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Theologies of the Cross and the Mysteries of God: Apostolic Weakness and Divine Power in the Literary Receptions of 1 Cor 2:1-16

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Abstract

This last essay of a three-part research on early Jewish-Christian traditions and Gnostic movements examines the reception of 1 Cor 2:1-16. Taking into consideration the Pauline Theology of the Cross, which emphasizes apostolic weakness; and revelations of the mysteries of God to those who were called perfect Christians, which provides empowerment through contemplation of this unveiling. There is an apparent ambiguity in Paul's arguments with many parallels in the gnostic traditions, apostolic fathers and other patristic texts. There are two clear sections on the textual reference used in this article, representing multiple interpretations throughout Pauline traditions, and revealing a polyphonic situation with ambivalent categories. These two studied sections disclose a polyphonic situation in

which opposite perspectives co-exist in religious or cultural expressions. These diverse receptions, attestations and interpretations of the Pauline ideas are natural developments in a complex system of communication, while also requiring a profound dialogue between literary methodologies and theological discourses. Even though scholars are unable to date particular texts and relate them to historical contexts, studies on literary receptions, rhetorical criticisms and ancient textual communications are crucial for the intersections between Religious Studies and Literature.

Keywords: Theology of the Cross; Mysteries of God; Gnosticism; Reception Theories; Corpora Paulinum

Resumo

Este último artigo, de uma pesquisa expressa em três ensaios sobre as tradições judaico-cristãs e os movimentos gnósticos, examina a recepção de 1 Cor 2:1-16. Consideram-se a Teologia da Cruz herdada dos escritos paulinos, a qual enfatiza a fraqueza apostólica, e as revelações dos mistérios de Deus para aqueles que são chamados de cristãos perfeitos, a fornecer autoridade e prestígio para aqueles que contemplam este desvelar. Há uma aparente ambiguidade nos argumentos paulinos que ecoam em muitos paralelos das tradições gnósticas, dos padres apostólicos e de outros textos patrísticos. Existem duas partes bem delimitadas na referência textual utilizada neste artigo, representando múltiplas interpretações que perpassam as tradições paulinas e, ao mesmo tempo, revelando uma polifonia com categorias ambivalentes. Estas diversas recepções, atestações e interpretações das ideias paulinas são desenvolvimentos naturais em um complexo sistema de comunicação, a exigir um profundo diálogo entre as metodologias literárias e os discursos teológicos. Embora os estudiosos não sejam capazes de datar textos particulares e relacionar os mesmos a contextos históricos específicos de maneira precisa, estudos sobre a recepção literária, a crítica retórica e os modos de comunicação textual antigos são cruciais para a interseção entre os estudos das tradições religiosas e a produção literária.

Palavras-chave: Teologia da Cruz; Mistérios Divinos; Gnosticismo; Teorias da Recepção; Corpora Paulinum

Discussing¹ the compositional process of the Corinthian correspondence as a post-Pauline product², which shares many features with the Pastoral letters, has realized eschatology as a common theological characteristic. The multiple forms and contexts through which eschatological thought appear in the corpus Paulinum reveal a dualistic characteristic that cannot be explained by a unique modern theory such as Apocalypticism or Gnosticism. This essay examines the reception of 1 Cor 2:1-16 in the first three centuries through the lenses of the Pauline Theology of the Cross, which emphasizes apostolic weakness; and revelations of the mysteries of God to those who were called perfect Christians, which provides empowerment through contemplation of this unveiling. The apparent ambiguity in Paul's arguments about the Theology of the Cross and the Mysteries of God has many parallels in

1. In the former two essays of this three-part research project on Early Christianities, focusing on Gnosticism and the Pauline traditions, a review of the *social status* of the Pauline *ekklesiae* complements the possibility of interpreting the *Corinthians* letters as theological treatises within post-Pauline social locations. This allows the study of different literary traditions in early ecclesiological life, in which theological and sociological considerations are interrelated, requiring a necessary re-evaluation of scholarship about ancient religious movements. Jewish-Christian roots present in various gnostic texts during second and third centuries do not impose the same conceptualization during the first century's intellectual productions; nevertheless, the inexistence of gnostic textual references and religious organizations in the first century do not exclude the presence of shared ideas with the New Testament mythic configuration. Indeed, there are many similarities among *Gnosticism*, *Apocalypticism*, *Ancient Magic* and *Mystery Religions* that cannot be categorized independently. Thus, in this third paper, Patristic attestations provide a depiction of a *polyphonic* situation, in which opposite perspectives co-exist in religious and cultural expressions. Divine empowerment and the *Theology of the Cross* are two distinct receptions of Pauline ideas incorporating different textual conventions and multiple interpretations. This indicates how enthusiastic pneumatological interpretations based on *realized eschatology* provide an intellectual framework for later gnostic ideas.

2. This is a probable consideration proposed for some radical perspectives and moderate approaches on the authorship of Pauline writings. Van Eysinga rejects the Pauline authorship for all letters, attributing them to a circle of authors because of uniformity (1912, p. 85-91). J. Sturdy shares a more moderate approach in which the entire *Corpus Paulinum* is a product of intense review (2007, p. 54-65). Stephen Hultgren proposes Ephesus as a place for the Redaction of the Pauline letters. He analyzes the dualistic perspectives present in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, in parallel with Eph 5 and Rev 21:3-8, and concludes that they share many elements and should have a common contributor (2003, p. 29-56). Even though some inferences and particular details in these arguments are questionable, they point out the gradual literary formation of the Pauline letters.

the gnostic traditions, apostolic fathers and patristic texts. Therefore, after a critical study of the main Pauline arguments, a brief comparison with different receptions follow.

P.H. Towner investigates how *realized eschatological* Pauline ideas were transformed in the Pastoral letters. Consequently, he proposes that the first Corinthian letter must be the initial point of research instead of later developments such as Gnosticism. Nevertheless, Towner emphasizes how some later gnostic elements composed this *realized eschatological* theology³ present in the Pauline traditions, especially because of some ascetic tendencies of these false teachers and some literary evidence in the Corinthian letters.⁴ Helmut Koester also comments on the reception of Pauline ideas in later ecclesiological constructions. He describes how Pauline schools gradually incorporated different traditions in order to attend their practical concerns and generate theological answers, i.e., how Pauline theological arguments were converted into ecclesiological doctrines. Letters that had a private and particular usage progressively conveyed a different message when they are used to “correct” or dismiss some ecclesiological situations; consequently, multiple combinations and compositions aimed to renovate these writings, transforming these literary pieces “more readable” and preserving Pauline legacy (KOESTER, 2000, p.

