

FLIP-FLOP? JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S POLYTROPIC PAUL

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'I don't like to be typed. I try to fit into anybody's
bag...anybody's groove I'm working with.'
—Jack Wilson (jazz musician)

In Plato's *Laches*, as Socrates and his companions set out the rules for their conversation, the general Laches articulates his contempt for those who say one thing and do another:

When I hear a man discussing goodness or any kind of wisdom, if he is truly a man and worthy of the words he speaks, then I am utterly delighted, observing that at the same time the speaker and what he says suit and harmonize with one another. Such a man seems altogether musical, harmonized with the finest harmony...with regard to his very own life, one that is concordant in its relation of words (λόγοι) to deeds (ἔργα)... But a man whose actions do not agree with his words is an annoyance to me, and the better he speaks the more I hate him...¹

This disdain for inconsistency between speech and actions, which has literary antecedents stretching back to Homer,² has a positive counterpart in the widespread belief that not only should one's words match one's deeds, but one's speech should also display a uniformity of thought.³ The virtuous man, then, was one who preserved his dignity through his way of life, 'not behaving irregularly or capriciously in anything, but preserving consistency in word as well as in deed'.⁴

1. Plato, *Lach.* 188c-d.

2. For instance, Helen's excoriation of Paris (Homer, *Il.* 3.428-36) and Artemis's castigation of Apollo (Homer, *Il.* 21.470-77).

3. Cf. Homer, *Il.* 9.378-79.

4. Isocrates 9.44: οὐδὲ πρὸς ἐν ἀτάκτως οὐδ' ἀνωμάλως διακείμενος, ἀλλ' ὁμοίως τὰς ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις ὁμολογίας ὥσπερ τὰς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις διαφυλάττων. See also Homer, *Od.* 22.312-19; Theognis, *Eleg.* 979-80: 'A man

Alongside this effort to maintain consistency in word and deed, however, was a parallel intellectual current that highlighted and indeed praised speakers who could adapt their speech to meet the needs of any given situation. According to this tradition, linguistic variability was a commendable trait demonstrating intellectual dexterity. The elegist Theognis, for example, encourages himself to adapt his speech based upon his interlocutor's mood and style. Employing a marine analogy, he states that just as the cuttlefish matches its color to the cliff in order to escape detection by its enemies, so too should the skilled orator change his own 'rhetorical complexion' depending upon his audience, for 'cleverness is stronger than consistency'.⁵ Later, writers such as Xenophon, Plato, and Dio Chrysostom will all recognize and laud the man who expresses himself and acts with versatility.⁶

By the end of the classical period, achieving nobility in 'words and deeds' had become a core value,⁷ yet the relationship between these two positions was an issue of contestation: those who valued consistency as the hallmark of virtue derisively ridiculed their opponents, who in turn went to great lengths to defend their supposed inconsistencies.⁸ This debate often coalesced around the career of Odysseus, a figure whose craftiness polarized later authors into representing him as either a despicable coward or a commendable hero.⁹ Interestingly, the early

who is friend in word but not in deed/Is not my friend'; Pindar, *Nem.* 1.20-31; Plato, *Resp.* 382e-83a. For secondary studies, see Raphael Woolf, 'Consistency and Akrasia in Plato's *Protagoras*', *Phronesis* 47 (2002), pp. 224-52; H. Wayne Merritt, *In Word and Deed: Moral Integrity in Paul* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity 1; New York: Peter Lang, 1993).

5. Theognis, *Eleg.* 213-18: Θυμέ, φίλους κατὰ πάντας ἐπίστρεφε ποικίλον ἦθος,/ ὀργὴν συμμίσγων ἦτιν ἕκατος ἔχει./ Πουλύπου ὀργὴν ἴσχε πολυπλόκου, ὅς ποτὶ πέτρῃ,/ τῇ προσομιλήσῃ, τοῖος ἰδεῖν ἐφάνη./ νῦν μὲν τῆδ' ἐφέπου, τότε δ' ἄλλοῖος χρόα γίνου./ κρέσσων τοι σοφίη γίνεται ἀτροπίης. See also 1071-74.

6. Xenophon, *Mem.* 3.1.6; Plato, *Hipp. Min.*; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 77/78.35-38.

7. Cicero, *De or.* 3.15. See also Gregory J. Riley, 'Words and Deeds: Jesus as Teacher and Jesus as Pattern of Life', *HTR* 90 (1997), pp. 427-36.

8. See Seneca, *Vit. beat.* 17.1; 18.1; 19.1; 20.1; 21.1; 24.4; 25.8; 26.7-8; 27.1-6; cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 53.4. For a relentless castigation of individual malleability, see also Lucian *Peregr.*

9. David Lévy Stone, 'La figure d'Ulysse chez les Socratiques: Socrate *polutropos*', *Phronesis* 50 (2005), pp. 181-214 (182); Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale

Christian era saw a similar controversy erupt around the figure of Paul, who was both attacked and defended in much the same way that Greco-Roman writers debated the character of Homer's 'man of many ways'. This paper will explore how this rhetorical construct resonates in early Christian discourse through an investigation of Paul's presentation of his relationship with the Corinthians and the encomia written by perhaps his most ardent supporter in late antiquity, John Chrysostom. While Chrysostom often engages in nuanced and occasionally tortured exegesis to insulate the apostle from charges of inconsistency, he nevertheless can appropriate the Odyssean theme to demonstrate that Paul's rhetorical versatility and self-effacement were both instrumental to his mission to spread the gospel throughout the world and to appropriate Christian virtues for his congregation to imitate in their own quest for salvation.

Odysseus Polytropos

In the first line of the *Odyssey*, Homer introduces his hero as 'the man of many ways' (πολύτροπον). For the poet, Odysseus earned this epithet because of his ten years of travels following the Trojan War.¹⁰ In time, however, *polytropos* began to take on a negative resonance among commentators who had begun to re-evaluate the personality of Odysseus according to developing ethical principles. As a result, Homer's positive portrait of Odysseus as a crafty, cunning warrior gave way to withering censure for his deceitfulness and shameful personality.¹¹

Not all portraits of Odysseus were negative, however, and some sought to parry these attacks against the hero's character. For example,

University Press, 1990), pp. 92-93; W.B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2nd edn, 1968), pp. 90-101; Ragnar Höistad, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King: Studies in the Cynic Conception of Man* (Lund: Carl Bloms Boktryckeri, 1948), pp. 94-97.

10. Stanford, *Ulysses Theme*, p. 101.

11. Odysseus boasts of his 'valor and council and wit' (ἀρετῆ βουλῆ τε νόω τε, *Od.* 12.211), and Homeric epithets for Odysseus include 'crafty-minded' (δόλοι, *Od.* 9.19; ποικιλομήτην, *Od.* 22.281), 'resourceful', and one 'of many devices' (πολύμητις, *Od.* 5.214; πολυμήχανος, *Od.* 5.203). Such descriptions, however, become the subject of criticism in the fifth century, as Pindar, *Nem.* 8.32-34, Sophocles, *Phil.* 77-82, and Euripides, *Hec.* 131-33 attest.

