to the scope of this study, not only in its socio-historical studies, but also in its reference to the Corinthian passages. Consequently the exegesis is mainly confined to 1 Cor. 1.18–31; 2.1–5, 4.8–13 and 2 Cor. 10.10; 11.23–33. While the choice of these passages may initially seem arbitrary, it will be demonstrated that they are directly related to the three socio-historical areas under consideration.

A balance between the socio-historical and the exegetical-theological is carefully sought in the ensuing discussion. Each of the three parts begins with socio-historical studies. *Part I: Crucifixion in Antiquity and Noble Death in Greco-Roman and Jewish Traditions.* *Part II: Rhetoric, Delivery,*

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<sup>64</sup> R. F. HOCK, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 31–35.