3. Anthony Thiselton affirms that *Realized eschatology* is not a “*necessary cause*” but a “*sufficient cause*,” to explain the ecclesiological problems described in the Corinthian correspondence, i.e., he argues that these eschatological ideas are not the only causes for explaining these ecclesiological conflicts, but they have a solid influence on these disputes. This includes a differentiation of ministers among the Corinthians when Paul needs to defend himself before this community and Pauline futuristic eschatological perspectives that may be seen as an anti-enthusiastic attitude. He concludes that Gnosticism is an unnecessary hypothesis for these conflicts, since eschatological dualism permeates the entire Pauline corpus. He avoids discussing the unity of the letter, affirming that Paul has a systematic argument to reply to a range of issues having a similar cause (THISELTON, 1978, p. 511-515).

4. Towner highlights three main tendencies in the scholarship’s history. 1) A continuum from Judaizing characteristics to Gnosticizing tendencies, with an oscillation to each perspective at specific circumstances and contexts. 2) A mixture of these Jewish and Gnostic perspectives, since Judaic traditions provide immediate background for gnostic ideas and their “Gnosticizing” characteristics in the first century. 3) The Pastoral Letters do not describe real, local and historical phenomena, but rather fictitious constructions to address a constant ecclesiological treat (TOWNER, 1987, p. 96-98).

266-270). Conversely, Walter Schmithals observes how the differentiation between authentic Pauline letters and post Pauline writings creates a chronological distinction, which allows a theoretical separation between enthusiastic members in the former and false teachers in the latter. He proposes a study of “early Jewish or Jewish-Christian gnosis and its mythology” in the Pauline traditions, rejecting the alternative of only Judaizing or only Gnosticizing tendencies, while honoring diversity and multiplicity of individual letters in their particularities as well as speculating about how these individual results must be correlated (SCHMITHALS, 2004, p. 108-115).

Therefore, by analyzing the reception of 1 Cor 2:1-16⁵, it is possible to

5. *Reception theories* and the *history of effects* investigations in biblical scholarship offer rich approaches that would be impossible to summarize in the scope of this essay. Considering *historical experiences of reading*, the fictional and rhetorical effects of texts as well as *dialogic* and *polyphonic* elements in different forms of communication, biblical scholars reinforce normative and formative characteristics of ecclesiological history while also investigating personal and communitarian engagements with textual reception, hermeneutics and the interface between texts and interpreters (PARRIS, 2009, p. 275-302). These theories engage intense dialogue with several intellectual tendencies, among those, Romanticism, Phenomenology, contemporary Hermeneutics and other particular philosophical thoughts. As Ricoeur, in connection with Robert Jauss’s three phases of interpretation, affirms in *Temps et Récit*, narrative has three *mimesis*: pre-figuration; figuration; and re-figuration (1984, p. 52-90): authors and readers are rooted in a historical *milieux*, promoting several pre-figurations. Consequently, arguing about an *open fictitious literary space* in which texts and contexts promote historicity, preservation and alteration are perennial activities in the act of reading – shaping readers and their respective approaches. According to Gadamer, while applying his *wirkungsgeschichte* ideas, meaning does not rely on original texts, intentions and authors, but rather on historical processes of interpretation (2004, p. 290-298). Indeed, *Reception Theory*—as is well known today—has Jauss and Iser as main theorists; nevertheless, precursors and alternative models have important contributions (HOLUB, 2005, p. 3-52; 107-150). This essay articulates the Reception of Pauline traditions in their textual expressions in a complex and dialogic communicative act. Thus, through these distinct discourses, creations and receptions of *utterances* are possible (BAKHTIN, 2003, p. 183-185). By exposing different comprehensions on *Pauline Theology of the Cross*, a “plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness” “with equal rights” and “within their own worlds” emerges in a *dialogic* consideration underlying direct and indirect literary forms in tradition (BAKHTIN, 2004, p. 301-315). Writing and reading Pauline traditions in the ancient world are particular forms of a “communicative act” in which semantic and pragmatic notions help filling discursive blanks in the process of textual reception. Thus, psychological and sociological approaches are in tandem with literary models through fiction (ISER, 1978). Indeed, these multiple interpretations of Pauline ideas and theological statements provide “insights into the unforeseeable multifariousness of human beings’ responses to their constitutive blanks” while, simultaneously, “recursive loops” in the hermeneutical circle furnish limits for interpretation (ISER, 2000, p. 158; p. 145-152).

discuss how some Pauline traditions evolved during late first century and how these essential ideas incorporated different textual conventions and multiple interpretations later. Albeit scholars are unable to date particular texts and relate them to particular contexts, studies on the reception of crucial elements in the Pauline corpora provide an opportunity to observe how Gnosticizing elements gradually became systematic theological doctrines, i.e., how enthusiastic pneumatological characteristics provide an intellectual framework for later gnostic ideas.

Discussing some variants and textual Criticism from 1 Cor 2:1-166

There are a few variants in the critical apparatus for this passage that deserve special attention for this study.⁷ Some manuscripts have the word μαρτύριον instead of μυστήριον in 1 Cor 2:1.⁸ This is a significant terminological change, since the sentence can be interpreted that either Paul was announcing “the mystery of God” or “the proclamation of God.”

6.The apparatus discussions are based on 27th *Novum Testamentum Graece* edition, since the most recent publication – 28th edition – only revised the Catholic Letters.

7.Nevertheless, the patristic attestation of 1 Cor 2 and the modification of some essential terms accentuate the ambiguous theological characteristic of this text in the reception of Pauline theology. Among the Fathers of the Church, earlier attestation from Clement of Alexandria, *Didache* and Irenaeus; as well as late witnesses as Hippolytus, Basil of Ancyra and Ambrosiaster, Ambrose and Pelagius are relevant.

8.μαρτύριον is attested by uncial κ with some corrections and the uncials B,D,F,G; minusculedocuments such as ψ, 33. 1739, 1881 the other majority texts and manuscripts. The vulgate has the term *sermonis*, which relates to μαρτύριον and the expression *sublimitatem sermonis aut sapientiae* indicates “sublime speeches of wisdom.” Nevertheless, papyrus 46 the uncial κ in its previous meanings, the uncials A and C – they are consistent first order witnesses – and few others attest μυστήριον. This version receives also an attestation in late church fathers such as Hippolytus, Basil of Ancyra and Ambrosiaster.

In verse 2 τι εἰδέναι is replaced by τοῦ εἰδέναι τι.⁹ In verse 4, the insertion of the adjective human (ἄνθρωπίνης) in ἐν πειθοῖ[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις] is a main variation.¹⁰ Few manuscripts attest πειθοῖ and fewer insert a καί between ἄνθρωπίνης σοφίας and λόγοις. This latter would separate human wisdom and the words in two different syntactic structures.¹¹ Also in verse 4, the term ἀποδείξει is replaced by ἀποκαλύψει in the primitive form of the uncial D and in one later correction. This furnishes a parallel with verse 7 and the term τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην, since it creates a contrast between “secret” and “revelation.” Moreover, this transformation has theological impact, considering the content of the text.

