

**PAUL AND THE RHETORIC OF REVERSAL:
KERYGMATIC RHETORIC IN THE
ARRANGEMENT OF 1 CORINTHIANS**

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Abstract

I argue that 1 Corinthians is a unified composition that exhibits *kerygmatic rhetoric*. That is, Jewish and Greco-Roman resources are brought into the service of an overall arrangement that is creatively suggested by Paul's *kerygma* of the Messiah who died, rose, and awaits cosmic manifestation. In particular, I demonstrate that the Jewish motif of dual reversal, whereby *boastful rulers* are destined for destruction while *righteous sufferers* are destined for vindication, serves as an influential conceptual motif in the formulation of Christian *kerygma*, and as such may be seen as an interpretative framework and rhetorical resource available to Paul.

In 1 Corinthians 1–4 Paul evaluates struggles over leadership in the Corinthian congregation as an implicit expression of human autonomy, and responds by summoning the Corinthians to identify with Christ, by forgoing the role of the *boastful ruler* and adopting the role of the *cruciform sufferer*. This identification with the cruciform Christ consequently gives shape to Paul's ethical instruction in 1 Corinthians 5–14, a section that draws on Jewish and Greco-Roman resources, while exhibiting a pattern of Pauline ethical argumentation expressive of Paul's *kerygma* of identification with the embodied Christ. In the final chapter of the main body of the letter (1 Corinthians 15), Paul utilises the Corinthian denial of "the resurrection of the dead" as the ultimate paradigm of their refusal to adopt a cruciform orientation, and urges that *the dead in Christ* will be raised to immortal glory, while present powers will be brought to nothing.

I suggest that this attention to the creative influence of Paul's *kerygma* on the form of his argumentation represents an important addition to the tools of the Pauline rhetorical analyst. Such an approach results in an historically attentive and exegetically persuasive account of the letter's arrangement that also finds great harmony with the perspective of the fourth century preacher John Chrysostom.

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Formatting, Translation, and Abbreviations

The formatting of footnotes and bibliographical entries conforms to SBL guidelines. For other issues of formatting I have attempted to be internally consistent throughout the dissertation. Page set-up is in accordance with the University of Nottingham guidelines.

All translations of ancient and modern literature are my own unless otherwise noted. At times I have left French, German, Greek, and Hebrew untranslated if it has seemed that the sense is adequately or more clearly communicated in this way. Biblical Hebrew and Greek quotations and translations are from the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, the *Stuttgart Septuaginta*, and the *Nestle Aland 27*.

Generally my references to ancient literature are written in full. However, references to patristic works in the *Patrologia Graeca* edition are abbreviated as PG, followed by the appropriate reference number. Abbreviations for journals and book series are as follows:

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| ANTC | Abingdon New Testament Commenaries |
| AJT | <i>American Journal of Theology</i> |
| AnB | Analecta Biblica |
| AYB | Anchor Yale Bible |
| AGAJU | Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums |
| ANRW | Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt |
| BECNT | Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament |
| <i>Bib</i> | <i>Biblica</i> |
| <i>BR</i> | <i>Biblical Research</i> |
| <i>TBW</i> | <i>Biblical World</i> |
| <i>BSac</i> | <i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i> |
| BNTC | Black's New Testament Commentaries |
| <i>BBR</i> | <i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i> |
| <i>CBQ</i> | <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> |
| <i>CTR</i> | <i>Chinese Theological Review</i> |
| CNT | Commentaire du Nouveau Testament |
| CEJL | Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature |
| ConB | Coniectanea Biblica |
| <i>CrTR</i> | <i>Criswell Theological Review</i> |
| <i>CBR</i> | <i>Currents in Biblical Research</i> |
| <i>CTM</i> | <i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i> |
| <i>DJ</i> | <i>Direction Journal</i> |
| <i>DisS</i> | <i>Discourse Studies</i> |
| DCCE | Doctrine Commission of the Church of England |
| ECF | The Early Church Fathers |
| <i>ETRel</i> | <i>Études Théologiques et Religieuses</i> |
| <i>EQ</i> | <i>Evangelical Quarterly</i> |
| EKKNT | Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament |
| <i>ExAu</i> | <i>Ex Auditu</i> |