Antisthenes' speeches delivered by Ajax and Odysseus after the death of Achilles represent the earliest attempt to rehabilitate the character of Odysseus.¹² While the purpose of these declamations centers on the heroes' attempts to persuade the Greeks to grant one of them the armor of the dead Achilles, the speeches are, in a broader sense, explorations on the nature of virtue.¹³ As the arguments unfold, the two heroes represent contrasting images of *aretē*.¹⁴ On the one hand, Ajax embodies the traditional values of the heroic age in which 'deeds' are superior to 'words'; virtue derives from public displays of valor rather than private, secretive missions; and cowardice and suffering are equated with shamefulness.¹⁵ Ajax thus glorifies the simple man of action whose martial exploits are the source of virtue and self-worth.

By contrast, Odysseus shows none of Ajax's disdain for argumentation, and as a result offers a lengthier and more nuanced picture of virtue. Rather than clinging to the values of archaic Greece, he presents a case for the revaluation of *aretē* in terms of selfless action. While acknowledging that he participated in all of the traditional battles, Odysseus nevertheless reminds the jury of his dangerous and individual covert operations on behalf of the Greek army.¹⁶ His nocturnal mission to recover the Greeks' statue from the Trojan sanctuary and his decision to disguise himself as a beggar in order to infiltrate the enemy's camp are not examples of cowardice, as Ajax had argued, but rather resourceful schemes that were necessary for the defeat of Troy.¹⁷

12. Fragments 14 (*Ajax*) and 15 (*Odysseus*) are collected in Fernanda Decleva Caizzi (ed.), *Antisthenis Fragmenta* (Milan: Instituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1966), pp. 24-28. For analyses of these speeches, see Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 105-108; H.D. Rankin, *Antisthenes Sokraticos* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1986), pp. 151-73; Abraham Malherbe, 'Antisthenes and Odysseus, and Paul at War', *HTR* 76 (1983), pp. 151-53; Höistad, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King*, pp. 94-102.

13. LévyStone, 'La figure d'Ulysse', p. 186. Ajax refers to the speeches as τὸν ἀγῶνα...περὶ ἀρετῆς (14.4). On the Greek idea of debate as a contest, see, for instance, Plato, *Prot.* 335a.

14. Ajax states that the two do not have a 'similar character' (ἄνδρα ὁμοιότροπον), and further, that 'Between him [i.e. Odysseus] and me there could be no greater divergence' (14.5).

15. 'Deeds' and 'words' (14.1, 7; cf. D.L. 6.11 for Antisthenes' sympathetic assertion that 'virtue has to do with deeds and does not need a store of words or learning'); 'public' and 'private' acts (14.5); cowardice and suffering (14.3, 5, 6).

16. ἐμοὶ δὲ τῶν ἰδίῳ κινδύνων οὐδεὶς ὑμῶν οὐδὲν ξύνοιδε (15.1).

17. 15.3-4, 8-9.

Odysseus's defense is utilitarian: the methods employed to accomplish these plans are less important than the fact that they were successful. As he argues, 'if in fact the taking of Troy is a "reasonable" (καλόν) objective, it is also "reasonable" (καλόν) to find out the means of doing so. All the others are grateful for my efforts; only you make them a matter of accusation.'¹⁸ Moreover, Odysseus claims that he is in fact more courageous than Ajax, for while the latter could boast of unbreakable armor and took time off from fighting to rest, he carried out his undercover missions with nothing more than 'the rags of a slave'¹⁹ and fought day and night to ensure a Greek victory.²⁰ For these reasons, Odysseus compares himself to a 'general' (στρατηγός), 'guardian' (φύλαξ) and 'helmsman' (κυβερνήται) who seeks nothing more than the salvation of his comrades.²¹

In this speech, Antisthenes begins the process of constructing Odysseus according to the values of Cynicism.²² Of the many *topoi* he deploys,²³ Odysseus highlights his endurance, resourcefulness, and craftiness, all of which coalesce in later texts to define the positive features of the adaptable person.²⁴ The crux of Odysseus's argument, however, rests upon the idea that his virtues rest upon his versatile, and thus superior, intelligence. Antisthenes underscores this point by contrasting the characters and deeds of the two heroes. On the one hand, Ajax displays a false sense of courage, for he relies upon an indestructible shield that is equivalent to walls around a city; he displays an unbalanced temper; and he rushes straight into battle like a wild boar, without giving his actions thoughtful consideration.²⁵ For these reasons,

18. 15.4.

19. Like Homer's hero, Antisthenes' Odysseus wears rags and bears the scars of a slave (15.10; cf. Homer, *Od.* 21.221).

20. Ajax's equipment (15.7); Odysseus's armor as τὰ δουλοπρεπή (15.10); Odysseus's continuous fighting (15.9-10).

21. οὕτω δὲ καὶ ἔγωγε καὶ σε καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἅπαντας σώζω (15.8). See also 15.2-3, where Odysseus states that his sole purpose in battle was to recover Helen and take Troy.

22. Stanford, *Ulysses Theme*, p. 97.

23. LévyStone, 'La figure d'Ulysse', pp. 186-89; Stanford, *Ulysses Theme*, p. 98; Höistad, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King*, pp. 97-102.

24. ἐμὲ μὲν ποιήσει πολύτλαντα καὶ πολύμητιν καὶ πολυμήχανον καὶ πτολίπορθον καὶ μόνον τὴν Τροίαν ἐλόντα (15.14).

25. Ajax's armor: 15.7; intellectual imbalance: 15.5-6; foolish and childlike mentality: 15.4-7.

Odysseus claims that Ajax is an intellectual simpleton suffering from the sickness of ignorance, ‘the greatest of evils’.²⁶ Odysseus, on the other hand, represents Ajax’s perfect foil. His courage stems from an intellectual versatility that acts as his weaponry and protection, and his supposedly shameful battle plans are in fact the result of a careful deliberation by a man whose singular purpose lies in defeating the Trojans and saving his friends.²⁷

Odysseus’s skillful use of reason, rather than his adoption of traditional military equipment, provides the context for appreciating his virtue.²⁸ It is this trait that enables him to endure suffering, for he knows that incurring shame through self-abasement is a tactic that will ultimately lead to victory and the salvation of the Greeks.²⁹ Building upon the Socratic dictum that no harm can befall a good person, the hero willingly accepts such temporary abuse in order to win a greater glory. The perspective of Odysseus correlates nicely with Antisthenes’ *chreia* that ‘it is a royal privilege to do good and be ill-spoken of’.³⁰

Antisthenes builds upon these conclusions in his commentary on Homer’s description of Odysseus as *polytropos*.³¹ Against those who chided the hero for his chameleon-like nature, Antisthenes states that Homer connects *tropos* to character as well as oratorical skill.³² In contrast with monotropic speakers, who are unable to adapt their speech to different audiences, Antisthenes argues that the training of polytropic orators in a variety of discourses enables them to ‘express the same

26. 15.13; Odysseus further denigrates Ajax’s intellect by calling him ‘obtuse’ (ἀμαθία, 15.4, 5, 13) and ‘full of infantile joy’ (ὥσπερ οἱ παῖδες χαίρεις, 15.7).

27. 15.7-8, 10. LévyStone, ‘La figure d’Ulysse’, 188: ‘ce n’est pas seulement le calcul des moyens adéquats à la fin qui caractérise le courage, c’est aussi la force nécessaire pour surmonter les dangers et réaliser le projet de la raison.’ On the *topos* of intellectual armor, see F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics, Paul, and the Pauline Churches: Cynics and Christian Origins II* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 137-41; Malherbe, ‘Antisthenes and Odysseus’, pp. 148-58.