In verse 8, the Papyrus 46 has two variations. Firstly, the term ἔγνω replaces ἔγνωκεν, the former is an aorist active third person singular, while the latter is an indicative perfect verb. Therefore, in this variant, the fact that the rulers of this age (τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος) “do not know” does not have the same intensity as those described in the majority texts. Secondly, there is an insertion of a genitive plural article between δόξης and ἐσταύρωσαν. There is a replacement of δὲ for γὰρ in verse 10 in some manuscripts, which would change the sentence from an additive or adversative clause to an explicative sentence, having the meaning

9. In the uncials manuscripts κ, A, F, G and 048; in the minuscule documents, 6. 1175 1241 1505 1464 and some others. The apparatus suggest οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινά τι εἰδέναι ἐν ὑμῖν , which can be translated as “I do not consider knowing someone in you;” while the majority of the variants Οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινα τοῦ εἰδέναι τι ἐν ὑμῖν provide a sense of “I do not consider about knowing someone in you”. Translating ἐν ὑμῖν as “among you” also implies a sense of status, since Paul’s writings were not primarily concerned about knowing someone among the Corinthians or about someone in the Corinthian congregation. Consequently, depending on the variants and on modern interpretations, this verse can signify that Paul was not looking for power among the Corinthians, rather Jesus, crucified. This furnishes an immediate social implication for Paul’s *Theology of the Cross*.

10. This occurs in κ (with some corrections), A, C, γ (630), the majority text and the clementine vulgate. The Stuttgart vulgate from 1994 has *persuasibilibus sapientiae verbis*, “persuasive words of wisdom,” i.e., without the adjective human.

11. Papyrus 46, uncials F and G, as well as a few other manuscripts, have πειθοῖς σοφία, therefore, ignoring the plural name λόγοις. The inclusion of the adjective “human” reflects the context of this passage while inclusion or absence of both “wisdom” and “words” deserve special attention in the particular contexts of these different textual traditions.

“because God reveals.”¹²

There is an inclusion of ἀγίου in verse 13, not for the main consistent first order witnesses. Then, the verse indicates the instruction of the Holy Spirit and not a generic philosophical form of πνευμα. In addition, two uncial manuscripts (B and 33) alter the term πνευματικοῖς to πνευματικῶς, changing from the dative to an accusative form, i.e., from an indirect object to a direct object.¹³ Additionally, there is an omission of τοῦ θεοῦ in verse 14 in some manuscripts, which would be read only as “do not receive the Spirit.”¹⁴ Verse 15 has many variants for the expression [τὰ] πάντα, but there are strong attestations in the first order witness.¹⁵ There is a replacement in verse 16, instead of Χριστοῦ, few uncial manuscripts have κυρίου, mainly B, F, G, 81, primitive D and Ambrose and Pelagius.¹⁶

12. Additionally, there is an inclusion of a personal pronoun in the genitive (αὐτοῦ) in some manuscripts, suggesting that this revelation occurs through the Spirit of God, i.e., particularizing the notion of πνευμα. Taking into consideration terms that are associated with mystery and the ecstatic religious interpretations of Pauline theology, the centralization of the divine power as described in verse 5 and the particularization of πνευμα may describe a process of clarification in the Pauline reception. This process of clarification is present in verse 11, where there is an omission of ἀνθρώπων in two uncials A and 33. Consequently, this verse would eliminate a construction with two genitive forms. The minuscule 1505 does not have τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, indicating a similar exception. Some theological implications or later developments can be seen in a few uncial manuscripts (D F G) and in one Bohairic document, since the expression κόσμου τούτου ἐλάβομεν includes a demonstrative pronoun that is not in the majority text in verse 12. This inclusion creates a deeper opposition between the world and the spirit of God in the context of the passage. Moreover, the majority of manuscripts are divided among εἰδῶμεν or ἰδῶμεν. This changes the verb from a first person plural subjunctive perfect form to an aorist in the indicative. As the variation in verse 8, this reduces the intensity of the verb tense.

13. If we interpret συγκρίνοντες as “consider or judge together,” this transformation maintains the syntactical parallel between spiritual objects and subjects.

14. These few examples include Ptolemy, according to Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria.

15. Papyrus 46, uncial documents A, C, D and ̅ – these last two in their primitive forms – plus the witness of Ptolemy according to Irenaeus. The presence of μὲν πάντα furnishes emphasis, since with them this verse has an adverbial tense “indeed” or “certainly.” The majority of uncial manuscripts have μὲν πάντα, including the first correction of ̅. The Didache and the Latin version of Irenaeus have μὲν πάντας while only πάντα appears in Clement and in the uncial manuscripts F and G. Finally, μὲν τα πάντας is in a few uncial and minuscule documents.

16. These thinkers wrote approximately close to the dates of these manuscripts, but nothing concrete can sustain any evidence, except the evident Christological considerations in these two interchangeable titles.

Apostolic Weakness and the Theology of the Cross in (2:1-3)

Paul initiates his arguments emphasizing that he did not come before the Corinthians with words of wisdom (λόγου ἢ σοφίας), but by announcing the mysteries of God or the proclamation of God.¹⁷ In this verse the repetition of the preposition *κατα* indicates a movement “from up to down.” The first expression, ἦλθον οὐ καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν, may be translated as “I did not come (before you) with preeminence.” The preposition *ὑπερ* denotes an excessive meaning, which theologically indicates that Paul “did not try to make himself more than the members of the community.”¹⁸ Therefore, Paul initiates his argumentation remembering the Corinthians, or even expressing this for the first time if scholars do not consider external early ecclesiological traditions focusing on rhetorical input in the audience, that his presence among them does not reveal his superiority or high official rank.

Paul develops his argument through a precise semantic choice, expressed, for instance, in the use of prepositions.¹⁹ A derivation of the term *κρίνω* appears for the first time in these verses, when Paul states that he

17. This distinction is present in aforementioned critical apparatus, being the term *μυστήριον* preferable.

18. TDNT VIII, 523-524. This notion of “rise above,” “surpass” or “distinguish from someone” is present in the classical usage of the word *ὑπεροχὴν*, especially in situations of war and rhetorical conflicts. Additionally, the term is used metaphorically to indicate the sense of projection, prominence and supremacy (LIDDELL, 1996, p.1867).

