

ON THE DISCORD IN CORINTH: 1 CORINTHIANS 1-4 AND ANCIENT POLITICS*

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ἔσονται σχίσματα καὶ αἵρέσεις

Agraphon of Jesus

Justin *Dialogue with Trypho* 35.3

The young Jewish gentleman whom Justin met one morning along the tree-shaded walks of Corinth¹ found grounds for the rejection of Christianity in the existence of factions and sects in the church. The Christian philosopher countered with a saying, which he attributes to Jesus, intended to show that even these things were foreknown and predetermined: ἔσονται σχίσματα καὶ αἵρέσεις.² The context makes it likely that this “*unbekanntes Jesuswort*”³ is, in fact, a saying of Paul, for Trypho’s examples of Christian schismatics are those who eat meat offered to idols (*Dial.* 35.1). This naturally recalls the σχίσματα in the church of Paul’s day, which appeared in connection with the assembly for the communal meal (1 Cor 11:18). The apostle responded bravely: δεῖ γὰρ καὶ αἵρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι (1 Cor 11:19). Justin, it seems, has made providence of Paul’s necessity. But whether Paul alludes to an unknown saying of Jesus, or Justin derives the statement from Paul, their intention is the same: to shield the idea of the church from the nihilistic consequences of factional strife. Paul subjects the phenomenon of factions to an eschatological interpretation,⁴ whereas Justin uses prophecy to show that divisions were foreknown by God. In both cases, the failure

*For Lloyd Spencer.

¹ Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 4.18 reports that the ξυστάς was in Ephesus, but Trypho’s remarks seem to place the dialogue in Corinth (*Dial.* 1.3).

² E. J. Goodspeed, *Die ältesten Apologeten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1914) 130. Cf. the parallels listed in E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 1. 88.

³ J. Jeremias, *Unbekannte Jesusworte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1948) 53-54.

⁴ Δεῖ with the appended ἵνα-clause seems to reflect an eschatological understanding. W. A. Meeks speaks of “apocalyptic determinism” (*The First Urban Christians* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983] 67). Matt 24:10 seems to form the background of Paul’s thought; see W. Grundmann, *TDNT*, 2. 21-25.

of the redeemed community refers us to a realm in which unity is attained: the will of God.

One suspects that the tendency to look away from the negative, political aspects of life in the church has exercised a subterranean influence on modern interpreters of the factions in Corinth as well. F. C. Baur's reduction of the parties involved in the strife from the four attested by the slogans echoed in 1 Cor 1:12 to two, the adherents of Paul and those of Peter, allows him to assert that early Christian history was not a meaningless rivalry between factions, but a rational, dialectical process, the realization of the spirit in the synthesis of Hellenistic and Judaistic Christianity.⁵ Part of the perennial attraction of the theory that the opponents of Paul (again reduced to a single group, the "Christ party") are to be identified as spiritual enthusiasts or gnostics must be that it allows for the explanation of the controversy in religious terms, without reference to politics.⁶ The strife between the Corinthian parties is thus transposed into the realm of Hellenistic mystery religions and syncretistic gnosis.⁷ In the period since World War II, it has even proved possible, and perhaps necessary, for some to deny the very existence of factions in the church.⁸

Yet however strong the aversion may be to the presence of political elements in the Corinthian epistles, it is impossible to resist the impression that Paul describes the situation in the church in terms like those used to characterize conflicts within city-states by Greco-Roman historians. Paul speaks first of *σχίσματα* (1:10). A *σχίσμα* is a rift, a tear, as in a garment; it is used metaphorically of a cleft in political consciousness (e.g., Herodotus 7.219; *PLond.* 2710.13). The verb from which the abstract noun is derived is used by Diodorus, for example, to describe the civil strife at Megara: "the multitude was divided (*σχιζόμενος*) according to party" (12.66.2). The clearest indication of the meaning of *σχίσμα* in 1 Cor 1:10 is provided by the author of *1 Clement*. Applying the example of Paul and the parties to the "abominable and unholy *στάσις*" in the church of his own day, he asks,

⁵ F. C. Baur, "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des paulinischen und petrinischen Christentums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom," *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* 4 (1831) 61-206; idem, *Paul* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1875).

⁶ For the opponents of Paul as spiritual enthusiasts, see W. Lütgert, *Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth* (BFCT 12/3; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1908); A. Schlatter, *Die korinthische Theologie* (BFCT 18/2; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1914). For the opponents of Paul as gnostics, see W. Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971); U. Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu 1. Kor. 1 und 2* (BHT 26; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1959); most recently, G. Sellin, "Das 'Geheimnis' der Weisheit und das Rätsel der 'Christuspartei' (zu 1 Kor 1-4)," *ZNW* 73 (1982) 69-96.

⁷ R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1978) 426-500.

⁸ J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (Richmond: John Knox, 1959) 135-67.

"Why are there quarrels and anger and dissension and divisions (σχίσματα) and war among you?" (46:5). The terms with which σχίσμα is associated make it clear that it is neither a religious heresy nor a harmless clique that the author has in mind, but factions engaged in a struggle for power.⁹

Chloe's people brought news of ἔριδες in the Corinthian church (1:11). Ἔρις is hot dispute, the emotional flame that ignites whenever rivalry becomes intolerable. It invariably appears in accounts of ancient political life the moment the pressure of circumstances, that is, the approach of an enemy army or the election of mutually hostile consuls, draws the citizens into confused knots.¹⁰ A single example will suffice. Plutarch describes the state into which Rome was thrown by the news that Caesar had crossed the Rubicon. The tempest swept the inhabitants of the country into the city, while the senators, seizing whatever possessions came to hand, abandoned Rome. Conflicting emotions prevailed everywhere, and throughout the city violent disturbances erupted. As was inevitable in such a large city, those who were pleased at Caesar's coming encountered those who were in fear and distress, and both giving voice to their opinions, "they began to quarrel with one another" (δι' ἐρίδων ἦν, Plutarch *Caes.* 33).

In 1 Cor 3:3 Paul combines ἔρις with ζῆλος to describe the source of the Corinthians' divisive behavior. Ζῆλος is the gnawing, unquiet root of civil strife—the real, psychological cause of war, according to Lysias (2.48), not the minor infractions both parties allege. The Alexandrian mob that began the civil war against their Jewish fellow citizens was driven by "jealousy" in Philo's judgment; enraged at the sight of the Jewish prince Agrippa, they seized a poor lunatic named "Carabas," dressed him in the robes of a king, and hailed him as "*Marin*" (Philo *In Flacc.* 41).¹¹

In 1 Cor 1:13 Paul asks rhetorically, μεμέρισται ὁ Χριστός, alluding by synecdoche to the notion of the church as the σῶμα Χριστοῦ. The translations fail to capture the political connotation that the verb undoubtedly had for its first readers. Μερίς is the customary term for "party" in Greek, corresponding to Latin *pars*. In the proem to his account of the civil wars, Appian relates that the senate and the plebs "were split into parties (ἐμερίζετο, *Bell. Civ.* 1:1; cf. Polybius 8.21.9) over the appointment of magistrates, the former supporting the consuls, the latter the tribune of the plebs, each seeking to prevail over the other by increasing the power of its own magistrate. We may gain in clarity if we paraphrase Paul's question thus: "Has the body of Christ been split into parties?"¹²

⁹ Cf. *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* 11.2, ed. H. Lambertin (Brussels, 1898) 122.24: "... πολέμους, φόνους, μάχας, σχίσματα."

¹⁰ Of the many examples that could be given: Thucydides 6.35; 2.21; Appian *Bell. Civ.* 2.2.6; 3.86.357; Josephus *Ant.* 14.16.1 §470.

¹¹ See also Plutarch *Lycur.* 4.2–3; 1 Macc 8:16; Cicero *Tusc. Disp.* 4.8.17. In 2 Cor 12:20 and Gal 5:20 Paul again combines ζῆλος with ἔρις in the sense of "rivalry" or "jealous strife."

¹² G. Heinrici rightly designates 1 *Clem.* 46:7 as a "commentary" on μεμέρισται (*Der erste*

Another explicitly political term, διχοστασία, appears in the earliest witness to the Pauline epistles, P⁴⁶ (ca A.D. 200), a number of important uncial manuscripts, and the majority text as characteristic of the situation in the church at Corinth (3:3).¹³ It was such "hardened difference of opinion," "bitter irresolve," which, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, paralyzed the Roman assembly (*Ant. Rom.* 8.72.1, 4).¹⁴ It is this "dissension" that Paul now identifies as the bane of the Corinthian church. What threatened the survival of the community of chosen people was not seductive gnostic theology or infectious Judaistic propaganda, but the possibility that its adherents might "behave like ordinary men" (3:3).

There is one last phrase that Paul uses to describe the demeanor of the Corinthian Christians: each is "puffed up on behalf of one against another" (4:6). It is symptomatic that this vivid image should prove so "difficult to fathom."¹⁵ It is all too familiar to the student of political history as the caricature of the political windbag, the orator inflated at his success (*Ps.-Plato Alcibiades* 2 145e; *Plutarch Cicero* 887b; *Epictetus Diss.* 2.16.10), the young aristocrat, the aspiring tyrant, filled with a sense of his own power (*Alcibiades* and *Critias* in *Xenophon Mem.* 1.2.25; *Gaius* in *Philo Leg. ad Gaium* 86.154; *Pausanias* in *Demosthenes* 59.97; see also *Thucydides* 1.132.1-3; *Dio Chrysostom* 30.19; 58.5), the supercilious officeholder (*Demosthenes* 19.314; *Philo Leg. ad Gaium* 69.255). With savage irony Paul imprints the familiar image of self-conceit which gives rise to partisanship upon the surface of his text, as a flash transfixes an image on film.

It is no longer necessary to argue against the position that the conflict which evoked 1 Corinthians 1-4 was essentially theological in character. The attempt to identify the parties with the views and practices condemned elsewhere in the epistle, as if the parties represented different positions in a dogmatic controversy, has collapsed under its own weight. Johannes Weiss already saw the flaw in this approach: Paul's strategy in dealing with

Brief an die Korinther [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1896] 61).