28. LévyStone, ‘La figure d’Ulysse’, p. 188.

29. 15.10: ἐγὼ σῶζω σέ.

30. D.L. 6.3 (said after learning that Plato was abusing him). See also D.L. 6.2 (‘pain is a good thing’), and D.L. 6.11 (‘bad reputation is a good thing and much the same as pain’).

31. Caizzi (ed.), *Antisthenis Fragmenta*, pp. 43-44 (fragment 51).

32. Caizzi (ed.), *Antisthenis Fragmenta*, p. 43: μήποτε οὖν τρόπος τὸ μὲν τι σημαίνει τὸ ἦθος, τὸ δέ τι σημαίνει τὴν τοῦ λόγου χρῆσιν;

thought in multiple ways'.³³ Antisthenes compares such speakers with Pythagoras, who addressed children, women, rhetoricians, and young men at their particular level of understanding. Far from villains, then, those who exhibit rhetorical adaptability are both 'sages' (σοφοί) and 'good men' (ἀγαθοί), and exhibit a *technē* comparable to that of the physician.³⁴ Furthermore, just as the doctor practices different forms of therapy to correspond to the different characters of his patients, so too the orator, because his character is constantly good, employs different modalities of speech to fit the specific character of his audience.³⁵ Finally, Antisthenes concludes that when the polytropic speaker crafts his speech to the unique character of his auditors, the resulting connection between the orator's speech and the audience's character produces a type of unity.³⁶

Plato's *Hippias Minor* explores further the nature of *polytropos* through an examination of the characters of Achilles and Odysseus.³⁷ Much like Antisthenes' *Ajax*, Hippias champions Achilles for his 'true and simple' (ἀληθής τε καὶ ἀπλοῦς) personality, one that despises those who think one thing and say another. For Hippias, this statement epitomizes Odysseus's crafty way of speaking, and is thus an indication of his defective character: he is 'polytropic and false' (πολύτροπος τε καὶ ψευδής).³⁸ Socrates, on the other hand, exploits the argumentation Antisthenes had developed in his *Odysseus*. As he cross-examines Hippias, Socrates distinguishes between the positive traits of the polytropic speaker, who possesses a morally neutral 'power' (δύναμις) for speaking in accordance with either truth or falsity, and the negative depiction of a polytropic speaker who possesses a bad character.³⁹ In Socrates' estimation, Odysseus is *polytropos* in the first sense, for

33. Caizzi (ed.), *Antisthenis Fragmenta*, p. 44: τὸν γὰρ ἑκάστοις πρόσφρον τῆς σοφίας ἐξευρίσκειν σοφίας ἐστίν.

34. On the relationship between rhetoric and medicine, see Plato, *Phaedr.* 270b.

35. Caizzi (ed.), *Antisthenis Fragmenta*, p. 43: ἐπίστανται τὸ αὐτὸ νόημα κατὰ πολλοὺς τρόπους λέγειν. For a further exploration of the necessity of rhetorical adaptability, see Plato, *Phaedr.* 271c-72b.

36. Caizzi (ed.), *Antisthenis Fragmenta*, p. 44: ἐν γὰρ τὸ ἑκάστῳ οἰκείον. See also LévyStone, 'La figure d'Ulysse', pp. 197-98.

37. LévyStone, 'La figure d'Ulysse', pp. 199-207.

38. *Hipp. Min.* 364e-65b; cf. Homer, *Il.* 9.308-13.

39. J.J. Mulhern, 'ΤΡΟΠΟΣ and ΠΟΛΥΤΡΟΠΙΑ in Plato's *Hippias Minor*', *Phoenix* 22 (1968), pp. 283-88.

skillful orators must possess both ‘prudence’ (φρόνισμοι) and ‘wisdom’ (σοφοί) in order to deceive (and to speak the truth).⁴⁰ That does not mean, however, that his character is bad, for according to Socrates’ argument *polytropos* is a power unconnected with personality. Indeed, as he states in the *Republic*, polytropic actions alone produce a negative character and lead to an ‘ignorance in the soul’ (ἐν ψεῦδος ψυχῆ ἄγνοια). By contrast, variable speech can actually be therapeutic, a *pharmakon* in which the speaker acts as a psychagogue for his auditors.⁴¹

The arguments Antisthenes and Plato set forth to praise Odysseus’s polytropism become a template for later authors, particularly those within the Cynic tradition, to defend the multi-faceted person from character assassination.⁴² Instead of betraying an intellectual weakness, these speakers came to typify the philosopher whose constancy in mind and purpose was precisely the reason they could be accommodating in speech. As such, they were ‘physicians of the soul’, for they crafted their message to each particular audience.⁴³ As Dio Chrysostom states, the philosopher must teach ‘sometimes by persuasion and exhortation (πείθων καὶ παρακαλῶν), at other times by abuse and reproach (λοιδορούμενος καὶ ὀνειδίζων), [hoping] he may rescue some from folly...taking them on one side on their own but also admonishing them together, whenever the opportunity arises, with gentle words at times, [and] at other [times] harsh’.⁴⁴ At the same time, they sharply juxtaposed their outer and inner natures, so that while they may have looked like Antisthenes’ Odysseus—weak, hapless slaves who suffered from hard and shameful labors—they claimed that their endurance of such

40. *Hipp. Min.* 366a. This is a technique Achilles lacks, and thus he represents the inferior hero (*Hipp. Min.* 370b-e, 371b-d).

41. Plato, *Resp.* 382b-c. LévyStone, ‘La figure d’Ulysse’, p. 207.

42. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 9.9; 13.9; 40.2. As Pseudo-Crates (*Ep.* 19) attests, however, not all later philosophers would find Odysseus a model worth imitating. See Malherbe, ‘Antisthenes and Odysseus’, pp. 158-62.

43. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.22.23-25; cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 4.83-96; 8.4-5; 77/78.44-45; n. 34, above. For a discussion of the analogy between the physician’s responsibility to cure bodies and the philosopher’s to cure souls, see Stanley K. Stowers, ‘Paul on the Use and Abuse of Reason’, in David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeke (eds.), *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 253-86 (274-75).

44. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 77/78.35-38.

privations actually testified to their moral perfection and freedom.⁴⁵ As pseudo-Crates exhorts, 'pursue not only the best of goods, self-control and perseverance, but also their causes, toils, and do not shun them on account of their harshness. For would you not exchange inferior things for something great? As you would receive gold in exchange for copper, so you would receive virtue in exchange for toils'.⁴⁶ Their speech and actions were thus designed to save others from the trappings of the world so that their souls could attain a similar experience of freedom.

The Polytopic Paul

Situating the letters of Paul within this broader context has revealed that the apostle was aware of the Cynic debate over the nature of the virtuous philosopher and appropriated its *topoi* both in his conversations with his communities and confrontations with his opponents.⁴⁷ The Corinthian correspondence is especially noteworthy for Paul's attempts to re-assert his authority within his community through the use of rhetorical strategies related to the Cynic's Odysseus.