19. The complement of the first verb with the participle *καταγγέλλων*, which is immediately related to God, is a good example. This verb relates to the noun *ἀγγελία* (message) or the verb *ἀγγέλλω*. Therefore, the sense of proclamation or announcement is complemented by the preposition *κατα*, which indicates a movement “from up to down.” The term *καταγγέλλων* can be related to official report or the process of cognition, having a religious implication in Hellenistic sacred festivals (TDNT I, 70) but also may indicate denunciation (LIDDELL, 1996, p. 886). Moreover, according to this reference, Philo and Clement of Alexandria understand their philosophical inquiry as religious proclamation (Omn Prob Lib 71; Prot. II 19,4). Consequently, the entire initial expression ἦλθον οὐ καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας καταγγέλλων ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ denotes an insistence from the author to explain that he was not before the Corinthians with excessive authority, proclaiming or revealing the mysteries of God with intimidating powers.

expects the Corinthians to know nothing (ἐκρίνα τοῦ εἰδέναι), except Jesus Christ, crucified. The religious or legal power relationship present in the proclamation, as described in verse 1, is immediately related to the fact that Paul was not interested in their particular situation, but in the crucified Jesus in them.²⁰ This term is ambiguous, specifically if readers take into account the theological and eschatological meaning of judgment. However, the first person singular affirms a human action, which corroborates the final verses, since the spiritual human (πνευματικὸς ἄνθρωπος) is able to perform judgment. In addition, there is a contrast between Paul's action and the political powers of his time if a comparison with this term and the expression τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος from verses 6 and 8 is considered, i.e., since Paul does not use authority "to select," "distinguish," "accuse" or even "decide a contest" among the congregants.²¹ The entire Pauline argument in this passage relies on different applications of the term κρίνω and different depictions of the Corinthians' religious experiences, including the interchangeable usage of οἶδα and γινώσκω. These terms have an eminent function in the dispute between ψυχικός ἄνθρωπος and πνευματικὸς ἄνθρωπος, since the spiritual human is able to finish the contest and no one is able to accuse her or him.

The argument present in 1 Cor 2:1-3 differentiates between λόγου ἢ σοφίας and the Pauline proclamation, which relies on Jesus Christ, crucified. Consequently, Paul reminds the Corinthians of his presence among them using three adjectives with one intensive modification (πολύς): weak (ἀσθενεία), fear (φόβος) and trembling (τρόμος). This notion of a weak apos-

20. κρίνω is predominantly a legal term in the LXX, having generic meanings such as rule, separate, distinguish. There are select or salvific connotations, depending on the context (TDNT, 922-924). Additionally, it can indicate a sentence upon someone or accusation, having a sense of deciding a contest or dispute (LIDDLEL, 1996, p.996).

21. Later different terms derived from κρίνω appear in the conclusion of this chapter: 1) when a critical comparison among spiritual realities is required (πνευματικῶς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες); 2) the natural humans (ψυχικός ἄνθρωπος) cannot receive the Spirit of God (οὐ δέχεται τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ), since they are not able to know it (καὶ οὐ δύναται γινῶναι) because they are spiritually "judged" (ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται); 3) the spiritual human (πνευματικὸς) examines everything and is not examined by none (ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει [τὰ] πάντα, αὐτὸς δὲ ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται.).

tle has deep impact on the reception of his letters and the development of different traditions, as the argument present in the resurrection controversy (1 Cor 15:43) signalizes (σπείρεται ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δυνάμει.). In addition, this theology of a weak apostle against a powerful one echoes throughout 2 Corinthian epistle, since Paul constantly glorifies his own weakness (τῆς ἀσθενείας μου καυχῆσομαι), even when he describes divine visions and revelations (2 Cor 11:30; 12:5). Paul argues that, because of his weakness, the power of Christ dwells in him (αυχῆσομαι ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου, ἵνα ἐπισκηνώσῃ ἐπ’ ἐμὲ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ.), concluding in 2 Cor 12:9-10 that it is when he is weak that he is powerful (ὅταν γὰρ ἀσθενῶ, τότε δυνατός εἰμι.).²²

Apostolic strength: Unveiling the mysteries of God (2:4-8)

The second part of the argument opposes words of wisdom (σοφίας [λόγοις]) with demonstration of the Spirit and power (ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως).²³ Different from the first movement of his argument in chapter 2, Paul does not emphasize weakness but power. His main argument is that the wisdom he proclaims is not from the present age (σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου); therefore, as a corollary, there

22. Consequently, the Pauline *Theology of the Cross* in these passages is complemented by a resurrection argument. The believers are crucified in their weakness but they live through and hope for future divine power, since “we are weakened in him, but will live with him” (καὶ γὰρ ἐσταυρώθη ἐξ ἀσθενείας, ἀλλὰ ζῆ ἐκ δυνάμεως θεοῦ. καὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἀσθενούμεν ἐν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ ζήσομεν σὺν αὐτῷ ἐκ δυνάμεως θεοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς). In addition, the non-communication of spiritual realities due to human weakness is also present in Rom 6:19, since the apostle claims that he is speaking in human words because of their flesh’s weaknesses (Ἀνθρώπινον λέγω διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν.). Therefore, this first part of the argument in 1 Cor 2 relies on theological concepts of the cross and resurrection, revealing a *realized eschatology* with a future expectation. In addition, the letter’s rhetoric conveys this message in a way that the emphasis on human weakness opposes human wisdom (λόγου ἢ σοφίας).

23. The structures of this second rhetorical construction follows: a. Words and proclamation are not based on human’s wise words but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power; b. Faith is not based on human wisdom, but God’s power; c. Wisdom among the “perfects,” but not from this age or from the rulers of this age; d. Wisdom of God in mystery to human glory; e. The rulers of this age do not know (γινώσκω) God’s wisdom.

is an opposition between human wisdom, based on the rulers (ἄρχων) of this age, and the wisdom of God (σοφίαν θεοῦ). Paul claims that he speaks the wisdom of God in mysteries (ἀλλὰ λαλοῦμεν σοφίαν θεοῦ ἐν μυστηρίῳ), since it is hidden (ἀποκρύπτω), but “God has predetermined it to our glory” (ἦν προώρισεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν). Consequently, in this second moment in chapter 2, Paul accentuates divine power, the possibility to know this and distinguish it from worldly powers. In addition, he categorizes two different groups, since among “the perfect ones,” he speaks about wisdom (Σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις·). Moreover, in verse 5, he announces that the apostolic kerygma is based on demonstrations of the Spirit and power, so that their faith is not (based on) human’s wisdom but in God’s power (ἵνα ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν μὴ ᾗ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλ’ ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ.).²⁴

The use of the philosophical and technical term ἀποδείξει in the ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως accentuates this contrast. In the writings of ancient geometers and logicians. this term denotes the process of demonstration from undisputable principles, e.g., Aristotelian syllogisms. Therefore, ἀπόδειξις has the common meaning of “pointing away from,” sharing a semantic range related to “making known, display, bring forth.”²⁵ Consequently, Paul distinguishes his kerygma from those who rely on the persuasive words, since his speech is based on bringing forth the Spirit and power that were not visible or evident before. As the apparatus indicates, the presence of the adjective “human” creates an opposition with the divine manifestation; furthermore, ἀπόδειξις is a *happax legomena*

24. The contrast between those who have access to divine wisdom and those who do not is emphasized in verse 8, where none of the rulers of this age know God’s wisdom (ἦν οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἔγνωκεν·). In the same verse, a subordinate clause initiates the conclusion, “because if they have known” (εἰ γὰρ ἔγνωσαν), which follows, “they would have not crucified the Lord of the glory” (οὐκ ἂν τὸν κύριον τῆς δόξης ἐσταύρωσαν·). The syntax in the verb reveals the emphasis on the ignorance of the rulers of this age, specifically in the case of the crucifixion. Therefore, instead of a prominence in the *Theology of the Cross* with emphasis on weakness, this section of the argument stresses *gnosis* of divine wisdom contrasting words of wisdom (σοφίας [λόγοις]).