¹³ P⁴⁶ D F G M a b it sy; Marcion, Cyp., Ir^g, Thdr., cf. C. Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece* 2 (Leipzig: Giesecke & Devrient, 1872) on 1 Cor 3:3.

There is much to suggest that the word was originally present in the text, *contra* B. Metzger (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [New York: United Bible Societies, 1975] 548), who suspects the intrusion of a "Western gloss," though P⁴⁶ is closer to the Alexandrian type of text. The term is an established part of Paul's vocabulary: Gal 5:20; Rom 16:17 (in a warning that immediately precedes mention of his friends and supporters in Corinth). Its appearance in 1 *Clem.* 46:5 along with ἐπίς and σχίσματα in a passage that refers to "the epistle of the blessed Paul" is also suggestive.

¹⁴ Cf. *Diodorus* 35.25.1; *Herodotus* 5.75; 1 *Macc* 3:29; *Plutarch Mor.* 478e-479a; *Solon Elg. Fr.* 3.37-38.

¹⁵ H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 86.

the parties makes it impossible to differentiate between them.¹⁶ Paul refuses to analyze the opinions of the various factions, but speaks to the community as a whole, as though all the parties had coalesced in his mind into "one perverse, insubordinate, arrogant, and hostile group."¹⁷ No one doubts that doctrinal differences existed, or that the claim to possess divine wisdom and knowledge played an important role in the controversy. But many, if not most, scholars today have returned to the view of John Calvin: that the real problem being addressed in 1 Corinthians 1–4 is one of partisanship.¹⁸ As Calvin observed, Paul deals in a different manner with false teaching in Galatians and Philippians. There he engages in polemic, but 1 Corinthians 1–4 is deliberative in character.¹⁹ Paul does not seek to refute a "different gospel," but exhorts the quarreling Corinthians "to agree completely, . . . to be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1:10).

It is a power struggle, not a theological controversy, which motivates the writing of 1 Corinthians 1–4; so much Weiss and H. Lietzmann were ready to accept. But critics have been slow to grasp the implications of this insight. It has not yet been realized how closely the situation in the church at Corinth resembles the conflicts within city-states described by Greek and Roman historians.²⁰ Nor has it been recognized how much Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 1–4 has in common with speeches on concord (περὶ ὁμόνοιας) by ancient politicians and rhetoricians, such as Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides.²¹ It is our contention that Paul's goal in 1 Corinthians 1–4 is not

¹⁶ J. Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910) xxx–xxxi. Even the sophistical conceit customarily associated with the adherents of Apollos, owing to his Alexandrian background and reputed eloquence (Acts 18:24), is rebuked in connection with the *Cephas party* in 3:18–23! Some have seen in 3:10–17 veiled polemic against the *Cephas party*: P. Vielhauer, "Paulus und die Kephaspartei in Korinth," *NTS* 21 (1975) 341–52. G. Lüdemann (*Paulus, der Heidenapostel II: Antipaulinismus im frühen Christentum* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983] 118–23) argues from the literary structure of 3:6–17; this remains a possibility, though θεμιλος need not refer to Cephas specifically, since the building metaphor occurs frequently in writings on concord, e.g., Plutarch *Mor.* 807c; Dio Chrysostom 38.15.

¹⁷ J. Weiss, *The History of Primitive Christianity* (New York: Scribner, 1937) 1. 339.

¹⁸ See, e.g., J. Hering, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Epworth, 1962) 44 and H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament II: History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 121.

¹⁹ John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) 8. On 1 Corinthians as deliberative rhetoric, see H. D. Betz, "The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology according to the Apostle Paul," in *L'Apôtre Paul: Personnalité, Style, et Conception du ministère* (ed. A. Vanhoye; BETL 73; Leuven: Peeters, 1986) 16–48..

²⁰ It was Robert M. Grant who first brought this to my attention. Cf. A. A. T. Ehrhardt, *Politische Metaphysik von Solon bis Augustin II* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1959) 10–12.

²¹ J. Weiss (*Der erste Korintherbrief*, on 1:10) and H. Lietzmann (*Die Briefe des Paulus: An die Korinther I* [HNT; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1910] on 1:10) provided parallels for Paul's exhortation from the Greek historians, Thucydides, Polybius, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. But it was Arnaldo Momigliano who directed me to the rhetoricians and their

the refutation of heresy but what Plutarch describes as the object of the art of politics—the prevention of *στάσις*.²² If this is so, then much light should be thrown upon Paul's admonitions by an investigation of these chapters in the context of ancient politics.

I. The Slogans in 1 Cor 1:12

Much energy has been expended on the interpretation of these watchwords. Most have worked under the assumption that the dispute was theological in character.²³ But through all the attempts to arrive at the origin of these party cries, their *form* has never been investigated.²⁴ If one seeks the formal derivation of these expressions, one is always led back to the realm of politics. For the form of the slogans clearly reflects the principle at work in the creation of ancient political parties: throughout antiquity personal adherence is the basic relationship from which party identification developed, as personal enmity is the social reality behind the concept of the opposing faction.²⁵ The most convincing evidence of this is the fact that there are no generally accepted names, such as "Socialist" or "Christian-Democratic," for political parties in antiquity; rather, they are named after the *individuals* whose interests they served. Thus, one speaks of the "faction of Marius" or the "party of Pompey," employing terms such as *στάσις* and *μερίς* (Latin *factio*, *pars*) with the genitive of the proper

discourses on concord. See Thrasyllus *περί πολιτείας*; Antiphon *περί ὁμόνοιας*; Isocrates *Or.* 4; *Ep.* 3, 8, 9; Plato *Ep.* 7; Socratic *Ep.* 30; Ps.-Sallust *Ep.* 2; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 38–41; Aelius Aristides *Or.* 23–24; [Herodes Atticus] *περί πολιτείας*, among others. In a future study, I hope to provide a detailed analysis of 1 Corinthians 1–4 to determine whether the literary form, internal composition, and argumentative rhetoric can be shown to be that of a συμβουλευτικὸς λόγος *περί ὁμόνοιας*.

²² There is no satisfactory treatment of *στάσις*, though see briefly D. Loenen, *Stasis* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitg. Mij., 1953) and A. Lintott, *Violence, Civil Strife and Revolution in the Classical City* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

²³ See nn. 5–8 above and the overview in J. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983) 96–107; N. A. Dahl, "Paul and the Church at Corinth in 1 Cor 1:10–4:21," in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* (ed. W. R. Farmer et al.; Cambridge: University Press, 1967) 313–35. Note R. Reitzenstein's influential variant of the theological interpretation of the controversy in his *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions*, 426. Reitzenstein holds that the Corinthians have divided themselves into *θᾶσσοι* and named themselves after their respective mystagogues, like initiates in the mystery religions. This hypothesis, although attractive, leaves too many features of 1 Corinthians 1–4 unexplained.

²⁴ G. Lüdemann, *Paulus*, 119 n. 51: "Eine Untersuchung der Form des Slogans von 1 Kor 1,12 steht noch aus."

²⁵ A fact which, in modern times, first seems to have been grasped by Fustel de Coulanges, "Le Patronat et la 'commendatio' dans la société romaine" in *Les Origines du système féodal* (Paris, 1890) 205–47; see now H. Hutter, *Politics as Friendship: The Origins of Classical Notions of Politics in the Theory and Practice of Friendship* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1978).

name.²⁶ Or one speaks, still more succinctly and conveniently of "those about Ismenias," etc.²⁷ A declaration of allegiance to a party so personal in organization could take no form other than that which it is given in 1 Cor 1:12—"I am of Paul!" "But I, of Apollos!"²⁸

For political history this is a fundamental insight, for which we have Matthias Gelzer and Ronald Syme to thank.²⁹ That it was arrived at so late is the result of the idealization of political history as the perpetual struggle of the "best men" against the "commons."³⁰ Freed of this misconception, Gelzer, Syme, and others developed a picture of ancient politics as a dynamic world of personal alliances, a cosmos of blood relations, clients, and friends, constellated around a few men of noble houses who contended for power against the background of the class struggle. There was, indeed, a broad material and conceptual divergence between popular and aristocratic programs running through the fabric of affairs, like a seam in a piece of iron.³¹ But the principle at work in the formation of parties Sallust saw clearly: "Some maintained that they were defending the rights of the commons, others that they were upholding the prestige of the senate; but under pretense of the public welfare, each in reality was working for his own advancement" (*Catil.* 38).³²

Political parties thus took the form of groups of clients and personal

²⁶ E.g., Plutarch *Ser.* 4.3-4; 7.1; *Pompey* 65.1; Xenophon *Hell.* 5.2.25; *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 17.1-2, ed. V. Bartoletti (Leipzig: Teubner, 1959). For Greek usage in general, see L. Whibley, *Political Parties in Athens* (Cambridge: University Press, 1889) 84; for Latin usage see M. Gelzer, *Die Nobilität der römischen Republik* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1912) 102ff.; J. Hellegouarc'h, *Le vocabulaire Latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la République* (Paris, 1963) 100-115.

²⁷ οἱ περὶ τίνα, οἱ μετὰ, etc., e.g., Thucydides 2.2.2; *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 17.1; 6.2; 7.2; 18.1; Xenophon *Hell.* 3.5.4; 5.2.31; 5.3.13; 5.4.5; Demosthenes 37.39; 21.20; Plutarch *Per.* 16; *Nic.* 11; *Pelop.* 6.2. In general, see G. M. Calhoun, *Athenian Clubs in Politics and Litigation* (Austin: University of Texas, 1913) 7, 13.

²⁸ On the slogan ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ, see n. 64 below.

²⁹ M. Gelzer, *Die Nobilität* (a pioneering study, supplemented by F. Münzer, *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien* [Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1920]). R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), followed by L. R. Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1949). On political parties in classical Greece, see G. M. Calhoun, *Athenian Clubs*, an exceptional doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Chicago; more recently, see F. Sartori, *Le eterie nella vita politica ateniese del VI e V secolo a.c.* (Rome: Bretschneider, 1957); O. Aurenche, *Les groupes d'Alcibiades, de Leogoras et de Teucros* (Paris: Belles lettres, 1974).