The Corinthians and Opposing Missionaries

In the Corinthian letters, community members and rival missionaries level both veiled and direct criticisms of Paul that are best understood within the context of variability. At the heart of the debate is an ongoing controversy over the nature of speech and knowledge and their relationship to Christian *praxis*.⁴⁸ In 1 Corinthians, the elite members of

45. For instance, Pseudo-Crates, *Ep.* 7; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.1.1-5; 4.7.13; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.

46. Pseudo-Crates, *Ep.* 15; cf. Xenophon, *Symp.* 4.34, 43; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.22.45-49; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 77/78.37-42.

47. Downing, *Cynics, Paul, and the Pauline Churches*, p. 140: 'Paul knows his way round this field of contemporary discourse, he is "at home" in it, and deploys it with confidence.' See also Scott B. Andrews, 'Too Weak Not to Lead: The Form and Function of 2 Cor 11:23b-33', *NTS* 41 (1995), pp. 263-76; Martin, *Slavery as Salvation, passim*; Malherbe, 'Antisthenes and Odysseus', *passim*; Abraham Malherbe, "'Gentle as a Nurse": The Cynic Background to 1 Thess. ii', *NovT* 12 (1970), pp. 203-17.

48. Hans Dieter Betz, 'The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology according to the Apostle Paul', in *Paulinische Studien: Gesammelte Aufsätze III* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), pp. 126-62 (138): 'Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians

the group had begun to grow restless with Paul's teachings and actions.⁴⁹ Specifically, because they claimed to possess a superior wisdom, they felt that they were exempt from showing any consideration for societal values: everything was lawful to them by virtue of their *gnōsis*.⁵⁰ Moreover, this exalted status apparently justified their exclusive interest in their own needs at the expense of those lower class members of the group.⁵¹ This position reflects the beliefs of those who enjoyed the benefits that come from existing near the top of the socio-political hierarchy.⁵² As a result, they apparently found Paul's embrace of self-abasement revolting, and the appearance of his inconsistency a matter of embarrassment.⁵³

In 2 Corinthians, the introduction of rival missionaries intensified the elite's antipathy toward Paul and crystallized the contours of the debate. The crux of their accusations centered on what they perceived to be the apostle's physical infirmity and inconsistency in both word and deed. For the superapostles, Paul's 'weighty and strong letters' did not cohere well with his 'weak presence' and 'contemptible speech'.⁵⁴ Moreover, Paul's repeated inability to follow through on his promises to visit the group was enough for the Corinthians to suspect that this vacillation was a sign of weakness.⁵⁵ Perhaps sensing that these inconsistencies were indicative of a bad character, the Corinthians appear to have concluded that attacks on Paul's weakness and humility were indeed evidence that the apostle was a shameful leader unable to accord the community with honor. Charging him with craftiness and deceit, they

is basically nothing but an extended wrestling with this claim' to possess speech and knowledge (λόγος καὶ γνῶσις).

49. See Paul's admonition against associating with the sexually immoral in 1 Cor. 5.9, a warning that was not taken seriously (cf. 1 Cor. 5.1-2). As Martin (*Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 50-146) has demonstrated, making a distinction between the upper and lower classes within the Corinthian community is essential for interpreting Paul's letters.

50. 1 Cor. 6.12; 8.1, 4, 8; 10.23.

51. This is inferred through Paul's discussion of the issues of meat-eating (1 Cor. 8-10) and spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14).

52. Andrews, 'Too Weak Not to Lead', p. 273.

53. Cf. 1 Cor. 4.11-13; 9.19-23.

54. 2 Cor. 10.12. See also 1 Cor. 2.3-4.

55. 1 Cor. 4.18; 2 Cor. 1.15-18.

concluded that he exhibited none of the qualities characteristic of an honorable philosopher-teacher.⁵⁶

Paul's Response

In order to defend himself against these charges, Paul appropriates typical philosophical *topoi* common in Cynic circles. In 1 Corinthians, he begins with a reevaluation of 'wisdom' and 'foolishness' and 'strength' and 'weakness' that had become standard in Hellenistic philosophy.⁵⁷ Alternating between gentle admonishment and stern rebuke, he chastises the Corinthians for their *hybris*, contending that the wisdom of God, the 'foolishness' of the cross, has rendered human wisdom impotent: 'God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength'.⁵⁸ Contravening traditional notions of wisdom and strength, Paul encourages the upper classes in his community to accept the paradox of the *kerygma*, for the apostle insists that Christ is the wisdom upon which 'righteousness and sanctification and redemption' rest.⁵⁹ Interspersed within this rather impersonal and mild discourse is a sharp rebuke of the Corinthians' haughtiness. While agreeing that there is such a thing as spiritual wisdom, Paul nevertheless contends that his community does not possess it: their 'boasting' is nothing more than empty self-praise, for it does not occur within the context of the *kerygma*.⁶⁰ As a result, the apostle concludes that they have been and remain 'children', lacking the spiritual maturity to receive more than basic instruction.⁶¹ Consequently, they remain spiritually imperfect and in need of the discipline that a father might give a child.⁶²

For Paul, this discipline involves nothing less than a reconceptualization of virtue: the Corinthians, he contends, should think of

56. 2 Cor. 4.2b; 6.8; 12.16.

57. John Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardship in the Corinthian Correspondence* (SBLDS, 99; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 100-103.

58. 1 Cor. 1.25. See also Stowers, 'Paul on the Use and Abuse of Reason', p. 257.

59. δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμός καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις (1 Cor. 1.30).

60. On the issue of boasting, see Christopher Forbes, 'Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony: Paul's Boasting and the Conventions of Hellenistic Rhetoric', *NTS* 32 (1986), pp. 1-30.

61. 1 Cor. 3.1-3.

62. 1 Cor. 4.14.

Christians ‘as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries’.⁶³ As an example of this ethic, Paul offers himself as one who has successfully reconfigured his identity in this manner, and therefore the person whom the Corinthians should strive to imitate.⁶⁴ In contrast to the Corinthians, whose arrogant boasting prevents them from recognizing the value of humility, Paul details his hardships in order to cast himself as a humble philosopher whose sufferings testify to his righteousness, and paradoxically, his power.⁶⁵ Unlike the ‘rich’ Corinthian ‘kings’,⁶⁶ Paul adopts the Cynic position that his inner fortitude derives from enduring the trials of the world, and that a commitment to *philanthrōpia* is the mark of the person of virtue.⁶⁷ His rehearsal of these dangers evokes clear reminiscences of Odysseus. For example, just as Odysseus saw no shame in escaping from dangerous situations, so too does Paul willingly characterize his escape from Damascus as proof of his so-called ‘weakness’.⁶⁸ Moreover, the apostle’s description of his self-abasement converges with the military tactics of the Greek hero: both enter into ‘battle’ with nothing more than the scars and rags of a slave, enduring this abuse for the salvation of others.⁶⁹ By assuming this role of servility, however, Paul does not imagine that he has abdicated his authority as an apostle. Rather, by constructing himself as one who deliberately lowered his status in order to gain the support of the lowly, he reinforces his apostolic authority and uses the trials of his life as tangible proof of divine power acting in the world.⁷⁰

63. οὕτως ἡμᾶς λογιζέσθω ἄνθρωπος ὡς ὑπερέτας Χριστοῦ καὶ οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ (1 Cor. 4.1).

64. 1 Cor. 4.16; 11.1.