25. (LIDDLEL, 1996, p. 195).

in the NT and few manuscripts prefer the term ἀποκαλύψει, which implies unveiling something that was hidden. Therefore, based on these semantic implications and the pragmatic consequences of both nouns (πνεῦμα and δύναμις), the expression ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως indicates a powerful spiritual or ecstatic experience with implications for modern theoretical constructions such as Mystery Religions, Apocalypticism and Gnosticism. This can be visualized in the argument present in verses 6 and 7 as follows:

⁶Σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις, σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου οὐδὲ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου τῶν καταργουμένων·
⁷ἀλλὰ λαλοῦμεν θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην, ἣν προώρισεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν,

The rhetorical construction in these verses indicates this distinction in the author's argumentation, since Paul differentiates between the wisdom of the rulers of this age (σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου οὐδὲ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος) and God's wisdom (θεοῦ σοφίαν).²⁶ Moreover, 1) he categorizes the divine wisdom as hidden (τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην), but accessible through mystery (ἐν μυστηρίῳ); 2) he distinguishes those who are in power in this age (τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου) from previous divine designations (προώρισεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων); 3) and he differentiates the annihilation of the present powers (καταργουμένων·) and the glorification of those who have access to this mystery (εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν). Finally, Paul claims to speak about wisdom among the "perfect" ones, or those who

26. The adversative conjunction ἀλλὰ in the beginning of verse 7 does not create an opposition with verse 6, but rather, it emphasizes multiple distinction in both verses.

are “complete” or “fulfill an end purpose.”^{27 28}

Therefore, these two sections may produce or may be products of multiple interpretations in the Pauline traditions, revealing a polyphonic situation²⁹ with ambivalent categories, according to our current theoretical framework, in which specific terms, expressions and theological remarks share multiple meanings and pragmatic consequences. In the first section (1-3) Paul depicts himself as weak and does not distinguish among members; while in the second part of the argument (4-8), Paul only speaks about wisdom with “fully developed ones.”

Later, Paul sustains that humans can only know about God through the spirit of God (εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ). Consequently, the initial distinction between human wisdom and the Pauline approach receives a complement. In the first section, Paul emphasizes his weakness and Jesus, crucified, while in the second argument human wisdom is in conflict with Spirit and power. Therefore, in his final argumentation, he sustains that humans can only know through the Spirit of God, generating a distinction between ψυχικός ἄνθρωπος and πνευματικός ἄνθρωπος.

27. The term **τέλειος** means something that is made perfect or has achieved previous goals, having the authoritative sense of being fully constituted or, in the case of the animals, full-grown (LIDDLEL, 1996, p.1769-1170).

28. Therefore, this distinction emphasizes that there are those who achieve the highest levels while there are also those who do not; Paul speaks about divine revelations with the former. In addition, καταργουμένων, in a literal sense, means “reaching down to the shoes” with connotation of total extermination or eradication (LIDDLEL, 1996, p.908). The presence of the preposition κατά furnishes a parallel with verse 1 and indicates an action beyond human control. The term ἀργος indicates something “inactive” or “without action,” being useless, while καταργουμένων denotes an action of putting something completely out of use, having many religious and social implications in Pauline theology. TDNT I, 452-454. Consequently, those who are in power of this age would be reduced and become powerless while those who participate in the mystery of God would be glorified, which reverberates the participation in the *Theology of the Cross* and resurrection in Paul, since the Lord of the glory was crucified (ὑπὸν τῆς δόξης ἐσταύρωσαν).

29. Mikhail Bakhtin asserts that every cultural expression occurs within a complex and dialogic interconnection, i.e., every communicative act is embodied in several spheres of human existence. Consequently, dialogic relations become discourse, since it is possible to articulate meaning only through creations and receptions of *utterances* and without these *utterance hermeneutics*, nothing can be known about what is expressed (BAKHTIN, 2003, p. 183-185; 2004, p. 301-315; 2004, p. 111-113).

Interpreting Isaiah – merging Is 64:3 and 65:16 – Paul affirms that God has prepared what “Eyes do not see” (ὄφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν) “ears do not hear” (οὐὶς οὐκ ἤκουσεν (1Co 2:9) and “do not rise in human hearts” (ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη).³⁰ The Corinthian author frames his arguments in a different context than the post-exilic prophet in order to emphasize divine revelation through the Spirit (ὁ θεὸς ἀπεκάλυψεν διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος).³¹ The distinction between the human and divine realms is accentuated. Since humans cannot understand the divine, a revelation of God is necessary. In a parallel with verse 7, Paul differentiates between the spirit of the world (πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου) and the Spirit of God (πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ).

Patristic Attestation and the Pendulum Between divine empowering wisdom and human weakness in the Theology of the Cross

There are many forms to frame the influence of Pauline thought in the Patristic period, including terminological reception and the adaptation of his thought in later contexts. Therefore, chronologically organizing the main textual references that cite 1 Cor 2 in late first century and middle second century, without considering particular discussions about dating ancient texts, especially their composition and transmissions, is exposed following. In addition, later receptions – between 160 and 300 CE – are also emphasized. These choices reduce the vast data to one specific

30. Different than the Septuagint text, Paul does not emphasize a previous time for these perspectives, but only utilizes the verbs in the aorist. In addition, Isaiah’s context accentuates the existence of a unique God in Isa 64:3 and talks about how Israelite’s transgressions will not rise in the heart of God. ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἠκούσαμεν οὐδὲ οἱ ὄφθαλμοὶ ἡμῶν εἶδον θεὸν πλὴν σου (64:3); οὐκ ἀναβήσεται αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν (65:16).

31. The notion of divine preparation in the aorist verb ἠτοίμασεν can be related with verse 7, in which there is a predetermination of God. In addition, this fits with Isaiah’s words in the LXX. By using the verb ἀναβαίνω and shifting focus from the divine heart to human heart, the author also indicates a figurative movement that opposes previous descriptions in this chapter: Paul did not impose his words through human wisdom (from up to down), but it is possible to ascend (ἀναβαίνω) and access (ἐραυνάω) divine promises and depths (τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ) through God’s Spirit.

chapter from the Corinthian letter while also focusing on early receptions and later systematic usage of Pauline ideas. Therefore, these earlier citations from chapter 2 are organized by date while the later theological usages from the middle of second century are organized by authors in their main literary works.³²

The high number of attestations for 2:9 refers to the Septuagint interpretation of Isaiah in these multiple texts and provides an interesting example for comparing Paul's arguments with different perspectives.³³ Paul argues that the rulers of this age do not have access to God's wisdom and, for this reason, they crucified the Lord of glory in 2:8. This ignorance of the powerful is present also in *Ascension of Isaiah* in which Jesus descends from higher heavens and becomes similar to those in the lower levels, without sharing his power and himself with the rulers

32. This way of exposition is easier, since there is a deep increase in the number of direct quotations from Paul in later second century. Indeed, 1 Cor 2 is a good example, since, from the early documents (around 1-150 CE), it has 30 references, while in a later period (around 160-300 CE) it appears 490 times. In addition, later thinkers such as Tertullian and Origen appropriate this chapter and the respective Pauline ideas in many forms, such as apologetic documents or sermons. In some of their works, e.g., biblical commentaries from Hebrew and Greek materials, they follow 1 Cor 2 verses and ideas while in some public sermons or fragments they just mention this chapter. Therefore, this exposition emphasizes chronology in early receptions and authorship in the latter because of the significant difference in the number of references, but also because these ancient authors differ in their literary reception and composition of Pauline ideas. In addition, this study prioritizes the later fathers Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen.

