New Testament exegetes researching the literary level of Saint Paul and the rhetorical features found in his letters cannot help but to ponder the meaning and significance of I Cor. 2:1-5, for the apostle’s disavowal of ‘persuasive words of wisdom’ in verse four seems to have prima facie relevance for their work. The techniques which Paul was unwilling to employ in his preaching and describes as ‘persuasive words of wisdom’ appear to have some resemblance to Graeco-Roman rhetoric. Is Paul inconsistent in his word and action to have refused persuasive speech here, but to use rhetorical devices and strategies elsewhere in his letters, especially in I and II Corinthians? Or is he, in this very passage, actually using a common rhetorical strategy of disarming his audience/reader (e.g. Dio Or. 12.15f; 42.2f)?

Research into the opening sections of I Corinthians has been abundant. Much of this work has focused on the Corinthian Chris-
tian's schismatic tendencies (1:12f), on Paul's *theologia crucis* (1:17f), on the sociological constitution of the Corinthian church (1:26f), on the meaning of *σοφία*, and on the literary genre of the


3 The question of whether or not the Corinthian church was divided has been treated by many scholars, the most important of whom are Barrett, *Christianity at Corinth*; Munck, "The Church Without Factions"; and Dahl, "Paul and the Church at Corinth".


5 I Cor. 1:26f has had a long history of interpretation. Celsus, thought that the Christian church deliberately excluded educated people; they were "the foolish, dishonourable and stupid, and [consisted of] only slaves, women and little children" Origen *C. Cels. 3.44*. Adolf Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, through his study of the language of the papyri and ostraca, suggested that the Christians of the first-century belonged to the lower classes (cited in Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], p. 51).