65. 1 Cor. 4.11-13; 2 Cor. 4.7-12; 11.23b-29; see also 2 Cor. 12.9; 13.4.

66. 1 Cor. 4.8.

67. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.22.54-55.

68. Fragment 15.9; 2 Cor. 12.32-33.

69. 1 Cor. 4.11; 2 Cor. 10.3-6; 11.28-29. In 1 Cor. 4.11, γυμνιτεύομεν can refer either to being lightly armed or ill-clad. For an extended treatment of the parallels between Antisthenes’ Odysseus and 2 Cor. 10.3-6, see Malherbe, ‘Antisthenes and Odysseus’, pp. 143-73.

70. 1 Cor. 1.27-29; 2.4-5. On the concept of the enslaved leader, see Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 86-116. See also Andrews, ‘Too Weak Not to Lead’, pp. 263-76; Paul Brooks Duff, ‘Apostolic Suffering and the Language of Processions in 2 Corinthians 4:7-10’, *BTB* 21 (1991), pp. 158-65 (163). Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly (‘A Girardian Interpretation of Paul: Rivalry, Mimesis and Victimage in the Corinthian Correspondence’, *Semeia* 33 [1985], pp. 65-81 [75]), who notes that in Stoic

Paul amplifies this argument in 1 Corinthians 9, where he draws upon images of freedom and slavery to challenge the elite Corinthians yet again to humble themselves for the sake of others.⁷¹ In the opening verses, Paul establishes his status as a free person and apostle, but as the argument progresses he states that he has renounced this freedom in order to fulfill his obligation as a slave manager of the household of Christ.⁷² For Greco-Roman ears, such an assertion was loaded with ambiguities, for one could assume that the apostle's status had either declined (i.e. from freedom to slavery) or improved (i.e. from a regular free person to a representative of Christ's household). For the Corinthians, the interpretive difficulties likely continued as they heard Paul proclaim that he was both free 'with respect to all' and that he made himself 'a slave to all'.⁷³ This chameleon-like self-presentation reaches its apex with the statement that he adapted his gospel message to meet the distinctive backgrounds of his audiences: he spoke to Jews as a Jew, to Gentiles as a Gentile, and to the weak as one who had become weak.⁷⁴ While such an assertion would have horrified those who valued rhetorical consistency and who accepted conventional standards of power, Paul does not suggest that he has degraded his authority. Instead, by becoming a 'slave to all' and 'all things to all people' he has redefined it based upon the concept of self-sacrifice.⁷⁵ For the apostle, the ultimate purpose of the argument is to spur the Corinthian elites to behave in like manner, to coordinate their words with their deeds and voluntarily give up their interests, humbling themselves instead for the sake of the other members of the community.⁷⁶

and Cynic literature, hardship catalogues were designed to 'demonstrate the divine power at work in the missionary by which he is preserved amidst the *peristaseis*'.

71. The following analysis draws heavily upon Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 50-135.

72. 1 Cor. 9.1-2, 12b, 15, 17, 18b; cf. 1 Cor. 4.1.

73. 1 Cor. 9.19.

74. 1 Cor. 9.20-22a.

75. τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα, ἵνα πάντως τινὰς σώσω (1 Cor. 9.22b).

76. Betz, 'Problem of Rhetoric and Theology', p. 145: 'Paul's letter...is designed to bring the Corinthians' praxis (ἔργον) up to the same standards as their "eloquence and knowledge".' See also Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), pp. 130-38; Stowers, 'Paul on the Use and Abuse of Reason', p. 258; Martin, *Slavery as*

While Paul may concede that he employs different styles in his ministry, he remains committed to the notion that the essential content of his message has never wavered. Admittedly, he acknowledges that his style may shift from meekness and humility to boldness, and perhaps with some disingenuousness, claims that he is ‘untrained in speech’.⁷⁷ Yet he insists that his ‘boasting’ has consistently occurred within a divine rubric⁷⁸ and that his knowledge remains steadfast.⁷⁹ Here, then, Paul contends, against his adversaries, that linguistic versatility has not negatively affected his character, for he cannot ‘do anything against the truth, but only for the truth’.⁸⁰ Once again, this argument draws upon the positive characteristics of rhetorical versatility stretching back to Antisthenes, whose Odysseus insists that, even if other claimants had challenged him for Achilles’ armor, he would not have altered the basic content of his argument.⁸¹

To be sure, Paul’s presentation of the *kerygma* and his missionary work does not correspond in every instance with the tradition of the wise sage.⁸² Yet an audience with even a basic knowledge of Hellenistic philosophical *topoi* would have detected the Cynic-like overtones in Paul’s argumentation.⁸³ The revaluation of ‘foolishness’ and ‘wisdom’ allowed Paul to offer a critique of conventional modes of

Salvation, pp. 120-23; For Paul’s interest in building community, see 1 Cor. 6.12; 8.1-13; 10.23-24; 14.12-19.

77. 2 Cor. 10.1; 11.6; cf. 1 Cor. 2.4. On the tendency to claim literary ignorance as a conventional strategy in Christian literature, see Margaret M. Mitchell, ‘Reading Rhetoric with Patristic Exegetes: John Chrysostom on Galatians’, in Adela Collins and Margaret M. Mitchell (eds.), *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays in Ancient Religion and Philosophy Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on His 70th Birthday* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2001), pp. 333-55 (344 n. 46).

78. 2 Cor. 10.13; 11.30-31.

79. εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, ἀλλ’ οὐ τῇ γνώσει (2 Cor. 11.6).

80. 2 Cor. 13.8; see also 2 Cor. 1.12-14; 4.2c; 6.8.

81. Odysseus to Ajax: ‘I would have used just the same argument (λόγος) against them [i.e. other claimants to Achilles’ armor]’ (15.11).

82. Stowers (‘Paul on the Use and Abuse of Reason’, pp. 260-61) has argued that Paul does not claim that his steadfast reason helped him survive his labors and suffering (1 Cor. 4.11-13), while Martin (*Slavery as Salvation*, p. 72) notes that Paul’s contention that he is an unwilling servant of Christ (1 Cor. 9.16-18) contravenes the common philosophical assumption that the wise man does not act under compulsion.

83. On the Hellenistic background, see Stowers, ‘Paul on the Use and Abuse of Reason’, pp. 272-74.

knowledge while claiming authority through divine knowledge, and his hardship list offered further evidence for his superior status as a person who, through the power of God, could survive suffering through endurance. Moreover, within the Cynic context of rhetorical variability, Paul's admission that he adapted his message only speaks to the form and not the content of the message, which, he claims, always remained true to its original purpose, the salvation of souls.