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| <i>ExpT</i> | <i>Expository Times</i> |
| <i>GTJ</i> | <i>Grace Theological Journal</i> |
| <i>GAP</i> | Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha |
| <i>GBS</i> | Guides to Biblical Scholarship |
| <i>HNT</i> | Handbuch zum Neuen Testament |
| <i>HTR</i> | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i> |
| <i>HTS</i> | <i>Harvard Theological Studies</i> |
| <i>Hermen</i> | <i>Hermeneia</i> |
| <i>HvTSt</i> | <i>Hervormde Teologiese Studies</i> |
| <i>Hesp</i> | <i>Hesperia</i> |
| <i>HTA</i> | Historisch Theologische Auslegung |
| <i>ICC</i> | International Critical Commentary Series |
| <i>Interp</i> | Interpretation |
| <i>ISBE</i> | International Standard Bible Encyclopedia |
| <i>JSJ</i> | <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i> |
| <i>JSNT</i> | <i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> |
| <i>JSOT</i> | <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> |
| <i>JBR</i> | <i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i> |
| <i>JBL</i> | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> |
| <i>JCC</i> | <i>Journal of Cognition and Culture</i> |
| <i>JES</i> | <i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i> |
| <i>JAAR</i> | <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> |
| <i>JETS</i> | <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i> |
| <i>JTS</i> | <i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> |
| <i>KEKNT</i> | Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament |
| <i>LNTS</i> | Library of New Testament Studies |
| <i>LTE</i> | Library of Theological Ethics |
| <i>LCL</i> | Loeb Classical Library |
| <i>Neot</i> | <i>Neotestamentica</i> |
| <i>NCBC</i> | New Cambridge Bible Commentary |
| <i>NGC</i> | New German Critique |
| <i>NICNT</i> | New International Commentary on the New Testament |
| <i>NIGTC</i> | New International Greek Testament Commentary |
| <i>NTS</i> | <i>New Testament Studies</i> |
| <i>NovT</i> | <i>Novum Testamentum</i> |
| <i>ÖTKNT</i> | Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament |
| <i>PNTC</i> | Pillar New Testament Commentary |
| <i>RNT</i> | Reading the New Testament |
| <i>RTR</i> | <i>Reformed Theological Review</i> |
| <i>RHPR</i> | <i>Revue D'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses</i> |
| <i>RSQ</i> | <i>Rhetorical Society Quarterly</i> |
| <i>SacP</i> | <i>Sacra Pagina</i> |
| <i>SJT</i> | <i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i> |
| <i>SBL</i> | Society of Biblical Literature |
| <i>SBJT</i> | <i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i> |
| <i>Spring</i> | <i>Springfielder</i> |
| <i>SVTP</i> | Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha |
| <i>SP</i> | <i>Studia Patristica</i> |
| <i>SBT</i> | Studies in Biblical Theology |
| <i>Tek</i> | <i>Tekmiria</i> |
| <i>TGST</i> | Tesi Gregoriana Serie Teologia |
| <i>Them</i> | <i>Themelios</i> |
| <i>TKNT</i> | Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament |
| <i>THNTC</i> | Two Horizons New Testament Commentary |
| <i>TB</i> | <i>Tyndale Bulletin</i> |
| <i>TNTC</i> | Tyndale New Testament Commentaries |
| <i>WUNT</i> | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament |
| <i>WW</i> | <i>Word and World</i> |
| <i>WBC</i> | Word Biblical Commentary |
| <i>ZNW</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> |

Introduction

The unity, arrangement, and central theme of 1 Corinthians are not viewed with consensus in New Testament scholarship. In this dissertation I aim to present a coherent and satisfying account of the arrangement of the letter. In doing so I will be exhibiting an approach to the study of Pauline rhetoric that acknowledges Paul's ease with Greco-Roman communicative devices and Jewish conceptual motifs, yet views these resources as subservient to the decisive influence of Paul's *kerygma* on epistolary arrangement and ethical formulation. I suggest that this results in an analysis that does better justice both to the historical Paul and to the flow of the letter (particularly the placement of the resurrection discussion) than the application of a generic classical rhetorical macro-structure.