³⁰ E.g., Ps.-Xenophon *Constitution of the Athenians*; Plutarch *Per.* 11; Cicero *Pro Sestio* 96-97. The great majority of scholars from the eighteenth century on, epitomized by the historian Theodor Mommsen (*History of Rome* [New York: Scribner, 1900]), believed in this conceptual antithesis, seeing in the antagonism between the optimate and the popular party the image of the strife of their own day.

³¹ E.g., Sallust *Iug.* 41.5; *Hist.* 1.6-13; Cicero *Rep.* 1.31; Caesar *B.C.* 1.35; Ps.-Sallust *Ep.* 2.5.1; Plutarch *Per.* 11.

³² Sallust (trans. J. C. Rolfe; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

adherents pledged to particular leaders. *Amicitia* (= shared interests, generally economic) held such associations together.³³ In the handbook of electioneering attributed to Quintus Cicero, the candidate is advised to make friends among the upper classes, but to avoid taking a stand on public issues (Comm. Pet. 53).³⁴ One notices how large a role the news of friendships, enmities, and reconciliations plays in Cicero's correspondence. The conception of politics which his letters reflect is that which also comes to expression in the slogans of 1 Cor 1:12.

The ephemeral nature of all the products of political life makes it unlikely that actual examples of party slogans would survive. But nearly fifteen hundred specimens were unexpectedly brought to light by excavations at Pompeii, painted on the stucco of house walls in large letters.³⁵ These notices are sponsored not by the candidates themselves but by private citizens. They point to a large measure of popular participation in the election of magistrates, something that was also true of political life at Corinth.³⁶ The Pompeian posters are mainly the work of the candidate's friends and neighbors. But groups such as the dyers, the fullers, the goldsmiths, and the Isiacs also sponsor notices. Remarkably, the slogans make no mention of issues; no promises are made on behalf of a candidate that he will watch over the markets with care or award public contracts fairly, though such matters clearly came under the control of local officials and were topics of lively interest.³⁷ The form of the notices accords with the personal character of ancient politics as we have come to know it. The slogans typically consist of the name of the candidate and his office, the sponsoring individual or group, and a verb of adherence or support. Thus, for example, "*Vatiam aed(ilem) Verus Innoces facit*" (CIL 4 no. 1080) or "*Vatiam aed(ilem) vicini*" (CIL 4 no. 443). How such party cries were used in voting assemblies can be seen from the papyri and legal texts. The procedure consisted in the proposal of names, then in a vote between them by formal acclamation.³⁸ Amid much wrangling, the candidate's supporters

³³ Too much was made by Syme and his students of ties of kinship, intermarriage, and *amicitia* in creating political factions. On the sense in which we may still use the term *amicitia* as the bond of political party, see P. A. Brunt, "'Amicitia' in the Late Roman Republic," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 11 (1965) 1-20.

³⁴ Note also the form of Caesar's commendation of his friends for office in Suetonius *Iul.* 41.

³⁵ CIL 4. See also the interesting sketch by F. Abbott, "Municipal Politics in Pompeii" in *Society and Politics in Ancient Rome* (New York: Scribner, 1916) 3-21.

³⁶ Republican electoral practices were evidently retained in many municipalities under the empire: see J. H. Kent, *Corinth VIII/3 The Inscriptions 1926-1950* (Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1966) 23. For evidence of nominally democratic constitutions in a number of Greek cities, see J. Touloumakos, "Der Einfluss Roms auf die Staatsform der griechischen Stadtstaaten des Festlandes und der Inseln im ersten und zweiten Jhdt. V. Chr." (diss., Göttingen, 1967) 11-15.

³⁷ Abbott, "Municipal Politics," 12.

³⁸ On voting procedures in cities under the empire, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Greek City*

shouted, "Upright loyal Ptolemy!" and "Let Achilles be crowned!" (*POxy.* 1415).³⁹

The positive counterpart of the factious behavior which Paul parodies in 1 Cor 1:12 is supplied by the orator Aelius Aristides in his speech to the Rhodians: "When we visited you, we saw you even in the assembly using not only a single voice, but if I may say so, for the most part even a single word. For often it was enough for you to exclaim, 'Well said!' and 'Crown him!' and such like, with the name of the speaker" (*Or.* 24.56). But it is Dio Chrysostom's pained account of the conduct of his fellow Prusans at their common gatherings that most recalls Paul's ironic report of the discordant voices in the Christian assembly. The orator describes "the shouts of the partisans, uttered in hatred and abuse, . . . outbursts which are not for reasonable men or temperate cities, but rather for those who, . . . as Homer says, 'In rage to mid-assembly go, and quarrel with one another as their anger bids'" (*Or.* 40.28–29; see also 39.4: οἱ στασιάζοντες οὐδ' αὐτῶν ἀκούουσιν).

II. The Role of Social and Economic Inequality

In what may be the earliest reference to schisms in the Corinthian correspondence, Paul speaks without dissimulation, and almost in passing, of the divisions that appeared when the Christians gathered to celebrate the Lord's Supper (11:17–34). The source of the problem is stated clearly in 1 Cor 11:21–22: the contempt of the rich for the poor, an attitude typically exhibited by wealthy Romans toward the lower classes.⁴⁰ Those who have houses and plenty to eat despise and humiliate those who are hungry and have nothing. Later, when the report of Chloe's people compels Paul to treat the matter at length, he seeks to deflate the pride which, in his view, has given rise to faction by stressing the reversal of status brought about by divine election:

For consider your calling, brothers; not many of you were learned by worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were nobly born.

from *Alexander to Justinian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940) 170–91; J. A. O. Larsen, *Representative Government in Greek and Roman History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966) 106–25.

³⁹ A. H. M. Jones, "The Election of the Metropolitan Magistrates in Egypt," *JEA* 24 (1938) 65–66. These examples are taken from the minutes of the councils of Oxyrhynchus and Hermopolis respectively, where elections had virtually ceased to be a reality and where flagging interest in local politics made compulsion necessary to secure candidates for the magistracies. But a century earlier in Greece there was no lack of spontaneous candidatures for local office; see Jones's conclusion on politics in the Greek cities of the empire in *Greek City*, 184: "On the whole it would seem that there was a sufficient supply of voluntary candidates till the latter part of the first century."

⁴⁰ Z. Yavetz, "Plebs sordida," *Athenaeum* 43 (1965) 295–311.

But God has chosen the foolish of the world to humiliate the learned, . . . the weak of the world to humiliate the strong, . . . the lowly born . . . and the despised, things that are nothing, to nullify things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God (1:26–29).

This attempt to create a sense of community as the reflex of a theological premise recalls Cicero's effort to mold a political bloc that would transcend conflict by redefining the term *optimates* as "the upright and well-disposed of all classes" (*Pro Sestio* 97; *Ad Att.* 1.14.5; 1.20.3; 2.5.1; 9.7.6). But such ideological stratagems cannot mask the reality of social and economic inequality: *some were* educated, influential, and of noble birth, though "not many." It is not our purpose to discuss the "social stratification" of the Christian community.⁴¹ Paul's statements are so revealing that virtually no one doubts that tensions between rich and poor were present in the church at Corinth.⁴² It is our task rather to investigate the bearing of such inequality on the instance of faction in the community.

No Greek or Roman would have denied that conflicts between classes played a large role in party struggles and civil strife, however the matter may have been presented in political pamphlets and public debate. Aristotle, the real expert on the social and political life of the ancient city, says unequivocally: "Party strife is everywhere due to inequality" (πανταχοῦ γὰρ διὰ τὸ ἀνίσον ἢ στάσις, *Pol.* 5.1.6 1301b27). This judgment represents not only the result of his profound analysis but also, as we shall see, what was generally believed. That modern political historians have ignored the statements of most Greeks and Romans on the centrality of class conflict bears witness to the extraordinary influence of those profoundly antidemocratic thinkers, Plato and Cicero, for whom στάσις was the result of moral degeneration and the unprincipled ambition of the "demagogues."⁴³ But it also attests the scholars' own sympathies and inclinations. Thus, we have had to wait until the last decades of this century for the first comprehensive analysis of the class struggle on the political plane.⁴⁴

⁴¹ This has already been done admirably by G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 69–120, 145–74; see also M. Hengel, *Eigentum und Reichtum in der frühen Kirche: Aspekte einer frühchristlichen Sozialgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1973) 44–45; H.-J. Klauck, *Hausgemeinde und Hauskirche im frühen Christentum* (SBS 103; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981) 28, 32–34; Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 67–69, 157–58.

⁴² Thus already Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 293; G. Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 126–28.

⁴³ Plato *Gorgias* 502e–519d; Cicero *Pro Sestio* 100–102 and his disingenuous treatment of Catiline, "that nefarious gladiator," in the four orations.

⁴⁴ P. A. Brunt, *Social Conflicts in the Roman Republic* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971); R. Macmullen, *Roman Social Relations 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) chap. 4; G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981); M. I. Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: University Press, 1983).