33. This is the case in 2 Clem 11:7 and 14:5 in which a clear reception of Pauline ideas is in place instead of a midrash from Isaiah. The former is a variation of the version in 1 Cor 2:9 with a different order of verbs or negative particles: ὅς οὐς οὐκ ἤκουσεν οὐδὲ ὀφθαλμὸς εἶδεν οὐδὲ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου ἀνέβη (2 Clem 11:7); Ἄ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν, καὶ οὐς οὐκ ἤκουσεν, καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη, (1 Cor 2:9). The latter passage shares the term ἡτοίμασεν – aorist form “to prepare” having God as subject – and modifies from “the one who God loves” (ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν) to “the Lord has prepared to his elects” (ὁ κύριος τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς αὐτοῦ). In the Gospel of Thomas this sentence also includes “what no hand has touched.” Petr Pokorny suggests that this inclusion is a direct answer to 1 Jo 1:1 and Jo 20:27, since discussions about the materiality of the risen Jesus seem unnecessary in face of his spiritual presence. (2009, p. 60-61). If this is the case, there is also a clear distinction between materiality and spirituality in this Thomas' tradition. Plisch compares Isa 64:3, 1 Cor 2:9, 1 Jo 1:1, Dial Sav. 57 and 2 Clem 11,7 establishing the differences among them. Isaiah only mentions eyes and ears; Paul adds mind and is echoed by Clement; the Dialogue of the Savior only mentions what no eyes have seen; while John is the only one who adds touching. (PLISCH, 2008, p. 72-74). Therefore, this may be an inclusion in John to reject some Gnosticizing ideas.

of this world. On the other hand, Minucius Felix attests this distinction in Christian preaching, based on secret experiences and the promises of salvation and resurrection of those who are initiated.³⁴

While debating about those who corrupt the Kingdom of God (οἰκοφθόροι βασιλείαν θεου), Ignatius advises the *Ephesians* that the believers should not be captive away of life (μὴ αἰχμαλωτίσῃ ὑμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ προκειμένου ζῆν), because of the rulers of this age's teaching (τῆς διδασκαλίας τοῦ ἄρχοντος τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου). He alerts that the believers become those who receive the knowledge of God (γινόμεθα λαβόντες θεοῦ γνῶσιν).³⁵ Ignatius also stresses his desire for martyrdom, which, according to him, would “throw down the rulers of this world” (ἐν ᾗ καταλύεται ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου).³⁶ The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* asserts that those who endure and obey are looking for which no eye sees or no ear hears while being transformed into angels (2 §3). Therefore, in these two perspectives, human weakness and the martyrdom are essential elements in their urgings.

The *Odes of Solomon* 16 §8 asserts that the Word of the Lord investigates the invisible and reveals the Lord's thought,³⁷ which resembles 1 Cor

34. Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 10-11.

35. Eph 16-17; there are many other parallels with the Pauline thought in 1 Cor 2, e.g., Paul uses the noun for ignorance in 2:14 and Ignatius transforms this into an adverb, modifying the verb ἀπολλύμεθα, which can be translated as “destroy” or “perish.” In Corinthians letter, the verb is καταργουμένων but it has a similar semantic and pragmatic meaning. Nevertheless, the change in the object of these verbs is an important consideration, since in the Pauline argumentation those who would disappear are the rulers of this age while Ignatius argues that those inside the communities are perishing in ignorance, i.e., without knowing God.

36. *Tra* 4,2. This is another transformation of the Pauline ideas, since the rulers of this world would perish for an implied divine action, recording the eschatological fulfillment from Isaiah in 1 Cor 2:9, while Ignatius affirms that this age's powers would be thrown down based on his suffering. There is a semantic parallel with *Eph* 16-17 based on the usage of verbs, since they share a similar root – λυω – with different propositions. In *Ephesians* ἄπο indicates that the object would be put under something, while in *Trallians*, the preposition κατά indicates that the object is throw from a higher level.

37. Rendell Harris and Alphonse Mingana comment in the Syriac version of this material attests that the verb here has a connotation of scrutiny (1920, p. 285-285).

2:10, while stressing that eyes can see and ears hear God's work;³⁸ while 6 §6 affirms that God multiplies knowledge about itself which, through divine grace, is given to humans. Paul, alternatively, emphasizes that the reception of the Spirit from God (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ) is in opposition with the Spirit of the cosmos (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου). In Odes of Solomon, it is emphasized that nothing can stand up against God (6 §5-6), which corroborates with the Pauline arguments concerning the inevitable destruction of the rulers of this age in verse 6. Nevertheless, Paul's argument sustains the differentiation between two opposite groups, those who have access to the Spirit of God and those who do not. The *Gospel of Truth* affirms that the hidden mystery, Jesus Christ, is revealed to the perfect ones, enlightening them and showing a way beyond oblivion and error.

Resurrection is the main theme in the *Letter of the Apostles*³⁹ §21, which resonates with the Pauline argument in 1 Cor 2 and the parallels with chapter 15. This also resembles the *Ascension of Isaiah*, since the myth of incarnation as a preparation, based on a higher being descending from heaven, is essential in this passage. Indeed, the incarnation is the manner through which those who die may resurrect and this is a divine plan since the beginning. Additionally, in § 28 and 29, the *Letter of the Apostles* distinguishes between the children of the light who are purified from all judgment, being redeemed from the power of the archons, and those who corrupt the Lord's commandments for their own glory,

38. This difference also denotes a possibility of understanding the revelation of God. In addition, there is a change from the Spirit to the "word of God." Nevertheless, Michael Lattke affirms that "the tradition underlying Stanza III is fairly clearly that of 1 Cor 2:9" while also asserting the reception of Prov 20:12,27. He speculates about the first quarter of the second century as the probable date for this material. In addition, he comments on the parallels with the *Gospel of Truth*, but affirms that later reception in the third century gnostic commentaries does not transform the *Odes of Solomon* in a Gnostic text (LATTKE, 2009, p. 12-14;217-225). Koester asserts how gnostic ideas or thoughts may have affected all the movements with Jewish origins (2000, p.223-224). James Charlesworth observes the parallels with the Gospel of John and Qumran in order to reflect about different theoretical frames in which these Odes are expressed (1998, p. 176-260).