My contention is that the varied issues of 1 Corinthians, which can be elucidated fruitfully by socio-historical studies, have been pastorally evaluated by Paul as collectively exhibiting the theologically presumptuous pursuit of *human autonomy*. Paul counters this perceived situation by allowing the pattern of his *kerygma* to give overall shape to his epistolary response. The Corinthians are summoned to find their identity and status in Christ, who remains especially known in the shame of the cross until the day that he will finally be revealed in resurrected glory. Thus the main body of the letter (1:10–15:58) proceeds from *cross* to *resurrection*. This overall *kerygmatic* movement draws on the Jewish conceptual motif of dual reversal, in which those who are boastful rulers in the present are destined for destruction, while those who are righteous sufferers in the present are destined for divinely-granted vindication.

My argument proceeds in five chapters:

In **chapter 1** I present *the rhetoric of reversal*. I argue that *divinely accomplished dual reversal* was an important cultural conceptualisation of early Judaism, and was significant

in early Christian interpretation of Jesus. I suggest that this was a viable rhetorical resource for Paul in the construction of 1 Corinthians. Paul is summoning those who are effectively playing the role of *the boastful ruler* (who will be destroyed) to rather take the role of the *cruciform sufferer* (who will be vindicated).

In **chapter 2** I step back to situate my interpretation within recent scholarship on the letter. I investigate arguments against the compositional unity of the letter and survey different models of the letter's coherence. I go on to consider the exegetical tensions that have provoked such a variety of perspectives on the letter's unity and coherence.

In **chapter 3** I focus on 1 Corinthians 1–4. I consider the Corinthian “problems” introduced in this section, and find John Chrysostom to be a valuable model in giving consideration both to the *social and historical background* of the issues as well as *Paul's pastoral evaluation* of those issues. In terms of background, I concur with Chrysostom that the problems arise from a situation in which godly leaders were being undermined and pushed aside as a result of the believers' preference for polished orators. In terms of pastoral evaluation, I agree with Chrysostom that this situation represents *boastful, present-obsessed human autonomy*, as the believers attach their status to humans rather than to Christ. This pastorally conceived problem, I suggest, is precisely the sort of issue penetratingly addressed by the motif of reversal in other examples of Jewish/Christian literature.

In **chapter 4** I examine 1 Corinthians 5–14 and suggest that the topics of these chapters follow an observable pattern of Pauline ethics. I compare ethical sections within the Pauline Corpus and find that they generally proceed from a corrective to passionate desire for bodily taboos (especially sexual immorality, greed and impurity) to a commendation of inter-personal service and love within the body of Christ. I investigate possible backgrounds to this progression of issues, and suggest that it echoes Jewish encapsulations of the themes of the Torah in the Hellenistic-Roman period. For Paul, however, this

general progression of issues implicitly continues the christocentric corrective of chapters 1–4, as Paul insists that the Corinthians identify “bodily” with the cruciform Christ.

In **chapter 5** I consider the rhetorical function and historical background of the resurrection discussion in 1 Corinthians 15. In terms of rhetorical function I argue that the resurrection-denial is presented as the epitome of Corinthian refusal to accept the significance of *the dead* (and thus the cruciform). In terms of historical background I suggest that the situation may be illuminated by the culturally recognisable themes of *disregard for the body* and *disregard for the dead*. Chapter 15 brings the main body of the letter to a rhetorical crescendo as Paul insists that it is *the dead* in Christ who will receive resurrected vindication from God.

Of course, there have been others who have perceived a movement from *cross* to *resurrection* in 1 Corinthians (as I will note in chapter 2). Indeed, my argument would be suspect if such an arrangement had not been noticed before. It has not yet, however, been rigorously demonstrated that the *kerygmatic* pattern of dual reversal can be viewed as a credible rhetorical resource for Paul as a first century writer. This study seeks to demonstrate that this is in fact the case; and furthermore, that such a reading of the letter carries substantial explanatory power for all parts of the letter.

Chapter 1

The Rhetoric of Reversal

1. The Concept of Reversal as a Rhetorical Resource

The question of the arrangement of 1 Corinthians necessarily raises the question of *rhetorical resources*. What resources might Paul reasonably have drawn upon in forming the macro-structure of the letter? This need not entail the search for a particular “form” that rigidly controls the arrangement and content of the letter. It may more broadly entail the exploration of models, motifs, and *concepts* that were at Paul’s disposal, and which appear to have been adopted or adapted in the letter.