When we turn to accounts of στάσις in ancient literature, we find that tensions between rich and poor are a constant feature. Solon's poems express his view of what had brought the plague of civil strife upon Athens: the "degrading bondage" of the poor to the rich had "roused from their sleep war and civil strife" (*Fr.* 4; see also *frr.* 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 23–25, 27). In Thucydides' moving account of the violent στάσις at Corcyra in 427, no attempt is made to conceal the element of class struggle. The people, under the leadership of Peithias, brought to trial the "wealthiest of the oligarchs": the charge against them was conspiring to overthrow the democracy, "but some were in fact put to death, because money was owing to them, by those who had borrowed it." Reflecting upon the period of civil strife to which the terrible events at Corcyra were but the prelude, Thucydides concludes: "the cause of all these evils was the desire to rule which greed and ambition inspire, and springing from them, that party spirit which belongs to men once they have become involved in factious rivalry" (3.81.4; 3.82.8).⁴⁵

Xenophon is our source for civil strife at Corinth in the fourth century: he makes it clear that enmity between rich and poor was at the root of στάσις. A massacre occurred in 393 when a group of men whom Xenophon tendentiously calls οἱ πλείστοι καὶ βέλτιστοι sought an alliance with Sparta. On the last day of the festival of Eukleia, the supporters of democracy assassinated the aristocrats as they sat in the theater and walked about the agora (*Hell.* 4.4.1–5). Diodorus provides a summary account of the στάσις at neighboring Argos, where 1,200 of the wealthiest citizens were put to death and their property confiscated when an oligarchic coup was uncovered (15.57.3–58.4; Plutarch *Mor.* 814b). Diodorus's calculated references to the madness of the δῆμος and the crimes of its leaders do not obscure the fact that the bloody σκυταλισμός of 370 was in essence a class conflict. Evidence of στάσις in Greek cities of the Roman period is scattered and fragmentary. But from the Achaean town of Dyme comes an inscription recording a letter of the proconsul Q. Fabius Maximus which complains of "disorder," described as συγχύσις and παραχή.⁴⁶ That the revolt resulted in part from economic grievances is evident from the burning of the public archives and the cancellation of debts, as from the enactment of legislation "contrary to the πολιτεῖαι granted to the Achaeans by the Romans," a reference to the oligarchical governments imposed by L. Mummius after crushing the revolt of the Achaean League.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Trans. C. F. Smith (LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

⁴⁶ *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (ed. W. Dittenberger; 3d ed.; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915–24) 2. 684; see the excellent article by A. Fuks, "Social Revolution in Dyme in 116–114 B.C.E.," in *Studies in History* (ed. D. Asheri and I. Schatzman; Scripta Hierosolymitana 23; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1972) 21–27.

⁴⁷ L. Mummius, the destroyer of Corinth, is said by Pausanias (*Des. Gr.* 8.16.9) to have

All these writers show themselves well aware that beneath the party struggles which menaced the πόλις lay social problems, the realities of exploitation and inequality upon which the ancient economy depended, however disingenuous their judgments on the character and motives of the leaders of the δῆμος.⁴⁸ It makes little difference whether the picture that later authors, such as Appian and Plutarch, present of the strife between the senate and the Gracchi, for example, is a mere "stereotype of στάσις,"⁴⁹ as historians sometimes contend. What matters is that ancient writers assumed that where there was discord, opposition between rich and poor lay behind. It helps us understand Paul's train of thought in 1 Corinthians 1-4 and 11:17-34, the transition from the condemnation of factions to a discussion of social and economic differences. Paul's "official" reaction is what we would expect, given the history of the movement and the nature of his project: he denies that the Corinthians are distinguished in the true, spiritual sense and contends that "the condition of the community demonstrates the freedom of God's electing grace."⁵⁰ It is surprising only that NT scholars should share this transfigured view of the situation in Corinth so unreservedly. It is, at any rate, clear that, whatever he says, Paul *knew* better. Like Aristotle he knew that feelings of inequality arising from distinctions of wealth, noble birth, and higher learning are the ἀρχαὶ καὶ πηγαὶ τῶν στάσεων (Aristotle *Pol.* 5.1 1301b5).⁵¹

There can be no more striking confirmation that Paul actually saw the situation in this light than the terms that he uses to describe the social makeup of the Christian community in 1 Cor 1:26f. For they are the very terms employed by Greek writers from the time of Solon to designate the major class divisions involved in στάσις. The supporters of oligarchic government are referred to as the "wise" (σοφοί or φρόνιμοι), the "powerful" (δυνατοί), the "nobly-born" (εὐγενεῖς, γενναῖοι, or γνῶριμοι) all substitutes for "the rich"; while "the poor," the supporters of democracy, are styled in antithesis the "vulgar" (μωροί or βάνανσοι), the "weak" (ἀσθενεῖς), the "lowly-born" (ἀγενεῖς or δημοτικοί).⁵² Examples abound: discussing the causes of

granted constitutions which "established property qualifications for holding office."

⁴⁸ Josephus is an interesting example. στάσις is a key interpretive concept in his work on the Jewish War: see the preface to *J.W.* and 4.3.2 §§128-34, as well as *Ant.* 18.1.1 §8. Occasionally he shows himself aware that conflicts between rich and poor play a part in civil strife, i.e., *Ant.* 20.8.8 §§179-80 and *J.W.* 2.17.6 §§426-27, though he generally presents the leaders of the revolt as indigents and criminals.

⁴⁹ E. Badian, "Tiberius Gracchus and the Beginning of the Roman Revolution" in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 1/1 (ed. H. Temporini; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972) 707.

⁵⁰ Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 49.

⁵¹ See also 3.8 1279b6-40 and 1310a3-10. Such passages would seem to refute the argument of M. Wheeler, "Aristotle's Analysis of the Nature of Political Struggle," *American Journal of Philology* 72 (1951) 145-61.

⁵² For Greek usage, see Loenen, *Stasis*, 7-10; R. A. Neil, *Aristophanes' Knights* (Cambridge:

στάσις, Aristotle says that those who are of “noble birth” (εὐγενεῖς) frequently stir up faction by claiming unequal rights (*Pol.* 5.1.3 1301b3).⁵³ Thucydides recounts the dissension that erupted within Athens as the Peloponnesian armies ravaged the countryside. The “men of influence” (δυνατοί) became angry with Pericles because they had lost their beautiful estates and expensive furnishings. In their resentment, they charged him with embezzlement (Thucydides 2.65.2; Plato *Gorgias* 576a).⁵⁴ Ion in Euripides assumes that the “worthy gentlemen” (χρηστοί) are “wise” (σοφοί) and fears that they will regard his attempt to penetrate the highest ranks of Athenian society as that of a “nobody” (ὁ μηδέν), who is “weak” (ἀσθενής) and “baseborn” (νοθαγενής), in a word, as “foolishness” (μωρία) (Euripides *Ion* 595–97).⁵⁵ Paul’s categories in analyzing the divisions in the community are like those of Aristotle, who recognized that “inasmuch as oligarchy is defined by birth (γένος), wealth (πλοῦτος) and education (παιδεία), the democratic characteristics are thought to be the opposite of these, low birth (ἀγένεια) poverty (πενία) and vulgarity (βαναυσία)” (*Pol.* 6.1.9 1317b39–41). Paul only apparently makes use of a different category when he speaks of the “powerful” rather than the “wealthy”: the δυνατοί are the πλούσιοι throughout Greek literature.⁵⁶

It is obvious whose view of society is reflected in these terms. The absolute dichotomy they express corresponds to the wide gulf between the rich and the poor in the ancient economy. Paul uses the established terminology ironically: God has inaudibly inverted the accepted values, an acoustic phenomenon for which only the elect have ears. But irony is indirect opposition, an indirection that has given rise to that curious circumlocution οὐ πολλοί (1:26) for the explicitly political term ὀλίγοι.⁵⁷ Sallust is

University Press, 1901) Appendix 2, “Political Use of Moral Terms”; J. Bohatec, “Inhalt und Reihenfolge der ‘Schlagworte der Erlösungsreligion,’ I Kor. 1:26–31,” *TZ* 4 (1948) 252–71; for Latin usage in full, J. Hellegouarc’h, *Le vocabulaire Latin*, 223–541.

⁵³ On εὐγενεῖς, see Euripides *Ion* 1540; Plato *Rep.* 375a; 2 Macc 10:13; 4 Macc 6:5; 9:13, 27.

⁵⁴ Thucydides uses δυνατοί to designate the political group supporting an oligarchical government: 1.24.5; 1.39.3; 3.27.3; 3.47.3; 4.51; 5.4.3; 8.73.2; he also speaks of δυνατώτατοι as the prime movers in oligarchic factions: 1.115.4–5; 2.2.3; 8.21; 8.44.1; 8.47.2; 8.48.1; 8.63.3; 8.90.1; 8.73.2.

⁵⁵ See also Theognis 33. On σοφοί, see further G. Grossmann, *Politische Schlagwörter aus der Zeit des Peloponnesischen Krieges* (Zurich: Leemann, 1950) 150–54. On ἀσθενής, see Plato *Rep.* 364a; on ἀγενής, see Plato *Gorgias* 465b; Aristotle *Pol.* 4.10; Josephus *J.W.* 4.3.6 §148; Epictetus *Diss.* 4.1.10.

⁵⁶ E.g., Thucydides 2.65; 3.70; 3.81; Plato *Laches* 186c; Xenophon *Hipparch.* 1.9–10; Aristophanes *Peace* 639; Philo *Som.* 1.155; *De virt.* 162; Josephus *J.W.* 1.17.2 §326; 2.14.4 §§287, 411; 7.8.1 §260.

⁵⁷ In Thucydides, for example, the term ὀλίγοι denotes the aristocratic, pro-Spartan faction, 3.70; 3.74.2; 3.82.1; 4.86.4; 4.110.1; 4.123; 5.82.2–3; 8.9.3; 8.14.2; 8.38.3. In general, see Loenen, *Stasis*, 7–10. On πολλοί and the related terms, πᾶθος, δῆμος, Latin *multitudo*, which denote the majority of the people, the “poor,” as opposed to the δυνατοί, see R. von Pöhlmann, *Geschichte der sozialen Frage und des Sozialismus in der antiken Welt* (2d ed.,

sometimes capable of direct confrontation, of dissolving rhetoric and ideology into social history, as when he says: "Whoever was most opulent and most capable of inflicting harm was regarded as a 'bonus' because he defended the existing state of affairs" (*Hist. fr.* 1.12, ed. B. Maurenbrecher). Paul is more subtle and evasive; he translates the existing value terms without penetrating and unmasking them.