John Chrysostom's Polytopic Paul

As a theologian well trained in the techniques of Greco-Roman rhetoric, John Chrysostom was familiar with the literary strategies used to discredit the apostle.⁸⁴ As a result, he often went to great lengths to preserve the apostle's uniformity in thought and deed, often relying on delicate interpretations of Paul's rhetoric.⁸⁵ For example, in his first homily on Romans, Chrysostom has to confront Paul's statement regarding the promulgation of the gospel 'among all the Gentiles'.⁸⁶ 'What', John asks, 'did Paul preach then to all the nations?' Knowing that an affirmative response would be unsustainable, the bishop imagines two possible interpretations to ensure what he said 'was not false'. First, Chrysostom states that the verse refers broadly to the entire Christian mission throughout world, and second, that even if Paul was referring to himself, he is accurate because his teachings have spread to all parts of the world since his death.⁸⁷ In a similar way, Chrysostom confronts the potentially embarrassing problem that Paul did not follow

84. In *Laud. Paul.* 5.6 (SC 300.240), Chrysostom lists a number of supposed Pauline inconsistencies that likely acted as fodder for his detractors. On Chrysostom's rhetorical training, see Rudolph Brändle, *John Chrysostom: Bishop, Reformer, Martyr* (trans. John Cawte and Silke Trzcionka; Early Christian Studies, 8; Strathfield, Australia: St Paul's Publications, 2004), pp. 7-12; J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom—Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 5-8. On attacks against Paul's consistency, see Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002), p. 327 n. 611.

85. Margaret M. Mitchell, "'A Variable and Many-sorted Man": John Chrysostom's Treatment of Pauline Inconsistency', *JECS* 6 (1998), pp. 93-111 (98-104).

86. Rom. 1.5.

87. *Hom. Rom.* 1.3 (PG 60.398). See also *Sac.* 4.7 (SC 272.274); *Laud. Paul.* 1.5 (SC 300.120).

through on his plan to return to the Corinthians by making a distinction between what he wrote and what he intended to do. While his failure to return to Corinth was indeed at odds with what he had previously written, it nevertheless did not reveal an inconsistency in thought, for he had wished to return but the Holy Spirit prevented him.⁸⁸ John thus distinguishes between human and divine words: it is possible to alter the former, but the latter, which Paul never wavered from expounding, are ‘steadfast and unmovable’.⁸⁹ Consequently, Paul’s character cannot be faulted, for he simply recognized an obedience to a higher authority.

Defending Paul from attacks of inconsistency was not the only strategy Chrysostom used to highlight the apostle’s virtue. He also occasionally drew upon the positive features of polytropism found in the Cynic tradition. From this standpoint, Paul’s supposed inconsistencies, contradictions, and hypocrisy become proofs for the apostle’s resourcefulness, intellectual stability, and selflessness.⁹⁰ By drawing upon the longstanding tradition in defense of variability, Chrysostom gathers together additional weapons for deflecting any hostile portraits of Paul while also ensuring that the apostle’s status as a model for emulation with his congregation remained secure.

When describing Paul’s life, Chrysostom often enjoys applying the *topos* of the unlettered man whose message, because of its divine truth, overcomes the arguments of the world’s best-trained orators.⁹¹ Nevertheless, like these rhetoricians who recognized that persuasion is a matter of connecting with one’s audience, John often credits the apostle for his rhetorical grace: as he states at the beginning of his homilies on Romans, ‘Paul’s tongue shone above the sun, and he exceed all others in the eloquence of his teaching (τῶ τῆς διδασκαλίας λόγῳ)’.⁹² This excellence consequently shaped the ways in which he spoke to his various communities. For example, John notes that Paul cited Greek poetry at the Areopagus in order to express himself in a manner familiar to the Athenians, and that when he wrote to the Corinthians he employed

88. *Hom. 2 Cor.* 3.2-3 (PG 61.407-408). The verses at issue are 1 Cor. 16.5 and 2 Cor. 1.16.

89. *Hom. 2 Cor.* 3.4 (PG 61.410): ἀπαρασάλευτος καὶ βέβαιος ὁ λόγος μένει.

90. For other treatments of this issue, see Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, pp. 326-53; Mitchell, “Variable and Many-sorted Man”, pp. 104-11.

91. *Sac.* 4.6 (PG 48.669); *Laud. Paul.* 4.10 (SC 300.202-204); *Laud. Paul.* 4.13 (SC 300.210).

92. For parallel examples, see Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, pp. 278-82.

indirect criticism and irony to prevent that group from becoming further alienated and hostile.⁹³ John is thus quite comfortable with praising Paul for ‘vary[ing] his speech toward the need of the learners’ and using clever tactics to ‘facilitate the reception of what he ha[d] to say’.⁹⁴ This ‘variability and cleverness’ (τὸ ποικίλον...καὶ σοφόν) thus become signs of the apostle’s excellence, for John claims that his spiritual oratory leads people to God in a way that compulsion cannot.⁹⁵

Yet to reassure those who might find such inconsistencies a sign of intellectual weakness, John insists that Paul may have altered his rhetorical strategies, but that his character and intellectual stability, the foundations for his preaching, did not waver. Drawing on the apostle’s own defense of his speaking skills, Chrysostom argues that while Paul might have lacked the graceful oral presentation found among the best Greek orators, his knowledge of the gospel was firm:

For the deeds were contradictory (ἐναντία ἦν), but the mind and intention (ἡ δὲ γνώμη καὶ ἡ διάνοια) from which they arose were very much in agreement and united with one another (σφόδρα ἀκόλουθος καὶ ἑαυτῇ συνημμένη). He continually sought one thing—the salvation of those hearing his words and seeing his action. That is why at one time he exalts the Law and at another destroys it. For not only in what he did but also in what he said, he was variable and many-sorted (ποικίλος ἦν καὶ παντοδαπός). However, he did not change his mind, nor become someone else (οὐχὶ μεταβαλλόμενος τὴν γνώμην, οὐδὲ ἕτερος ἐξ ἑτέρου γινόμενος), but he remained the very man that he was, and made use of each of the courses of action I mentioned for the present need.⁹⁶

By underscoring this harmonious functioning of mind and personality, Chrysostom offers a defense of Paul’s authority and excellence: far from playing the hypocrite,⁹⁷ the apostle ‘did nothing frivolously, but did all in conjunction with a just and reasonable cause’ (μετὰ αἰτίας

93. *Hom. Act.* 38 (PG 60.269); *Hom. 1 Cor.* 13.1-2 (PG 61.107-108).

94. *Hom. Gal.* 1.1 (PG 61.612); *Comm. Gal.* 2.4 (PG 61.642). See also *Laud. Paul.* 5.10-11 (SC 300.249-50), where John commends Paul for speaking with boldness but also for having the wisdom to cease this rhetorical strategy at precisely the right time.

95. *Laud. Paul.* 5.8 (SC 300.245); *Paenit.* 2.5 (PG 49.290).

96. *Laud. Paul.* 5.6 (SC 300.241-42). See also *Laud. Paul.* 3.8 (SC 300.176).