Peter Lampe has recently urged that the spectrum of “the rhetorical landscape of antiquity” must be understood in more radical terms than has traditionally been the case in the study of Paul’s rhetoric:

When comparing ancient rhetoric with early Christian literature, we need to have in mind not only the pagan Greco-Roman culture, but also the *Jewish* rhetorical (and epistolary) practice, both in its Hellenistically influenced and its apocalyptic specifications.... [W]e mainly need to observe the Jewish rhetorical and epistolary *praxis*, trying to systematize it and then compare it with the New Testament.... There might still be a lot to discover.¹

In the same volume, Duane F. Watson issues further challenges to those who would study the rhetoric of Paul’s epistles:

¹ Peter Lampe, “Rhetorical Analysis of Pauline Texts – Quo Vadit? Methodological Reflections,” in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 3-21; 19; emphasis original. This imbalance has been recognised for some time. In 1994, Yeo commented, “In rhetorical study of the NT, the traditional, predominant approach is to read the NT in the light of the Greco-Roman tradition. So far, few have employed the Jewish rhetorical tradition to study the NT. That shortcoming may be attributed to the following two conditions: (a) The absence of Jewish rhetorical handbooks; and (b) the tendency to see the disjunction or opposition between Hellenism and Hebraism, or generally between Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures”. Khiok-Khng Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10: A Formal Analysis with Preliminary Suggestions for a Chinese, Cross-Cultural Hermeneutic* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 64.

Studies of Romans illustrate that linking a Pauline epistle to a particular rhetorical species [i.e. forensic, deliberative, or epideictic] is unwise and looking toward a *Christian rhetoric* may [be] a better solution.²

[M]ore study is needed, for it is in the intersection of Jewish and Greco-Roman rhetoric that we may discover the unique contributions of Paul to the style of his epistles.³

It is my contention that although Paul employs certain Greco-Roman oratorical and literary devices, the overall movement of the letter is not sufficiently explained by the conventions of Greco-Roman speech or letter composition.⁴ Rather, I propose that the macro-structure of the letter evidences what might be called “*kerygmatic rhetoric*”. The movement of the letter body from “cross” to “resurrection” exemplifies the early Christian interest in identifying believers with the narrative of Christ’s passion, which was itself interpreted with the Jewish *conceptual motif* of *divine reversal*.⁵

2. Reversal as Jewish Motif

It is important to establish that the concept of divinely arranged dual reversal was a pervasive motif in early Jewish liturgy, literature, and historical interpretation.

² Duane F. Watson, “The Three Species of Rhetoric and the Study of the Pauline Epistles,” in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 25-47; 47; emphasis mine.

³ Duane F. Watson, “The Role of Style in Pauline Epistles: From Ornamentation to Argumentative Strategies,” in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 119-139; 122.

⁴ I address this in some detail in chapter 2.

⁵ It is worth pointing out here that I view “the rhetoric of reversal” as a subset of “*kerygmatic rhetoric*”. That is, there may be various ways in which the *kerygma* resources the formulation and arrangement of early Christian communication; but 1 Corinthians in particular evidences a *kerygmatic rhetoric* of dual reversal.

The Condemned Boaster and the Vindicated Sufferer: *Liturgical Figures*

Recital and Participation

G. Ernest Wright maintains that:

the Bible relates a certain history in a confessional manner, because the recounting of this history is the central religious act of the worshipping community. Hence it is here maintained that Biblical theology is *the confessional recital of the redemptive acts of God* in a particular history, because history is the chief medium of revelation.⁶

Successive generations of God's people who share in reciting the songs and stories of what God has done in the past are able to enter into those narratives and see themselves as their heirs, as is expressed by Anthony C. Thiselton:

These communities, even if separated in time or place, perceive themselves as taking their stand and as staking their identity through *sharing in the same narrative*, and through the recital and retelling of the same founding events.⁷

This is what occurs when believing communities recite the Psalms. Jutta Leonhardt has shown that, according to Philo, recitation of biblical hymns and psalms was an integral part of Jewish worship. Leonhardt reasons that Philo's description of psalmic antiphonal singing (in particular, of Exodus 15) is plausible as first century liturgical practice, given supplementary evidence from Qumran and rabbinic synagogal liturgy.⁸

⁶ G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (London: SCM, 1952), 13; emphasis original.

⁷ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 43; emphasis original. See also Anthony C. Thiselton, "Knowledge, Myth and Corporate Memory," in *Believing in the Church: The Corporate Nature of Faith* (DCCE; London: SPCK, 1981), 45-78.

⁸ Jutta Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 165.