Now the question is this: How are the tensions between rich and poor so evident in the epistle related to the formation of factions? Though Paul tells us almost nothing about the factions of Peter, Apollos, and Christ, what we learn of his own party suggests that the divisions in the community were not strictly along class lines. Although Paul's informants, "Chloe's people" (οἱ Κλόης, 1:11), are probably slaves,⁵⁸ Paul cannot be said to "take the side of those members of the community who come from the lower strata."⁵⁹ For the supporters of Paul whom we know by name are people of wealth and status: Crispus, the former ἀρχισυνάγωγος, (Acts 18:8),⁶⁰ Gaius, whose house was large enough to accommodate the entire congregation,⁶¹ and Stephanas, a householder who visited Paul in Ephesus with two companions, apparently bringing material support.⁶² It is to the latter and to "such men" that Paul attempts to subject the community in 1 Cor 16:15-18. Evidently the leaders of the opposing factions were also men of substance, for the terms that Paul uses to characterize those who would examine his apostolic credentials in 1 Cor 4:10—"wise" (φρόνιμοι), "strong" (ἰσχυροί), and "held in repute" (ἐνδοξοί)—are, like the epithets in 1:26, euphemisms for "the rich."⁶³ In both passages, the context makes plain that Paul is addressing those whom he regards as the prime movers in faction, the social and political elite.⁶⁴

Munich: Beck, 1912) 1. 427; Loenen, *Stasis*, 7; J. Hellegouarc'h, *Le vocabulaire Latin*, 506-16; note, for example, the usage of Thucydides in 2.37.1; 3.27.2; 3.72.7; 4.104.4; 8.73.6; 8.21; 1.25.1; 5.82.1 and Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* 27.4.

⁵⁸ See the arguments advanced by Theissen, *Social Setting*, 92-94 and Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 59.

⁵⁹ So Theissen, *Social Setting*, 57.

⁶⁰ Cf. E. Judge, "The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community," *JRH* 1 (1960) 129-41; Theissen, *Social Setting*, 73-75; Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 57.

⁶¹ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 55-56, 89; Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 57. The church at Corinth was a λαὸς πολὺς, according to Acts 18:10.

⁶² Theissen, *Social Setting*, 55. According to 1 Cor 16:17, Stephanas made up the ὑπόστημα of the Corinthians. The same term is found in Phil 2:30 of the material support brought to Paul by Epaphroditus, the λειτουργὸς τῆς χρείας (Phil 2:25).

⁶³ Loenen, *Stasis*, 7-10; Plato *Soph.* 223b; Xenophon *Mem.* 1.2.56; Isocrates 1.37.

⁶⁴ A. Schreiber, *Die Gemeinde in Korinth* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1977) 154-60. Schreiber rightly points out that none of the "authorities" to whom the factions appeal are present in Corinth at the outbreak of the crisis. The real party leaders are thus local Christians who seek to legitimate their power by appealing to renowned figures in the church. In this respect the Christ-party is no different from its counterparts.

The answer that the evidence suggests is one that is disturbingly familiar to the student of ancient politics:⁶⁵ the bondage of the poor to the rich is the breeding ground of faction. Poverty creates dependence, a relationship that ambitious aristocrats readily exploit in their struggle for power (Solon *fr.* 4.1–22; Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* 2.1–3). The process is graphically described in the *suasoria* falsely attributed to Sallust and written perhaps under Tiberius.⁶⁶ The author complains that poverty and idleness have gradually driven the common people from the fields, forcing them to live without a fixed abode, to covet the riches of others, and to barter their liberty, their services, and their share in the common sovereignty for slavery to one man (Ps.-Sallust *Ep.* 2.5.1–6). He appeals to Caesar to intervene in the crisis and put an end to the grievous bondage of the commons to the faction of the nobles (Ps.-Sallust *Ep.* 2.2.4).

We may rely upon Aristotle for further insight into how patronage contributed to the creation of factions. In the well-known account of the rivalry between Pericles and Cimon, Aristotle explains that Pericles introduced a per diem allowance for jurors “as a counter-measure against the wealth of Cimon. For Cimon, who had an estate equal to that of a tyrant, not only discharged the public services munificently, but also supplied food to many of his fellow-demesmen. Since Pericles’ property was insufficient for such a lavish expenditure, he took the advice of Damonides . . . , as he was being worsted with his private resources, to distribute to the multitude (οἱ πολλοί) what was theirs, and so he instituted payment for jury service” (*Ath. Pol.* 27.3–4). The dynamic at work in ancient politics could hardly be more clearly revealed: the poverty of a large portion of the citizen body, the subsistence level at which the majority were forced to live, made possible the deployment of wealth in the creation of factions.

Cicero’s speeches and letters provide ample documentation of the way aristocrats used patronage to garner political support. In his defense of Murena against a charge of electoral corruption, Cicero states without compunction that “men of slender means have only one way of earning favors or of repaying benefits to men of our order, and that is by helping us and escorting us about when we are candidates for office” (*Pro Murena* 70; see also Quintus Cicero *Comm. Pet.* 34–38). Dionysius of Halicarnassus reports that it was considered impious and unlawful for a client to vote against his patron or to be found in the number of his enemies (*Ant. Rom.* 2.9–11).⁶⁷ Aristocrats could impose sanctions upon those who failed to

⁶⁵ J. C. Scott, “Patronage or Exploitation?” in *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (ed. E. Gellner and J. Waterbury; London: Duckworth, 1977) 21–39; M. I. Finley, “Authority and Patronage” in *Politics in the Ancient World*, 24–49.

⁶⁶ R. Syme, *Sallust* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964) 348. For a summary of debate on the authorship and date of the second *Epistula ad Caesarem senem*, see K. Vretska, *Sallust: Invective und Episteln* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1961) 1. 38–51.

⁶⁷ On the *fides*-relationship, see Gelzer, *Nobilität*, 52–54; and J. Hellegouarc’h, *Le*

provide political support. In an emotional speech to the Roman assembly in 167 B.C., Marcus Servilius, "a man of consular dignity," threatened: "when the people proceed to the vote, I will go down and follow along with them all and learn who are base and ungrateful and who would prefer to be persuaded (δημαγωγείσθαι) in war rather than commanded!" (Plutarch *Aem. Paul.* 31).⁶⁸ An inscription from Corinth shows how a client was expected to express his gratitude and support. On the base of a monument found in the agora, a certain M. Antonius Promachus has written, "for his friend and patron NN, because of his fine character and trustworthiness."⁶⁹

What was the power that enabled the protagonists of the Corinthian parties to create divisions in the community? All the evidence suggests that their power was based on material wealth and the dependence it induced. The "household" (οἶκος/οἰκία) of Stephanas (1:16; 16:15) and that of Crispus (Acts 18:8) no doubt included slaves and freedmen.⁷⁰ The latter's influence is attested by the author of Acts, and Stephanas is praised by Paul as the patron of the community (16:15b).⁷¹ Gaius, the rich proprietor, is not only "host" (ξένος) to Paul and the "entire church" (Rom 16:23), but is probably also the employer of Tertius, who writes an epistle to Ephesus from his house (Rom 16:22), and of how many other hired laborers?⁷² As city treasurer, Erastus would have exercised still greater influence, not only through disbursement of his private fortune but also by control of public expenditure for streets, public buildings, and the market place.⁷³ Chloe is probably also to be reckoned among the δυνάτοι of the Corinthian community.⁷⁴ Her slaves or freedmen report to Paul in Ephesus (1:11). Slaves, freedmen, hired laborers, business associates—the whole *clientela*—furnished not only an army of political supporters for the wealthy Christian who sought to exert control over the new movement but also, more

vocabulaire Latin, s.v. *fides*.

⁶⁸ On patronage as a factor in political life and the influence of patronage on voting, see G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, "Suffragium: from vote to patronage," *British Journal of Sociology* 5 (1954) 33–48.

⁶⁹ Kent, *Corinth*, 107.

⁷⁰ See Aristotle's definition of οἶκος in *Pol.* 1.2.1: "the complete household consists of slaves and freedmen"; see also Cicero *De off.* 1.17.58; Acts 10:2, 7. See the discussion in Theissen, *Social Setting*, 83–87; A. Strobel's contention that οἶκος equals Latin *domus* and thus includes only family members is not convincing ("Der Begriff des Hauses im griechischen und römischen Privatrecht," *ZNW* 56 [1965] 91–100).

⁷¹ See Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 58, 78, 118, 123, 137.

⁷² On hired labor in antiquity, see P. Garnsey and J. Skydsgaard, *Non-slave Labor in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (Cambridge: University Press, 1980).

⁷³ Kent, *Corinth*, 27. On community patronage and politics, see P. Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque: Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1976).

⁷⁴ We cannot be certain that Chloe lived in Corinth, but the fact that Paul mentions her name without introduction indicates that she and her *familia* were known to the Christians there.

important, the experience of social distance by virtue of which he felt himself to be a person of higher rank, worthy of ruling the community (4:8).

If we would form a proper conception of Paul's position in the controversy, we must not regard the apostle's support for men of status such as Stephanas in isolation from his seeming valorization of those who are without wealth, birth, or education. Taken together, Paul's actions bear a remarkable resemblance to Cicero's attempt in the eleventh hour of the republic to capture the lower classes for his own faction by means of a political fiction, the idealization of class affiliation (*Pro Sestio* 96–98). By expressing solidarity with the despised and oppressed (1:26–28), Paul sought, like a Greek politician of old, to “bring the δῆμος into his faction” (Herodotus 5.66).

III. 1 Cor 1:17–2:5

In a carefully constructed argument in 1:17–2:5, Paul contrasts the “speech” and “wisdom of the world” with the “word of the cross” and the “wisdom of God.” Scholars have found the transition to this section abrupt and the point at issue perplexing.⁷⁵ The role of this passage in Paul's advice on factions depends upon the content of “wisdom” (σοφία) against which Paul polemicizes. Ulrich Wilckens confidently asserts that σοφία is a gnostic concept, a title that the Corinthians have applied to the heavenly redeemer, the exalted Christ.⁷⁶ He supports this thesis by a wide-ranging investigation of the concept “wisdom” in the history of religions and, above all, in gnosis. But Wilckens ignores the clues that Paul provides to the nature of σοφία.⁷⁷ From the first, Paul speaks not of wisdom in general but of σοφία λόγου (1:17), an expression that W. Bauer rightly translates “cleverness in speaking.”⁷⁸ Moreover, the context of Paul's discussion of wisdom and foolishness is the account of his “preaching” (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι, 1:17) and “proclamation” (καταγγέλλειν, 2:1). The identity of “wisdom” is thus established in relation to his own “discourse” (λόγος, 2:4): Paul denies that he came to the Corinthians “with excess of speech or of wisdom” (καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας, 2:1) or that his message was delivered “in persuasive words of wisdom” (ἐν

⁷⁵ Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*, 6; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 37; E. Peterson even suggests that 1 Cor 1:16–31 is a homily that Paul delivered in a synagogue in Ephesus or Corinth and later incorporated into the text of his epistle! (“1 Korinther 1,18f. und die Thematik des jüdischen Busstages,” *Bib* 32 [1951] 97–103).