39. This is a Coptic apocryphal text in which the named apostles receive a special revelation of the risen Lord before he ascends to heaven. An origin in the middle of the second century is cogitated in some *Hellenistic-Jewish* circles in Egypt (MULLER, 1990, p. 249-251).

who will be judged and condemned to death. Consequently, the *Letter of the Apostles* and some later possible interpretations of Pauline letters share many theological perspectives, especially those based on 1 Cor 2 and the resurrection theme. In contrast, in the *Dialogue of the Savior* the distinction between the apostles as those who are complete and perfect, versus the world that they were inhabiting as deceitful, is constantly emphasized in relation to the resurrection and historical political powers. Therefore, the meaning of what has not yet been seen by human eyes is revealed in the followers of Jesus who will invert the powers of this age while the Savior affirms that nothing that comes out of truth dies. In the *Acts of Peter* this differentiation between what comes from God and what can be attained through corruptible body and is also stressed.⁴⁰

Justin the Martyr attempts to prove that certain prophecies about Christ are fulfilled in his *Apology*, including his rejection and humiliation (JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apol.* 49-52). In addition, he inserts in his argument the origins of the heavens and symbolic usage of the cross, even though demons mislead humans and causes persecutions to those who believe in Christ (JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apol.* 54-55). This also raises up “atheistic doctrines” (ἀθέων δογμάτων) and dissensions as exemplified through Marcion who preaches a different God than the Creator. Consequently, in order to reject gnostic arguments, Justin argues that Plato depends on Moses and the doctrine of the Cross, explaining Christian practices, e.g. the Baptism, and how they are imitated by the dissidents (JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apol.* 59-62). He emphasizes how this knowledge of God is shared with those who do not have access to education and are not able to speak (βαρβάρων τὸ φθέγμα); this knowledge is not based on human wisdom but rather God’s power. Therefore, Justin’s receptions of Pauline ideas in 1 Cor 2:5 are shaped in a direct conflict with early gnostic ten-

40. In addition, together with the different Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, this work mentions the cross within a transcendent meaning, since it reveals the structure of the cosmos and has its foundations in Creation itself (BOLYKI, 1998, p.118-19). This is also present in Justin the Martyr’s arguments, indicating debates about receiving the divine gifts and the meaning of the cross among later thinkers.

dencies. He stresses divine sovereignty when comparing Hellenistic platonistic schools and attests gnostic interpretations of these Pauline ideas, i.e., the possibility of having direct access to the truth.

From this earlier reception of the Pauline ideas present in 1 Cor 2, it is possible to discern how the differentiation between those who are initiated in the mysteries of God and the world around them is perceived by those who receive Paul's letters. The social consequences in the Roman world is described in Minucius Felix's arguments, while the gnostic usage of these ideas is framed in different texts and condemned in Justin the Martyr's *Apology*. Ignatius' letters and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* accentuate the Pauline *Theology of the Cross*. This ambiguity is also perceived in later receptions, specifically in their direct attacks to Gnosticism, the discussion of a moral or perfect Christian life and how Church Fathers conceive mystic experiences. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen are the main Patristic authors who refer to 1 Cor 2 in their work in late 2nd and 3rd centuries. Because of the massive textual references, only the reception in one work from each of these Fathers will be summarized following.⁴¹ Origen and Clement express a careful reading of this Corinthian chapter through their quotations while discussing the reception of Pauline ideas in the later second century; Tertullian conveys his message against multiple forms of gnostic teachings and different doctrines. The high number of references to this chapter and how most of the verses after 1 Cor 2:5 are mentioned by these authors indicate how the second part of Pauline argument based on pneumatic experience received privilege in these Patristic authors. Therefore, the ambiguity between

41. Among the 490 references to 1 Cor 2 between 160-300 CE, other important authors are Hippolytus of Rome and Cyprianus of Carthage. In addition, many different works and Homilies from the selected Patristic authors also have a direct relationship with this Pauline material. Therefore, it would be impossible to analyze this data in the present essay. In addition, even these particular textual references are not fully analyzed in their context, but provide a strong foundation for the main argument in this essay, i.e., the consolidation of Pauline theology in the late second century occurs simultaneously among different groups, including those who are categorized as Gnostics and Christian Orthodox. The references in *Pistis Sophia* and in the *Acts of Thomas* are also important considerations in the context of Gnostic reception of Paul.

the *Theology of the Cross* and spiritual gifts in early second century, with special attention on martyrdom, is gradually changed to a Christian devotional life based on doctrinarian and moral attitudes.

Clement of Alexandria is a good example of this transformation, since at the same time that he praises the martyrs he asserts that living well and safe is an excellent form of Christian life (CLEMENT, *Strom* 4.4). These varieties of intellectual perspectives and behaviors should help Christians to discover the truth, i.e., these “miscellanies of notes” contribute for “recollecting and expressing the truth.”⁴² Clement asserts that God alone is the source of life, referring to 1 Cor 2:5 (CLEMENT, *Strom* 5.1), and separates those who do not discern spiritual realities from those who do not have access to the mysteries (CLEMENT, *Strom* 5.4). He reads 1 Cor 2:6-14 and associates the spiritual human with the gnostic experience, since even the common faith has gnostic ideas as its foundations.⁴³ Consequently, Clement attests gnostic interpretation of this passage, illustrated by the perfect Christian who is united with God in mysterious ways.⁴⁴

Tertullian mainly utilizes 1 Cor 2 in *Adversus Marcionem* in the following sessions, 2.2; 4.22-26; and 5.6. In the first, he emphasizes the doctrine of Creation by directly attacking those who claim to possess knowledge of the divine Being, arguing that God’s essence and actions surpasses human understanding.⁴⁵ Later, he sustains the relationship between

42.This is exactly how Clement explains the title of his work (*Strom* 4.2), associating it with the harvest from a great mixture of seeds in order to separate the wheat. This also characterizes his theological reflections, especially when modern readers take into consideration his rejection of some specific gnostic groups and the reception of general gnostic ideas, including Christian perfection (e.g. *Strom* 4.21 and 6.12).

43.He affirms, in a different context, “to know God is, then the first step of faith.” *Strom* 7.2.

44.Other Clement’s texts in which 1 Cor 2:8-9 is mentioned: *Excerpta e Theodoto*; *Eclogae ex scripturis prophetis*; *Paedagogus*; *Protrepticus*; *Quis dives salvetur*. Except for one quotation from 2:8 in *Excerpta e Theodoto*, all the others are from 2:9.