From the 1950s with Eduard Schweizer,⁹ it has been increasingly noted that the development of early Christology occurred in a setting in which the canonical Psalms played an important community-defining role.¹⁰ It is worth considering, then, the ways in which the dual motif of the *condemned boaster* and the *vindicated sufferer* functioned as *liturgical figures*.

Psalms

In Psalms the figures of the boastful enemy and the righteous sufferer find hyperbolic liturgical expression.¹¹ So the enemies of the king – the “rulers” – are variously pictured as “devious”, “evildoers”, “arrogant”, “haughty”, “boastful”, and merely *human* (e.g.

Psalms 9:20-21, Greek: ἀνθρωποί εἰσιν). In Psalm 2 we read:

Psalm 2:2

The kings of the earth stand in resistance, and the rulers conspire together against the LORD and against his anointed.

Correspondingly, the righteous sufferer is presented as exemplary of innocent, dependent trust. The sufferer is called “meek”, “righteous”, “faithful”. In the first century BCE Psalms of Solomon, we read:

Psalms of Solomon 1:2

⁹ Eduard Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship* (SBT 28; London: SCM, 1960); trans. of *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung bei Jesus und seinen Nachfolgern* (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1955).

¹⁰ Richard B. Hays comments “The interpretation of Jesus’ death and resurrection, as far back as we can trace it, grows organically out of the matrix of the psalms of the Righteous Sufferer. These psalms may be the ‘Scripture’ to which the confessional formula of 1 Cor 15:3-4 refers”. Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 118.

¹¹ Indeed, Yehoshua Gitay points out that the Psalter is introduced and summarised in Psalm 1 with a provocative exploration of the “habitual theme of the reward of the righteous versus the fate of the wicked”. Yehoshua Gitay, “Psalm 1 and the Rhetoric of Religious Argumentation,” in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. L.J. de Regt, J. de Waard, and J.P. Fokkelmann; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1996), 232-240; 232.

The shouts of war were heard in front of me. [The Lord] will hear me because I am filled with righteousness!

Thus there appears in the lyrics of Jewish worship¹² the boastful *human* enemy, juxtaposed with the righteous sufferer who appeals to the *Lord* for help. And, as hinted in the citation above, these figures can usually expect some sort of *reversal*. The boastful enemy, being merely human, eventually receives mortal condemnation, while the righteous sufferer, being dependent on the Lord, receives or looks forward to vindication.

The Qumran community similarly utilise this sort of rhetoric in their own psalms, thanking God for reversal that has already been achieved, and expecting God to act as the great Reverser. The following psalm exhibits the sectarian self-understanding of the Qumran community. They are the righteous few, opposed by evildoers in the last times. They look to God as the one who brings down the evildoers and vindicates the righteous:¹³

1QH^a Column 2, Lines 20-30:

I thank you Lord, for you have placed my life among the living
And you have protected me from all the traps of the pit.
For the violent have sought my life,
While I have held onto your covenant.

But these people are a council of wickedness and an assembly of Belial.
They did not know that my standing comes from you,
And that, in your mercy, you saved my life –

¹² Although note Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr's estimation of the Psalms of Solomon: "Wir haben keine Sammlung von Kultgesängen der Gemeinde, sondern ein Erbauungsbuch vor uns". Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Gesetz und Paränese: Katechismusartige Weisungsreihen in der frühjüdischen Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 223.

¹³ Eileen Schuller discusses a similar thanksgiving psalm from Qumran in which it is emphasised that God reveals mysteries to his poor people, and casts down the haughty. Schuller notes the importance of this motif of reversal in liturgy: "The reversal motif of casting down and raising up is well attested in hymns; see 2 Sam 2:6-8; Ps 145:14; Sir 10:14; 11:5-6; Luke 1:52; 1QM xiv 11,15 (=4Q491 8-10 i 8,12). Eileen Schuller, "A Hymn from a Cave Four Hodayot Manuscript: 4Q427 7 i + ii," *JBL* 112/4 (1993): 605-628; 616.

For my steps come from you.

And these people have fought against my life because of you,
So that you might be glorified in the judgement of the ungodly,
And, in me, you might be shown to be mighty, before the children of men.
For my standing is in your mercy.

And as for me, I said, "Mighty men have encamped against me,
They have surrounded me with all their weapons of war.
And arrows have broken without healing,
And the flaming spear has consumed the trees.

And like the roar of many waters is the commotion of their voice;
A rainstorm that destroys many.
Crushing through the cosmos, they bring about great wickedness
With the dashing of the waves".