⁷⁶ Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*, 68; G. Sellin attributes the wisdom theology to the influence of Apollos, whose party he believes Paul is combatting throughout chaps. 1–4 (“Das ‘Geheimnis’ der Weisheit und das Rätsel der ‘Christuspartei’ [zu 1 Kor 1–4],” *ZNW* 73 [1982] 69–96).

⁷⁷ Wilckens denies that Paul has anything to say about the content of σοφία! (*Weisheit und Torheit*, 68). He contends that the term is taken over from the Corinthians for whom its meaning was already well established in a gnostic sense.

⁷⁸ BAGD, 759.

πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις, 2:4).⁷⁹ Ὑπεροχή is Plato's term for "prolix discourse" in the *Politicus* (283c), and πειθῶ is defined as the product of rhetorical art in the *Gorgias* (453a: πειθοῦς δημιουργός ἐστιν ἡ ῥητορικὴ). Most telling are the terms Paul uses to characterize wisdom's adepts in 1:20. In a threefold anaphora Paul asks, "Where is the wise man (σοφός)? Where is the scribe (γραμματεὺς)? Where is the debater (συζητητής) of this age?" The first two questions recall passages from Isaiah (19:12 LXX: ποῦ εἰσιν νῦν οἱ σοφοί σου; 33:18: ποῦ εἰσιν οἱ γραμματικοί), but the third clause, the climax of the series by virtue of its length, contains a term that is *hapax legomenon* in the NT and the key to Paul's thought.⁸⁰ It is the "disputer," the "debater," whose cleverness God has brought to naught. The σοφία which Paul fears will undermine the community is nothing other than rhetoric.

This was the view of an older generation of scholars, more familiar with Greek and Latin authors.⁸¹ But they did not fully comprehend the point of Paul's contrast between rhetorical skill and the word of the cross. In their reflections upon civil strife, ancient authors show themselves aware of the dominant role of rhetoric. It is regularly discussed whenever the forces that exacerbate conflict are sought. In his "excursus" on στάσις, a passage that exercised a profound influence on the political thinking of antiquity,⁸² Thucydides discusses at length the role of language and rhetoric in creating discord. Throughout the Hellenic world, the conflict escalated as factions in one city learned deviousness and equivocation from the strife in another (3.82.3). Thucydides shows himself deeply concerned for the corruption of moral vocabulary through the cynical misuse of language: "The customary understanding of words in relation to things was changed as one thought fit. Reckless daring came to be considered courageous loyalty to comrades, thoughtful hesitation specious cowardice, moderation a cloak for unmanliness . . ." (3.82.4). The party leaders on each side adopted "fair-sounding slogans," using "political equality for the masses" instead of the forthright δημοκρατία, and "moderate aristocracy" rather than ὀλιγαρχία (3.82.8). "Fair words" were proffered by opponents, who then violated their "oaths of reconciliation" (3.82.7). Like Paul, Thucydides believed that addiction to a kind of false σοφία, or "cleverness," lay at the root of discord. Opponents in factional strife "are more willing to be called clever villains than good simpletons, for they are ashamed of the one but glory in the other" (3.82.7). Those engaged in civil strife cannot be reconciled because "they fear the intelligence (συνετός) of their opponents, . . .

⁷⁹ On the variants in the manuscript tradition, see Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 55.

⁸⁰ BAGD, 775.

⁸¹ E.g., Heinrici, *Der erste Brief*, 65–66; Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, xxxiii; see now H. D. Betz, "The Problem of Rhetoric."

⁸² On the influence of the excursus in general, see the appendix to M. Cogan, "The Role of the Speeches in Thucydides' History" (diss., University of Chicago, 1974).

lest they be worsted in words or by their opponents' intellectual ingenuity" (3.83.3).

In the extant fragment of Thrasymachus's discourse on concord, great stress is laid upon the function of rhetoric in faction. Those who are engaged in party strife suffer from lack of understanding: "For thinking that they are speaking things contrary to one another, they do not perceive that they are doing the same thing, nor that the speech of their opponents lies within their own."⁸³ In the pseudo-Sallustian *Epistula ad Caesarem senem*, the author appeals for action that will put an end to party strife. It is noteworthy how large a part eloquence plays in the rise of faction. The author ostensibly warns Julius Caesar to beware the rhetorical skill of Cato, eloquent pupil of the Greeks (Ps.-Sallust *Ep.* 2.9.3). The "cleverness" (*calliditas*) and "caprice" (*libido*) of the leaders of faction threaten to overthrow the true "wisdom" (*consilium*) on which the ancestors established the Roman state (Ps.-Sallust *Ep.* 2.10.6; 11.1). In his analysis of στάσις, Aristotle concludes that as a means of preventing factional strife "one ought not to put faith in sophistical arguments strung together for the sake of deceiving the multitude" (*Pol.* 5.7.2 1308a1).

Thucydides' paradigmatic description of στάσις makes it clear that there was sufficient reason for concern about the power of words. The clever animal, the ζῷον πολιτικόν, misuses language, reverses the names, to make the unreal appear as real. Objectified, language is an uncanny force, drawing the speaker on until simulation devours value. Like these authors, Paul warns and reflects; he wishes to curb the misuse of language in the Christian ἐκκλησία. Paul's opponents in Corinth, who sought to lead the new movement by "persuasive words of wisdom," might have answered the apostle as the democratic rhetor, Diodotus, answered Cleon: it is the duty of the good citizen to be a good speaker, to employ fair argument, whatever eloquence, to advise the people responsibly. "As for words," he concludes, "whoever contends that they are not to be the guides of our actions is either dull of wit or has some private interest at stake" (Thucydides 3.42.2, LCL).

IV. 1 Cor 2:6–3:3

In 1 Cor 2:6–3:3 Paul addresses himself to those who claim to possess higher religious knowledge, evidence of their superiority, as πνευματικοί, to the common lot of believers. The defensive tone of Paul's remarks suggests that some have questioned Paul's ability to impart such hidden wisdom.

⁸³ *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (ed. H. Diels; rev. W. Kranz; 12th ed.; 3 vols.; Dublin: Weidmann, 1966–67) 85 A 1. The speech, of which only the opening is preserved, is sometimes called *περί πολιτείας*. But the concern of the speech seems to be not with the πολιτεία as such, but with ὁμόνοια; cf. A. Fuks, *The Ancestral Constitution* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953) 103.

The interpretation of this passage has presented scholars with great difficulties, exegetical and theological. In particular, it is unclear how the apostle's claim to have penetrated the depths of the knowledge of God in 2:6–16 is related to the discussion of factions. The section seems to spring the bounds of its context: the emphatic, antithetical $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ (2:6) marks a contrast with what has gone before;⁸⁴ but in what respect? The vocabulary and conceptuality shift suddenly and unmistakably to the realm of the mystery religions.⁸⁵ Even the term $\sigma\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha$, which furnishes the slender thread of linguistic continuity, undergoes a shift in meaning: no longer a catchword for rhetorical-philosophical training, it seems a cover for "gnosis."⁸⁶ But what has given greatest offense is the apparent contradiction between Paul's previous assertion that he knows and preaches nothing except the crucified Christ and his current claim to communicate hidden wisdom to the spiritually perfect.⁸⁷ Thus, scholars have referred to the section as a "digression," an "interlude,"⁸⁸ an "abridgment," even a "counter"⁸⁹ to the preceding argument.

Some have attempted to explain the shift in subject matter by pointing to the polemical tone of the passage. Thus it is maintained that Paul takes up the terms and concepts of the Corinthians, either because he shares certain elements of their understanding of the spirit and of revelation and wishes to refine and correct them,⁹⁰ or because he desires to demonstrate to the gnostic elite, in their own terms, that they are $\nu\eta\pi\iota\omicron\iota$ and $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\phi\iota\omicron\iota$.⁹¹ It has even been suggested that 2:6–16 is not the work of Paul, but an interpolation from the hand of a Corinthian gnostic!⁹² There is undoubtedly something "gnostic" about the passage, whether the views represented are Paul's own or those of the Corinthians. It is enough to note the frequency of the verb $\gamma\iota\omega\sigma\chi\epsilon\iota\upsilon$ in this passage—2:8 (twice), 11, 14, 16—without

⁸⁴ Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 60.

⁸⁵ Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions*, 431–36.

⁸⁶ Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*, 52–89; Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 138–41, 151–55; D. Lührmann, *Das Offenbarungsverständnis bei Paulus und in den paulinischen Gemeinden* (WMANT 16; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965) 113–17.

⁸⁷ R. Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 1. 71–74; Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 151.

⁸⁸ J. Weiss, "Beiträge zur paulinischen Rhetorik," in *Theologische Studien: B. Weiss zu seinem 70. Geburtstag dargebracht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897) 204; idem, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 52.

⁸⁹ Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 57.

⁹⁰ Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*, 52–60; Lührmann, *Das Offenbarungsverständnis*, 113–17; M. Winter, *Pneumatiker und Psychiker in Korinth: Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund von 1. Kor. 2,6–3,4* (Marburger theologische Studien 12; Marburg: Elwert, 1975) 230.

⁹¹ Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, 1. 71–73; E. Käsemann, "1 Korinther 2,6–16" in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 1. 276.

⁹² M. Widmann, "1 Kor. 2,6–16: Ein Einspruch gegen Paulus," *ZNW* 70 (1979) 44–53, esp. 46.

recalling the Corinthian slogan, πάντες γινώσκιν ἔχομεν from 1 Cor 8:1. It is unclear how one would determine whether the γινώσκιν discussed here was the kind known to the church fathers Hippolytus (5.6.4) and Clement of Alexandria (in *Exc. ex Theod.* 78), or “mysteries” such as Paul reveals in 1 Cor 15:51 and Rom 11:25, or merely a matter of greater insight into things spiritual, the product of education and culture. To present these possibilities as alternatives is, perhaps, to fail to comprehend that the situation is overdetermined. It is not our task, at any rate, to define the content of γινώσκιν in 2:6–16, but to indicate why such a topic belongs to a discussion of factions.