45.Tertullian, in *Adv. Mar* 2.2, divides his arguments in two clear considerations: he exposes how Paul reads Isaiah, emphasizing divine sovereignty and how human understanding is not able to grasp the divine mind; and how those with the “spirit of the world” claim something about divine Nature.

the Christ and the Creator while condemning Marcion's Christ based on the impossibility of association with his divine glory.⁴⁶ This Christological differentiation is stressed in the last session – 5.6. – where Tertullian depicts Paul as a “wise master-builder” associated with prophecy and the Jewish Scriptures while associating Marcion with the princes of this age, since a *Theology of the Cross* related to spiritual realities and not material perspectives. Consequently, following the Tertullian arguments demonstrates that the reception of 1 Cor 2 had multiple interpretations, especially those associated with religious ecstatic perspectives and gnostic ideas.⁴⁷

Origen mentions 1 Cor 2:2 in his Trinitarian theology, accentuating that Paul emphasizes the Cross because the Corinthians are weak (ORIGEN, *De Princ* 4.4). He also stresses divine sovereignty against the rhetorical power of theological treatises, including the aspiration for perfect Christian life based on spiritual realities (ORIGEN, *De Princ* 4.1). Even though he affirms it is impossible to distinguish between the “princes of this world” and principalities (ORIGEN, *De Princ* 1.5), he uses 1 Cor 2: 6-8 to affirm the existence of invisible enemies (ORIGEN, *De Princ* 3.). Trying to explain “hostile movements” that oppose humans, Origen proposes a threefold wisdom based 1 Cor 2: *world, rulers of this age and God's wisdom* (ORIGEN, *De Princ* 3.3). He also distinguishes between two human natures based on this passage (ORIGEN, *De Princ* 4.2) and argues about the transformation of the body, discussing the resurrection (ORIGEN, *De Princ* 3.4). In addition, he rejects that heaven-

46. Tertullian finds his arguments on the fact that after the transfiguration, Christ shares moments with the disciples, different from the gnostic ideas in which the materiality of Christ was not important. In addition, he accentuates how God reveals his plans to babies while concealing them from the wise (*Adv Mar* 2.25). Therefore, Tertullian aims to preserve the Creator based on Hebrew Scripture and Jesus' traditions while rejecting Marcion gnostic ideas (2.22). In addition, because he discusses spirit possession and its validity, the presence of 1 Cor 2 is relevant. Therefore, the direct association between Christ and the Creator aims to produce a different Christological concept than Marcion's theological statements.

47. Another Tertullian's texts in which 1 Cor 2 are mentioned follow: *De spectaculis*; *Adversus Hermogenem*; *Ad uxorem*; *De Carne Cristi*; *De resurrectione mortuorum*; *De Pudicitia*.

ly and human orders have different creators and affirms that everything shares good and evil, except God and Christ. Consequently, he is able to establish a hierarchy of rational creatures, having the spiritual human in the highest position, not being judged by anyone (ORIGEN, *De Princ* 1.8). By not emphasizing martyrdom, Origen's *De Principiis* furnishes a different milieu in which the Pauline *Theology of the Cross* is received. Moreover, the Pauline dualistic approach that differentiates natural from spiritual humans is explored in multiple forms in this patristic text.⁴⁸

The receptions of these Pauline ideas after the late second century gradually adapted the *Theology of the Cross* and mystic experiences with the Spirit to their systematic needs. Clement differs from some gnostic traditions, specifically because of his insistence in citing the Scriptures and maintaining traditional Jewish theological conceptions such as Creation. Nevertheless, reading Paul's ideas about the πνευματικοίς, Clement claims that spiritual humans who have full experiences with God are perfect Christians and, therefore, are *gnostics*. Tertullian, utilizing the same passages, condemns Marcion's schools for believing that through their knowledge they have access to God. Instead of focusing on the possibility of human experience, Tertullian categorically asserts divine sovereignty, the materiality of the risen Jesus and, at the same time, associates Christ with the Creator. Finally, Origen articulates Pauline dualism with the princes of this age in a literal and analogical meaning, discussing the invisible enemies of the Christian life while mentioning the historical and future transformation of the spiritual human. These texts reveal a more

48. Other Origen's texts in which 1 Cor 2 is predominant, besides his homilies and fragments, are: *Commentarii in Iohannem*; *De Oratione*; *Commentarii in Matthaem libro X-XVII*; *Contra Celsum*. The presence in many homilies also indicates a different context in which these Pauline ideas are applied by Origen. In addition, in both commentaries the high number of references to 1 Cor 2 indicates how Paul's conceptions, particularly those in this chapter, influenced Origen's theological discourses and exegesis. Indeed, in the Johannine commentary almost all the verses from 1 Cor 2 are referred, except 1 and 11; while in the Matthew material the exception are verses 1, 3, 5, 12, 14. Finally, the extensive usage in *Contra Celsum* suggests how Paul and Origen's contexts and debates enrich each other in tandem, e.g., the distinction between ordinary and perfect Christians, conversion and moral transformation and Jewish heritage.

consolidated Pauline tradition, since these Patristic authors are able to cite the entire chapter 2, combining multiple ecclesiological traditions and rejecting those doctrines that they do not believe represent Christian life.

Reflections and Implications: Receptions in their Infinite Labyrinths

Realized eschatology has many consequences in the Pauline tradition, including the pneumatic or gnostic reception of Pauline ideas. Some modern attempts to understand these phenomena tend to classify these literary evidences in separate categories such as *Gnosticism* or *Apocalypticism*. Nevertheless, by observing the compositional processes of first Corinthians in their textual developments and the particular reception of 1 Cor 2:1-16, it is easy to observe how ancient textual ambiguities mirror elusive theoretical approaches, i.e., the multiple meanings of these texts can never be fully comprehended. Examples of differing theological receptions of Pauline ideas include: the Pauline *Theology of the Cross*, which emphasizes the apostolic weakness; and the revelation of the *mysteries of God* to the perfect Christians. These perspectives are in tandem throughout the reception of the Pauline ideas during the first three centuries of Christian era, exposing theological ambiguities while holding together in multiple ecclesiological constructions.

If the idea of a gradual composition of the Corinthian letters reduces the chronological distance between the “authentic” and the Deutero-Pauline material, this does not elucidate the differences and similarities between enthusiastic members and false teachers. Nevertheless, this is relatively clear – based on apostolic and patristic reception – how early multiple interpretations of these materials generate later theological differences, i.e., enthusiastic pneumatological characteristics based on *realized eschatology* provide an intellectual framework for later gnostic ideas. Indeed, we may agree with the author of 2 Pet 3:16 about how hard it is to understand (δυσνόητά) and how often we can “twist” Paul’s writings.

The argument in 1 Cor 2:1-3 differentiates between λόγου ἢ σοφίας and the Pauline proclamation of the crucified Christ. Conversely, in 2:4-8 he opposes words of wisdom (σοφίας [λόγοις]) with demonstrations of the Spirit and power (ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως). In this case, we may disagree with 2 Pet 3:16, since the reader/listener cannot distort (στρεβλώω) or misinterpret, there are many possibilities for interpretation. These two sections reveal a polyphonic situation in which opposite perspectives co-exist in religious or cultural expressions. Therefore, these multiple receptions, attestations and interpretations of the Pauline ideas are natural developments in a complex system of communication.

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