And as for me, when my heart had melted like water,
You strengthened my life in your covenant.
But as for these people, the net that they spread for me will capture their own
feet,
And they have fallen into the traps that they set for me.
But my feet stand in uprightness. In the assemblies I will bless your name.

This reversal in the canonical Psalms and other liturgical literature is not always clear-cut,¹⁴ but is a prominent pattern nonetheless, informing the worldview of those who share in its recitation. The boastful enemy, being merely human, eventually receives mortal

¹⁴ Indeed, sometimes there is no evident reversal, or a movement from praise to lament. See Federico G. Villanueva, *The 'Uncertainty of a Hearing': A Study of the Sudden Change of Mood in the Psalms of Lament* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

condemnation, while the righteous sufferer, being dependent on the Lord, looks forward to vindication, sometimes from the grip of death itself.

The Condemned Boaster and the Vindicated Sufferer: *Literary Figures*

Deutero-Isaiah

In my reading of Isaiah, the servant is the one who represents Israel in opening the eyes of the blind, yet becomes rejected, eventually being vindicated by God in the sight of his enemies.

The servant is introduced in Isaiah 42:1-9 as the one in relation to whom Yhwh's prophetic ability is especially displayed. In contrast to the noisy (41:1: הַחֲרִישׁוֹ אֵלַי אֵיִם) caretakers of blind idols (41:22), the servant of Yhwh is seen as the calm (42:2) locus of divine illumination (42:6-7). The mention of calling and taking the hand in these verses can reasonably be said to conjure the image of installation; but importantly reminds the reader strongly of 41:8-10, in which *Israel* was pictured as עֶבְדִּי, called and upheld by God himself. Given this obvious connection, there is no reason to understand the identity of the servant in 42:1-9 as anything other than Israel. Thus, in the face of the blindness and silence and inability of the idols/nations, who can do nothing but “wait” (יִחַלּוּ, 42:4) for the Torah, the servant Israel embodies and displays the illumination of the only living God. The servant is a “covenant for the people and a light for the nations”, in the sense arguably envisaged in Exodus 19:5-6, where the Israelite covenant bears witness to the nations that the God of the whole earth is committed to Israel.¹⁵

However, for the hearer already steeped in the tradition of Isaiah, this raises the uncomfortable recollection that Israel itself has been pictured as being just as blind and

¹⁵ It is in a parallel, but more obviously positive, sense that, in Genesis 12, Abraham is promised to *be* a blessing (בִּרְכָה), in whom the nations themselves will be blessed. Similarly, Servant Israel *is* a covenant to be witnessed by the nations.

ignorant as the nations¹⁶ (6:9-13; 29:9, 18; 35:5). And indeed, this irony becomes explicit in 42:18-22, where the servant is pictured as blind and deaf. This paradox immediately offers a vocational challenge to the recipients of Deutero-Isaiah's message: How will they fulfil their calling to be the ideal servant? The paradox appears to be further developed as Deutero-Isaiah progresses, such that by 52:13-53:12, the servant may in fact be an ostracised righteous representative of Israel, afflicted, but eventually vindicated in the presence of those by whom he had been rejected.¹⁷

In this latter section, then, the dual motif of the "condemned boaster" and the "vindicated sufferer" is clearly visible, as the shocked former-boasters express their repentance in their description of the servant's persecution and vindication:

Isaiah 53:3,4,9 (NRSV)

He had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him....
he was despised, and we held him of no account.
Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted....
They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich,
although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Isaiah 53:10,11,12a (NRSV)

When you make his life an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days;
through him the will of the LORD shall prosper.
Out of his anguish he shall see light;

¹⁶ Thus the Targum makes an explicit application to Israel here: "To open the eyes of the house of Israel who are as it were blind to the law". Cited in Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Hermen; Minneapolis, Minn., Fortress Press, 2001), 132.

¹⁷ The identities of the figures in this section have long been the subjects of debate. See, for example, D.A. Clines, *I, He, We and They: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 53* (JSOT Supplement 1; Sheffield: Continuum, 1976).

he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.

The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong

In Deutero-Isaiah, then, Israel – or Israel’s representative – is presented as experiencing divine vindication, while those who had judged according to human appearance experience shocked repentance.

Daniel

The book of Daniel repeatedly features the motif of reversal, developing both the image of the boastful ruler and that of the righteous sufferer.