Whoever has studied the history of civil strife at Rome knows that religious knowledge was constantly manipulated by the ruling elite, in whose hands control of the priestly colleges lay, for the benefit of one faction in rivalry with another.⁹³ As Caesar’s colleague in the consulship in 59 B.C., Bibulus sought to prevent Caesar’s proposed legislation by announcing that he intended “to watch the heavens” for bad omens (Dio Cassius 38:6; Suetonius *Iul.* 20). Similarly, recourse was had to the Sibylline oracles in 56 by a tribune in the pay of Crassus to prevent Pompey from leading an army to Egypt (Dio Cassius 39.15). The letters of Cicero repeatedly show how Roman nobles used religion in their faction struggles: by presenting themselves to the people as those upon whom the gods had conferred the proper interpretation of the divine will.⁹⁴

There are unmistakable clues in 1 Cor 2:6–3:3 that those who claim to be “spiritual” and to possess knowledge are to be identified with the protagonists of the Corinthian parties. The language used to distinguish those who are worthy to receive wisdom from those who pretend to knowledge is obviously drawn from the mystery cults; but there are clear political overtones. Paul imparts wisdom ἐν τοῖς τελείοις (2:6). In Greek literature the τέλειος is one who has “completed” his initiation into the mysteries and is thus “perfect.”⁹⁵ In the philosophical tradition, the τέλειος is the true wise man.⁹⁶ But the term is also found in Plato’s *Laws* and elsewhere as a description of the “perfect” citizen.⁹⁷ The phrase ἐν τοῖς τελείοις recalls the related expression, οἱ ἐν τέλει, found throughout Greek literature as a designation for “the influential,” “those in office.”⁹⁸ Thus Lucian speaks of the leaders of the

⁹³ L. R. Taylor, “Manipulating the State Religion” in *Party Politics*, 76–97; H. D. Jocelyn, “The Roman Nobility and the Religion of the Republican State,” *JRH* 4 (1966/67) 89–104.

⁹⁴ See esp. *Ad Quin. Fr.* 2.4.4–5; *Ad Fam.* 1.4.2; 1.7.4–5; *Leg.* 2.31; 3.27.

⁹⁵ Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions*, 431–36; Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*, 53–60; P. J. du Plessis, *TELEIOS: The Idea of Perfection in the New Testament* (Kampen: Kok, 1959).

⁹⁶ G. Dellling, “τέλειος,” *TDNT*, 8, 69–72.

⁹⁷ Plato *Leg.* 643d; 730d; see LSJ s.v. τέλειος for other instances; Dellling, “τέλειος,” *TDNT*, 8, 68.

⁹⁸ E.g., Sophocles *Aj.* 1352; *Ph.* 385; Herodotus 3.18; 9.106; Thucydides 3.36; 1.10; Josephus *J.W.* 1.12.5 §243; *Ant.* 14.12.2 §302.

Christian church in Palestine as οἱ ἐν τέλει (*Peregr.* 12). The same ambiguity attaches to the term Paul uses to characterize those from whom God has hidden his wisdom: οἱ ἄρχοντες (2:6, 8). We need not deny that the word has mythical connotations in this context,⁹⁹ amid talk of μυστήριον and σοφία ἀποκρυμμένη (2:7), to recognize that Paul refers to political powers.¹⁰⁰ The term seems to lie in the background when Paul later taunts his opponents: "Without us you have become rulers! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the sovereignty with you!" (4:8). Finally, the apologetic principle that Paul lays down in respect to the "spiritual man" (*sc.* himself) in 2:15—namely, that he is to be "judged" (ἀνακρίνεται) by no one—anticipates the verb used in reference to the examination of Paul's apostolic credentials in chap. 4. Thus, it is likely that throughout 2:6–3:3 Paul is speaking to the leaders of the rival factions. Like their counterparts in the πόλις, they sought to gain control of the ἐκκλησία by advancing claims to higher religious knowledge.

The force of this claim was not lost on the apostle Paul, despite his principled contention that he knew nothing except "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (2:2). The fact that Cicero was a theoretical skeptic did not prevent him from claiming to know the will of Jupiter when he wanted to destroy a political rival (*In Catil.* 3.19–20). Polybius and Plutarch may look at religion with greater detachment when they explain how it served to strengthen the Roman social order, but not with more comprehension.¹⁰¹ Paul understood that if he was to regain his position as the teacher and guide of the community, he must persuade the Corinthians that he possessed σοφία ἐν μυστηρίῳ (2:7). He could call for an end to faction and exhort his rivals to become his imitators (4:16) only if he could convince them that he had "the mind of Christ" (2:16).

V. 1 Cor 4:1–21

Paul concludes his appeal for concord in 4:1–21 with a demand for recognition of his qualifications as a conciliator of the factions. What begins as a firm refusal of the attempt to examine (ἀνακρίνειν) his apostolic credentials (4:1–3) is subtly transformed into a powerful assertion of his immunity from prosecution (4:3–5). He then attempts to undermine the confidence of the Corinthians by reminding them of their spiritual

⁹⁹ Theodore of Mopsuestia in K. Staab, *Pauluskommentare aus der griechischen Kirche aus Katenenhandschriften* (NTAbh 15; Münster: Aschendorff, 1933) 174; Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*, 61–63.

¹⁰⁰ So already J. Schniewind, "Die Archonten dieses Äons, 1 Kor. 2,6–8" in *Nachgelassene Reden und Aufsätze* (ed. E. Kähler; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1952) 104–9; A. Feuillet, *Le Christ Sage de Dieu d'après les Épîtres pauliniennes* (Paris: Gabalda, 1966) 25–36.

¹⁰¹ Polybius 6.56; 16.12.9–10; Plutarch *Mor.* 822b; as well as Diodorus 1.2.2; Cicero *Rep.* 2.2.4; *Leg.* 2.7.15–16; Pliny *N.H.* 2.26.

dependence (4:7) and by contrasting their complacency with his own sufferings as an apostle (4:8–13).

The reluctance of scholars to consider the political dimension of Paul's thought has ensured that the relation of this passage to the rest of the epistle has remained obscure. Thus, one is generally content to refer to the chapter as a "demonstration," an "application,"¹⁰² or a "consequence"¹⁰³ of the preceding argument. But 4:1–13 is not merely an appendix to Paul's advice on factions; as a defense of his conduct as peacemaker and apostle, it is an integral part. In the ancient world parties engaged in strife regularly made use of the courts as a means of attacking their political opponents.¹⁰⁴ To comprehend the connection between litigation and party strife one only has to recall that in Greece and Rome trials were held before a large section of the assembly or in the open forum where crowds were free to come and listen. Publicity, the partisan character of the juries, and the latitude in pleading and the introduction of evidence made the courts an efficient medium of political attack. The condemnation of Pericles, for example, was the result of a well-timed indictment by his political rivals; his apology is preserved in Thucydides (2.60–64; 2.65.2). The account of the *στάσις* at Corcyra illustrates the way the courts were used in the initial stages of party strife: the leaders of the oligarchic faction brought Peithias, the head of the popular party, to trial; when he was acquitted, he in turn brought suit against the five wealthiest men of the oligarchs for plundering the sacred precinct of Zeus (Thucydides 3.7.4). Demosthenes claims that for a time he was himself put on trial every day on various charges preferred by members of the opposing faction (18.249). Cicero's speeches provide detailed evidence of the importance of the courts in his political career. Through mastery of judicial oratory he was able to eliminate numerous political rivals.¹⁰⁵

Paul's language in 4:1–5 leaves little doubt that his opponents sought to "examine" his credentials in quasi-judicial proceedings. The apostle attempted to silence their criticism by demonstrating its irrelevance: "It does not matter to me in the least that I should be judged by you or by any human court" (4:3). The verb used repeatedly to characterize the action of his opponents, *ἀνακρίναι* (4:3, 4; 2:14, 15), has a broad judicial usage: it means "to examine closely," "to interrogate."¹⁰⁶ Thus it denotes the examination of witnesses or of the parties to a dispute, so as to prepare the matter

¹⁰² Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 82.

¹⁰³ Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*, 10.

¹⁰⁴ See Calhoun, *Athenian Clubs*, 97–106.

¹⁰⁵ See Taylor, *Party Politics*, 98–118.

¹⁰⁶ Thucydides 1.95; Plato *Symp.* 201e; C. Michel, *Recueil d'inscriptions grecques* (Paris, 1900) 409.9; Luke 23:14; Acts 24:8.

for trial.¹⁰⁷ Of particular importance in this context is the use of the term to designate the examination of magistrates and other political leaders to establish their qualifications (Demosthenes 57.66, 70). We must think of a kind of ecclesiastical court, where the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship is to be tested. His initial response is to use eschatology to make his position seem unassailable: "It is the Lord who judges me. So do not pass judgment before the time, until the Lord comes, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each will receive such praise from God as he deserves" (4:4b-5). But threats were of no avail, judging from the course of events reflected in 2 Corinthians. Only after the anguished apology of 2 Corinthians 10-13, more savage in its irony than 1 Corinthians 4, could the apostle reassert his authority over the community.

By the time Paul concludes his advice on factions, it is clear that his early and hyperbolic praise of the Corinthians as "in every way enriched . . . in all speech and in all knowledge" (1:5) was also meant ironically. For it is the seeming growth of the community, their sense of greatness, which the apostle regards as the *cause* of faction.¹⁰⁸ Paul derides, "Already you are filled! Already you are rich!" (4:8). We are no longer surprised to find that it is to such a cause that Thucydides attributes the Peloponnesian War: "The truest explanation," he concludes, "I believe to have been the growth of the Athenians to greatness, which brought fear to the Lacedaemonians and forced them to war" (1.23.6). It is an interpretive tool which he employs repeatedly in seeking to understand the origin of στάσις in the cities: civil strife ensued in Epidamnus after it had "become great" (1.24.3-4); the Corcyraeans raised a rebellion against their mother city, Corinth, "in the insolence of power and wealth" (ὑβρεὶ δὲ καὶ ἐξουσίᾳ πλούτου, 1.38.6). The principal cause of strife among equals, Aristotle concludes, is the desire to become greater (*Pol.* 5.2.1-2 1302a22-32).¹⁰⁹

It may be dissimulation when the apostle claims: "I am not writing this to make you ashamed" (4:14). But it is the ostensible *purpose* of his admonition that the Corinthians "may learn . . . not to go beyond what is written" (4:6a). The phrase has occasioned the greatest consternation: some wish to delete it as a gloss, others find it "unintelligible."¹¹⁰ But such

¹⁰⁷ Andocides 1.101; Isaeus 5.32; Demosthenes 48.31; Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* 56.6; *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* 953.46; Josephus *Ant.* 17.5.7 §131.