97. John anticipates this accusation in *Comm. Gal.* 5.2 (PG 61.667) and 6.3 (PG 61.678).

δικαίας καὶ εὐλόγου).⁹⁸ Because his ‘contradictory actions’ (τὰ ἐναντία πράγματα) paralleled God’s own decision to reveal himself to humanity in different ways,⁹⁹ Paul’s intellect was not unstable but rather exhibited a ‘great wisdom’ (τοσαύτης σοφίας) that garnered ‘praises from all directions’ through his many conversions.¹⁰⁰ Through his success in bringing the gospel to the whole world, Paul achieved a unity with his audiences, a state that Antisthenes had argued was the sign of an excellent speaker.¹⁰¹

Discerning the needs of others was the skill that John thought Paul had mastered better than any other speaker. Drawing on the medical analogy found in Antisthenes’ commentary on *polytropos*, John states that, like a physician who uses different treatments to save his patients, so too does Paul recognize that he had to ‘vary his speech (ἐποίκιλε τὸν λόγον) according to the needs of his students’.¹⁰² In his letter to the Galatians, this meant that a combination of rebuke and conciliation was necessary: if the harsh words were like ‘a very deep cut’, the gentle words acted as an ‘ointment’.¹⁰³ Yet while both Paul and the physician may be called ‘master craftsmen’, the apostle’s *technē* is ultimately superior to that of the doctor, for while the latter’s remedies only treat the sickness of the body, the apostle’s varied speech attends to the different illnesses in human souls.¹⁰⁴ When he spoke to these ‘mutilated souls’ (τὴν ψυχὴν λελωβημένους), his words acted like a *pharmakon*, ‘setting straight all those who were lame and crippled in reasoning, and clothing the naked and shameless with the cloak of philosophy’.¹⁰⁵ Had he spoken consistently to all people at all times, John claims, Paul would not have earned the title of ‘teacher’, but would have acted like a

98. *Laud. Paul.* 5.10 (SC 300.248).

99. *Laud. Paul.* 5.5 (SC 300.238-40); *Laud. Paul.* 5.8 (SC 300.244).

100. *Laud. Paul.* 5.10 (SC 300.248).

101. On Paul’s skill in converting people to Christ, see *Sac.* 4.6 (PG 48.668-69).

102. *Comm. Gal.* 1.1 (PG 61.612).

103. *Comm. Gal.* 4.1 (PG 61.658-59).

104. *Laud. Paul.* 5.7 (SC 300.242-44); cf. *Comm. Gal.* 4.2 (PG 61.659), where John praises Paul for his ‘spiritual skill’ (σύνεσιν πνευματικῆν).

105. *Laud. Paul.* 1.11 (SC 300.128).

‘corrupter’ or ‘enemy’.¹⁰⁶ Approaching the ‘sick’ in ‘straightforwardly consistent measures’ would have dissolved his ‘efforts for salvation’.¹⁰⁷

This selfless aspect of Paul’s missionary activities receives further amplification through the bishop’s theology of ‘condescension’ (συγκατάβασις). According to Chrysostom, Paul’s concern for others is part of the divine economy in which both God and Christ accommodated themselves for the sake of humanity.¹⁰⁸ As an imitator of Christ, Chrysostom imagines that Paul is on this same journey, knowing that he must first descend into lowliness before rising to the spiritual heights.¹⁰⁹ This descent involves a deliberate modification of his presentations and a lowering of his own status for the sake of connecting with the intellectual and spiritual capabilities of his audience. Thus, for example, Chrysostom thinks that Paul refrains from imparting to the Hebrews the higher mysteries surrounding Jesus because of their infantile state of mind.¹¹⁰ Likewise, he does not attack specific members of the Corinthians, but instead offers himself as one who can be judged by them.¹¹¹ Such an approach to missionary work culminates in Paul’s

106. *Comm. Gal.* 1.1 (PG 61.611): οὐ διδασκάλου, ἀλλὰ λυμεῶνος...καὶ πολεμίου.

107. *Laud. Paul.* 5.7 (SC 300.244): κὰν ἐξ εὐθείας αὐτοῖς προσίης, πάντα οἰχήσεται τὰ τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν.

108. See, for instance, *Hom. 1 Cor.* 3.2 (PG 61.24-25), which states that ‘the loving-kindness of God toward humanity is shown by the creation of the world, and, however, in nothing so much as by the condescension (τῆς συγκαταβάσεως) through the cross’; and *Hom. Rom.* 15.3 (PG 60.543), where Jesus’ intercession for humanity involves ‘using a way of speaking better suited for humanity (ἄνθρωπινώτερον) and more condescending (συγκαταβατικώτερον)’. For an overview of Chrysostom’s use of *sunkatabasis*, see Rudolf Brändle, ‘ΣΥΓΚΑΤΑΒΑΣΙΣ als hermeneutisches und ethisches Prinzip in der Paulusauslegung des Johannes Chrysostomus’, in *Stimuli: Exegese und Ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum: Festschrift für Ernst Dassmann* (ed. Georg Schöllgen and Clemens Scholten; Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, 23; Münster: Aschendorff, 1996), pp. 297-307.

109. *Hom. Heb.* 14.1 (PG 63.109).

110. *Hom. Heb.* 8.2 (PG 63.70; on Heb. 5.11). See also *Hom. Rom. Arg.* 2 (PG 60.393), where Paul addresses the same subject to the Romans and Colossians in a different manner because of their different levels of spiritual maturity.

111. *Hom. 1 Cor.* 12.1 (PG 61.96): ‘this was not hypocrisy, but condescension (συγκαταβάσις) and tact (οἰκονομία).’ See also *Comm. Gal.* 2.5 (PG 61.641), where John states that Paul spoke to the Galatians ‘not out of anger’ (οὐ μάχης) but with ‘tact’ (οἰκονομίας).

desire to become ‘all things to all people’. According to Chrysostom, Paul’s ‘wise arrangement’ (οἰκονομία) of thought spurred him to take this approach: it was ‘not because his mind changed...but because his love condescended’.¹¹² That the apostle kept the highest law, that of Christ, and still willingly descended to the level of Jews, Gentiles, and the weak is for John proof of his humility (ταπεινοφροσύνην), wisdom (σύνεσις) and excellence of perfection (ἀκριβείας ὑπεροχήν).¹¹³

Suffering and labor marked the apostle’s descent, and these traits testify to the apostle’s virtue. Consequently, Paul’s trials are not evidence of weakness, but confirmations of his gospel: they are tangible ‘proof of his bravery’.¹¹⁴ Like the Cynic who actively sought out hardships, Paul rejected conventional forms of honor and material possessions, and instead ‘used to pursue the discredit and insult suffered for the gospel’, seeking death, poverty, and sufferings.¹¹⁵ Far from revealing his shame, however, John claims that ‘The apparent weakness of Paul’s nature is itself the greatest proof of his virtue’, for ‘he considered only one thing to be worthy of shame: overlooking anything necessary for salvation’.¹¹⁶ Consequently, apparent displays of cowardice, such as his escape from Damascus, become instead judicious decisions guided by a divine plan.¹¹⁷ In like manner, John asserts that the apostle’s willingness to enter into battle on one occasion and retreat on another are signs of both his martial and intellectual valor: ‘when you see him fleeing dangers, marvel the same as when you see him rushing forward to meet them. For just as the latter is proof of bravery (ἀνδρείας), the former is of wisdom (σοφίας).’¹¹⁸

112. *Hom. 1 Cor. 22.3* (PG 61.184): οὐ τῆς γνώμης αὐτῷ μεταβαλλομένης...ἀλλὰ τῆς ἀγάπης συγκαταβαίνουσης.

113. *Hom. 1 Cor. 22.3* (PG 61.185), where John culminates his praise of Paul by remarking on the ‘exceeding greatness of his condescension’ (συγκαταβάσεως ὑπερβολήν). See also *Hom. 1 Cor. 23.1* (PG 61.187).

114. *Comm. Gal. 6.4* (PG 61.680): τῆς ἀνδραγαθίας...τὴν ἀπόδειξις.