In chapter 2, the king (2:2: βασιλεύς¹⁸) demands something that is impossible for mortal humans (v11: πάσης σαρκός) to accomplish, and orders execution when it is not accomplished. The “God of heaven” grants the revelation of a mystery (2:19: μυστήριον) to Daniel and his companions, and their execution is averted. Daniel himself is promoted and honoured.

In chapter 3, the king perceives that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refuse to worship him, and he threatens to have them executed in the furnace. They entrust themselves to “God whom we serve” (3:17), and, indeed, this God is shown to miraculously save his servants (3:28: τοὺς παῖδας αὐτοῦ). Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are vindicated and promoted.

In chapter 4, the ruler Nebuchadnezzar is depicted as refusing to acknowledge that “the Most High rules over the kingdom of humans [ἄνθρώπων] and he gives it to whomever

¹⁸ I draw attention to the Septuagint terms here, as these will be significant when looking at the terminology of reversal in Paul’s Greek.

he chooses” (4:32). He is punished for this until he acknowledges the sovereignty of God, as opposed to his own humanity.

This story is rehearsed in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar’s son Belshazzar in chapter 5, who is similarly presented as refusing to humbly acknowledge God: “You have exalted yourself against the Lord God of heaven!” (5:23). Belshazzar’s rule is brought to an end, whereas Daniel is honoured.

In chapter 6, those in positions of royal influence conspire against Daniel, resulting in a sentence of execution. God is depicted as miraculously saving Daniel, and his accusers are executed in his place.

These pictures of individual reversal (of boastful rulers to condemnation, and righteous sufferers to honour¹⁹) are paradigmatic of the book of Daniel’s expectations for Israel as a whole. The book utilises the promise of apocalyptic reversal as a means of providing comfort, security, and hope for those who were presently experiencing the insecurity and uncertainty of foreign domination:

The deferral of eschatological hope is part of a strategy for maintaining Jewish life in a Gentile environment, even in the service of Gentile kings.²⁰

Indeed, the book ends in chapter 12 with the expectation of the resurrected vindication of the righteous dead, and the final condemnation of certain others. Nickelsburg comments:

¹⁹ Similar examples of individual reversal occur in the Greek additions to the book, Susanna and Bel and the Dragon.

²⁰ John J. Collins, *Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 137. That the hope of apocalyptic reversal brings comfort and security need not imply that the literature expressing such hope derives from a particularly downtrodden group within Judaism. Such literature may represent an “establishment” theological reflection on the possibility or nature of theocracy under foreign domination. Philip R. Davies considers, “There is absolutely no hint that Daniel is the product of a fringe; its opposition is only to the Seleucid monarchy; its writers are most probably aristocratic, even priestly, scribes”. Philip R. Davies, “The Social World of Apocalyptic Writings,” in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological, and Political Perspectives: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study* (ed. Ronald Ernest Clements; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 251-274; 258.

For Daniel resurrection is *a means* by which both the righteous and the wicked dead are enabled to receive their respective vindication or condemnation. Thus Daniel has gone beyond Isaiah. There will be punishment for the wicked who are already dead.²¹

The figures of the condemned boastful ruler and the vindicated righteous sufferer receive continued utilisation and development in deuterio- and non-canonical Jewish literature.

Wisdom of Solomon

The Wisdom of Solomon chides “the ungodly” whose observation that no one returns from death leads them to reason that they should be able to enjoy a dissolute life. They play the role of what I have called the “boastful ruler”, blind to God’s “mysteries”, and boldly triumphant:²²

Wisdom of Solomon 2:21-22

For they were blinded by their own wickedness, and did not know the mysteries [μυστήρια] of God, or hope for the reward of holiness, or discern the prize for blameless souls.

In chapter 5, the vindication of the suffering righteous is envisaged, involving the shocked repentance of the onlooking former boasters (as in Isaiah 53²³), who conclude that they “did not know the way of the Lord”:

²¹ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity* (exp. ed.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 33; emphasis original. Nickelsburg has since come to doubt the hint at chronological development here (cf. page 5).

²² Kolarcik correctly perceives that “death” is ultimately viewed positively for the righteous, for whom it results in union with God; but negatively for the wicked, for whom it means the final confirmation of their distance from God. Michael Kolarcik, *The Ambiguity of Death in the Book of Wisdom 1-6: A Study of Literary Structure and Interpretation* (AnB 127; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991).