¹⁰⁸ So already O. Bauernfeind, "Wachsen in allen Stücken," ZST 14 (1937) 483.

¹⁰⁹ Aristotle provides a more detailed list of αἰτίαι from an unknown source in *Pol.* 5.2.3 1302a35-1302b3: κέρδος, τιμή, ὕβρις, φόβος, ὑπεροχή, καταφρόνησις, αὔξησις παρὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον. Paul mentions several by name in 1 Corinthians.

¹¹⁰ In addition to the commentaries, see O. Linton, "Nicht über das hinaus was geschrieben steht" (1 Kor 4,6), TSK 102 (1930) 425-37; P. Wallis, "Ein neuer Auslegungsversuch der Stelle I. Kor. 4,6," TLZ 75 (1950) 506-8; M. D. Hooker, "Beyond the Things Which are Written: An Examination of I Cor. IV.6," NTS 10 (1964) 127-32. Schmithals thinks that the phrase should be deleted as a gloss (*Gnosticism in Corinth*, 122 n. 11), and Conzelmann finds it "unintelligible" (1 Corinthians, 86).

advice is commonly offered by theorists and politicians who seek to prevent faction. As a safeguard against στάσις, Aristotle recommends that the greatest "care be taken to prevent people from committing any breach of the law . . . for transgression of the law (παρανομία) creeps in unawares" (*Pol.* 5.7.1 1307b32–33). Plato's *Seventh Epistle* purports to be a message of "counsel" to Dion's friends who are beset by στάσις. The literary fiction of a συμβουλευτικός is carried through up to a point: Plato warns the ἐταῖροι that the evils of faction will not cease until they enact "common laws" by which all can abide (*Ep.* 7. 336d–337b). In the speech entitled περὶ πολιτείας, sometimes attributed to Herodes Atticus, the citizens are urged to put an end to factional strife by living "in accordance with the law" (κατὰ νόμον) instead of destroying one another "lawlessly" (παρὰ νόμους, 17–18, 29).¹¹¹ It may be objected that Paul does not speak of "the law" but of "what is written" (ὃ γέγραπται). But precisely this language is found in inscriptions that record the willingness of parties to a dispute to live within the terms of the agreement. Thus, OGIS 229 records the reconciliation between Magnesia and Smyrna after a period of hostility; the inhabitants of both cities are to swear the following oath: "I will not transgress the agreement nor will I change for the worse the things which are written in it . . . and I will live in concord and without faction" (καὶ οὐθὲν παραβήσομαι κατὰ τὴν ὁμολογίαν οὐδὲ μεταθήσω ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν αὐτῇ . . . καὶ πολιτεύσομαι μεθ' ὁμόνοιας ἀστασιάτως).¹¹² Paul clarifies his own expression in a second ἵνα-clause: what he means is that they "should not be puffed up (φυσιοῦσθε) on behalf of one against another" (4:6b). The two motifs are sometimes combined in portraits of factious behavior: thus Philo describes the disastrous overreaching of Macro, who, disregarding the Delphic γράμμα, γνώθι σαυτόν, "became puffed up beyond measure" (πλέον ἐφυσήθη τοῦ μετρίου) and sought to transcend his proper place as the emperor's subject (*Leg. ad Gaium* 69).¹¹³

We may conclude. It is Paul's intention in 1 Corinthians 1–4 not merely to put an end to dissension but to transform the Corinthians' understanding of the conflict. The strife of the factions is no petty quarrel, no *Cliquenstreit*, but a mirror of the cosmic conflict between the rulers of this age and the power of God. The theological interpretation that the apostle gives to the struggle is obviously designed to turn the Corinthian Christians away from politics. The fate of the community does not rest upon precepts of statecraft, but upon the word of the cross. Thus, its members need not look to political leaders, but can await redemption from God.

¹¹¹ [Erode Attico] *Peri Politeias* (ed. U. Albin; Florence: Monnier, 1968).

¹¹² *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* (ed. W. Dittenberger; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1903–5).

¹¹³ See also Demosthenes 59.97; Thucydides 1.132.1–3.

Whether Paul succeeded in dissolving the immediate instance of faction is not apparent; surely the parties of 1 Corinthians 1–4 are somehow involved in the earnest opposition to Paul evidenced by 2 Corinthians. What is certain is that his attempt to avoid any complicity in the affairs of this world, to separate religion as far as possible from practical politics, proved to be of historic significance. Its repercussion can be heard in Augustine's negative valuation of the *civitas terrena* and in the political naturalism of Machiavelli and Rousseau. With Paul, the goddess Dike, who had struggled so long to free herself from the snares in which the sophists and politicians had entrapped her, soars aloft to a place no eye has seen, leaving the apostle as her only mediator. The unwelcome drives that found expression in the strife of the parties could not be abolished, so they were transfigured.

Fortunately, even this eschatological gesture does not mask entirely the reality of political conflict. Our investigation has discovered at many points correspondence between the situation in the church at Corinth and what historians, philosophers, and rhetoricians call στάσις. We can still recognize the phenomenon, though the apostle withholds the name. That the name could not be uttered is owing less to the possibility that some unwelcome eye might conceive something really seditious about Christianity than to the reluctance to acknowledge that within the movement which claimed to have accomplished the renunciation of enmity in word and deed there might linger the antithetical instinct.

The image that emerges from this reading of 1 Corinthians 1–4 has the advantage of agreeing with the picture that a near contemporary, the author of *1 Clement*, developed of these events. Whatever issues complicated the controversy, the problem that occasioned "the epistle of the blessed Paul" was essentially one of "partisanship," πρόσκλησις (47:1–4). The conflict differed from "the abominable and unholy στάσις" (1:1) in the church of Clement's day only in that the Corinthians acquired less guilt by having made themselves "partisans of renowned apostles" (47:4). Alluding repeatedly to 1 Corinthians, the author writes: "Your σχίσμα has turned aside many, has cast many into despondency, many into despair, all of us into grief. And your στάσις continues!" (46:9).

Corinth had a history of faction: from the bloody revolution of Cypselus (Herodotus 5.92) to their role in initiating the Peloponnesian War,¹¹⁴ to the contemptuous act that sparked the revolt of the Achaean League (Strabo *Geogr.* 8.6.23).¹¹⁵ Politics remained a concern of the Corinthians under the empire, though the game was played for lesser stakes. The names of her ambitious citizens, their rivalries, and election promises

¹¹⁴ See H. M. Tierney, "Corinthian Power Politics" (diss., University of Chicago, 1968).

¹¹⁵ See J. Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome I: 228 B.C.-A.D. 267" in *ANRW* 7.1 (ed. H. Temporini; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979) 459–61.

are known to us from inscriptions recording their donations.¹¹⁶ We deceive ourselves if we imagine that the Corinthian Christians were innocent of all this. It is more than probable that the Erastus who laid the limestone pavement adjacent to the theater *pro aedilitate sua pecunia*¹¹⁷ is none other than the Corinthian οἰκονόμος mentioned by Paul in Rom 16:23 and, thus, a Christian.¹¹⁸

It is useless to object that as a religious institution the Christian church enjoyed an immunity from internal struggles. The ἡγούμενος of the guild of Zeus Hypsistos also found it necessary to include in the rules of the organization an injunction which forbade action that would create σχίσματα: "No one is permitted to make himself the leader of a party, or cause divisions (σχίσματα συνίστασθαι), or to depart from the fraternity of the leader to another fraternity."¹¹⁹ Like Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 1-4, this statement illustrates what must have been one of the most important functions of such associations under the empire: they provided scope for the exercise of the political instinct at a time when, as Plutarch reports, "the affairs of the cities no longer included leadership in wars, or the overthrow of tyrannies, or the conclusion of alliances," or any of the other deeds appropriate to a public career (*Mor.* 805a). In the church, Greek converts may have hoped to experience some of the δύναμις and ἐλευθερία of which they heard the apostle speak.

The author of 1 Corinthians 1-4 had higher aims. His life was devoted to the great politics: the proclamation of the word of the cross. Dissension and party spirit belonged to the life he had left behind (*Gal* 5:20). Then came the discord at Corinth. 1 Corinthians 1-4 embodies the shock with which Paul found that in the supposedly peaceful assemblies of the Christians there had appeared "billowing forms and patterns like waves of the sea."¹²⁰ The apostle struggled against this moving chaos, like the steersman in Alcaeus's poem, caught in the storm and "bewildered by the στάσις of the winds."¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Kent, *Corinth*, 22-26, 119-21.

¹¹⁷ Kent, *Corinth*, 27, 99-100.

¹¹⁸ See H. J. Cadbury, "Erastus of Corinth," *JBL* 50 (1931) 42-58, for arguments in favor of the identification of the aedile with the Corinthian Christian of that name.

¹¹⁹ *PLond.* 2710.13 = F. Preisigke, *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1950) 5.7835.13. The translation follows the reading συνταγμα-ταρχήσιν suggested by Dihle in *TDNT* 7. 963 n. 2, rather than συντευματαρχήσιν proposed by C. H. Roberts, T. C. Skeat, and A. D. Nock, "The Gild of Zeus Hypsistos," *HTR* 29 (1936) 39.

¹²⁰ From Posidonius's description of the party strife caused by the Gracchi in F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 2 A (Leiden: Brill, 1957) 295.

¹²¹ Alcaeus in D. L. Page, *Lyrica Graeca Selecta* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968) 123-24.

This essay was completed in October 1984. It has not been possible to include references to works published after that date.

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