115. *Laud. Paul. 2.3* (SC 300.146); *Laud. Paul. 7.1-2* (SC 300.294). See also *Laud. Paul. 2.3* (SC 300.148).

116. *Laud. Paul. 6.2* (SC 300.264); *Laud. Paul. 3.8* (SC 300.176). See also *Laud. Paul. 4.10* (SC 300.202): ‘he led the entire human race...singly to the truth’.

117. *Laud. Paul. 5.3* (SC 300.234-36).

118. *Laud. Paul. 5.8* (SC 300.244-46). On the willingness of the Cynic to search for suffering, see Downing, *Cynics, Paul, and the Pauline Churches*, pp. 144-50. On Antisthenes’ argument that retreating from battle is occasionally necessary, see fragment 15.9.

If the dissemination of the gospel is the responsibility that God gives Paul, it is a plan that unfolds through the metaphor of warfare. Chrysostom imagines that Paul enters into his battle much like Odysseus and the Cynics, through a descent into abject poverty and without traditional weaponry. As a 'poor, naked, and solitary man who did not even have a javelin in his hand or a garment to wear',¹¹⁹ Chrysostom exclaims that the apostle achieved successes that even emperors with all of their military might could not match: indeed, Chrysostom rejoices in the fact that he overran 'countless' cities 'throughout the world' while the imperial armies could not even 'conquer the barbarians'.¹²⁰ The ensuing victories enabled him to ascend from his lowliness, not by himself, but with 'the whole world', bringing 'many others' crowns of glory.¹²¹ While these efforts are far superior to Odysseus's rescue of the Greeks, Chrysostom is content to compare him with biblical figures. Indeed, he asserts that the apostle's virtuous activity far surpassed that of Noah and Abraham, for while they had only focused on helping a few, Paul 'snatched away...the whole world (τὴν οἰκουμένην πᾶσαν)' from the forces of evil, 'enduring countless dangers (ὑπομένων κινδύνους) every single day, and acquiring a great measure of security for others by his own deaths'.¹²²

In the tradition of the polytropic hero, Chrysostom discovers a rhetorically savvy means of defending the apostle's status and authority from his detractors. Equally important, though, is the way in which he employs the idea of polytropism to present Paul as a model of imitation for the Antiochean Christians. In order to accomplish this task, Chrysostom temporarily moderates his hyperbolic rhetoric¹²³ in order to underscore the apostle's mortal nature: although Paul was certainly a great

119. πτωχός τις γυμνός καὶ μόνος, καὶ μηδὲ ἀκόντιον μεταχειρίζων, μηδὲ ἰμάτιον ἔχων (*Laud. Paul.* 4.13 (SC 300.212). See also *Laud. Paul.* 4.13 (SC 300.210).

120. *Laud. Paul.* 4.13 (SC 300.212); *Laud. Paul.* 4.14 (SC 300.212).

121. *Laud. Paul.* 7.8 (SC 300.310). See also *Laud. Paul.* 3.6 (SC 300.172); *Hom. 1 Cor.* 22.3 (PG 61.185).

122. *Laud. Paul.* 1.5-6 (SC 300.118-22). See also *Laud. Paul.* 5.8 (SC 300.246): 'he was doing all these things to administer the salvation of the many' (τὴν γὰρ τῶν πολλῶν οἰκονομῶν σωτηρίαν, ταῦτα ἔπραττε).

123. For instance, *Sac.* 4.6 (PG 48.669): 'shall we then any more compare ourselves with this saint, after such great grace was imparted to him from above, after so great virtue was manifested in himself? What could be more presumptuous?'

man, one of the best in history, he was, Chrysostom reminds his audience, still human.¹²⁴ The major difference between him and others, however, lay solely in the fact that he had completely conformed his 'will' (προθυμία) to the grace God bestowed upon him.¹²⁵ For those who might therefore complain about the frailties of their bodies, poverty, lack of education, or suffering, Chrysostom retorts that Paul's experiences on all of these counts were much more acute, and they did not harm him at all. In fact, he managed to achieve victory over them all through the strength of his soul and will.¹²⁶ Consequently, he admonishes his congregation not to seek excuses for their shortcomings and the injustices they suffer, but to look upon the apostle as one who had perfected his soul and mind, and to seek to do likewise. If they are 'zealous for virtue', as Chrysostom exhorts them to be, then, the bishop confidently asserts that 'there is nothing to hinder' them 'from becoming like Paul'.¹²⁷ By engaging in a zealous emulation of the apostle's manner of living, Chrysostom imagines that his congregation should expect that at death they too might enjoy God's grace and put on the 'undefiled crowns' of salvation.¹²⁸

Conclusion

At the end of his speech against Ajax, Odysseus imagines a time in the future when a poetic genius declaiming on the subject of *aretē* will praise him for his 'endurance and wise counsel and resourcefulness', as a 'sacker of cities' who was solely responsible for the capture of Troy.¹²⁹ Later Cynics saw to it that this wish did not go unfulfilled as they appropriated the hero as a paradigm for the quick-witted, much-suffering person of righteousness who endures the abuses of the world in order to save others. The resiliency of this image was further ensured through the use of these *topoi* in the literature of early Christianity,

124. For instance, *Laud. Paul.* 4.21 (SC 300.228); 5.1 (SC 300.230-32); 6.3 (SC 300.266).

125. *Laud. Paul.* 5.3 (SC 300.234); 5.4 (SC 300.236).

126. *Laud. Paul.* 5.1 (SC 300.230-32).

127. *Laud. Paul.* 5.2 (SC 300.232).

128. See *Laud. Paul.* 1.16 (SC 300.140); 2.10 (SC 300.158-60); 3.10 (SC 300.178-80); 4.21 (SC 300.228); 5.17 (SC 300.258); 6.14 (SC 300.290); 7.13 (SC 300.320).

129. ἔμὲ μὲν ποιήσει πολύτλαντα καὶ πολύμητιν καὶ πολυμήχανον καὶ πτολίπορθον καὶ μόνον τὴν Τροίαν ἔλόντα (15.14).

particularly the letters of Paul. The Odyssean Paul defends his authority by relying upon his skillful speech and by demonstrating his courageous virtue by his willingness to enter into battle against the hostile forces of the world, risking dangers and enduring hardships at every turn in order to proclaim the gospel. The writings of John Chrysostom enriched this portrait of the crafty, long-suffering apostle. For John, the apostle was a man whose 'love for humanity' and concern for 'the advantage of the many' trained him to say only what each situation required, 'the very things which would be necessary for the present need'.¹³⁰ Because he embodied 'the proper measure of all things', Paul represents for John the pinnacle of Christian virtue and the figure that his congregation should therefore strive to emulate in order to attain salvation.¹³¹ With these assertions, Chrysostom completes his transformation of the polytopic Odysseus from Homer's itinerant traveler into a Christian teacher whose words and deeds become a template for his students to enter into the fullness of the Christian life.¹³²

130. *Laud. Paul.* 5.14 (SC 300.256).

131. *Laud. Paul.* 5.16 (SC 300.256).

132. See *Sac.* 4.8 (PG 48.671): 'For this is the perfection of teaching, when the teachers both by what they do and by what they say as well (ὅταν καὶ δι' ὧν πράττουσι, καὶ δι' ὧν λέγουσι), bring their disciples to that blessed state of life which Christ appointed for them.'