²³ The similarity has not gone unnoticed: M. Jack Suggs, “Wisdom of Solomon 2₁₀₋₅: A Homily Based on the Fourth Servant Song,” *JBL* 76/1 (1957): 26-33.

Wisdom of Solomon 5:1-8

Then the righteous one will stand with much boldness, in view of those who had oppressed him, and those who had disregarded his labours. Seeing him, they will be stirred up with severe fear. And they will be amazed by the unexpectedness of his salvation. They will speak to one another in repentance, and from a spirit of distress they will groan and say, “This is the one whom we once held to be a laughingstock and an insulting byword – we fools! We considered his life to be madness and his death to be dishonourable. How is it that such a person has been counted among the sons of God, with an inheritance among the saints? So we had strayed from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness did not shine on us, and the sun did not rise for us. We were filled with lawless and destructive ways and travelled through inaccessible deserts, but we did not know the way of the Lord. Of what benefit to us was arrogance [ὑπερηφάνια]? And of what help to us was wealth with boasting [ἀλαζονείας]?”

The “way of the Lord” includes his ability to deliver *to* Hades and *from* Hades (16:13, cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; Isaiah 10:14; 43:13; Tobit 13:2).²⁴ A direct application is made to the boastful rulers of the earth, in chapter 6. As in Daniel, they are called to humble themselves and acknowledge the “Most High”, or else face his judgement:

Wisdom of Solomon 6:1-5

Listen then, kings, and understand! Learn, judges of the ends of the earth! Give ear, you who rule over many and boast [γεγαυρωμένοι] over the multitudes of the nations! Your rule was given to you by the Lord, and your power from the Most High. He will examine your works and will search out your plans, because

²⁴ Samuel Cheon observes that the exodus is a crucially programmatic story lying behind such material in the Wisdom of Solomon, and (along with other literature) influences this identification of God as the one who brings life and death. It seems likely to me that the story of the exodus (and the song of Moses in Exodus 15) is extremely influential on depictions of “the way” of God as the divine Reverser more broadly. See Samuel Cheon, *The Exodus Story in the Wisdom of Solomon: A Study in Biblical Interpretation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 63.

as assistants of his kingdom you did not judge rightly or keep his law, or go along with his purposes. Shockingly and hastily, he will come upon you, because severe judgement comes to those in positions of authority.

In chapter 9, it is reiterated that (as in Daniel) the “reasonings” of earthly “wise men” are worthless; and genuine revelation necessarily comes from God. Thus there is a sharp distinction between that which is “human” and that which is divine.

Wisdom of Solomon 9:13-14, 17

For what human [ἄνθρωπος] can know the counsel of God? Or who can discern what the Lord wills? For the reasonings of mortals [θνητῶν] are worthless....

But who has known your counsel, except the one to whom you have given wisdom, and to whom you have sent your holy spirit from above?

The Wisdom of Solomon thus continues and develops the dual motif of the condemned boastful ruler and the vindicated righteous sufferer, using these figures as respective representatives of *human* wisdom and *divine* wisdom. Hearers are urged to rely on God’s wisdom, and so look forward to divine vindication.²⁵

Nickelsburg suggests that the “story of the persecuted and vindicated righteous man” in the Wisdom of Solomon expresses a common ancient “wisdom tale”, with parallels in the story of Joseph (Genesis 37-45), the story of Ahikar, the book of Esther, Daniel 3 and 6, and the story of Susanna:

[A]lthough the Danielic stories are considerably shorter, they are in many points similar in technique to Joseph, Ahikar, and Esther: the interweaving of narrative and dialogue; similar structural elements (conspiracy, trial, rescue, vindication,

²⁵ Both God’s honour and the sufferer’s righteous dedication receive vindication, as the postmortal fate of God’s people is tied to the faithful justice of God. This emphasis on the necessity of postmortal vindication is often viewed as a decisive development in Jewish wisdom literature. See, for example, John J. Collins, “The Root of Immortality: Death in the Context of Jewish Wisdom,” *HTR* 71/3 (1978): 177-192; Jack T. Sanders, “Wisdom, Theodicy, Death, and the Evolution of Intellectual Traditions,” *JSJ* 36/3 (2005): 263-277.

acclamation, etc.); observations about the characters' emotions. These basic similarities in theme, setting, characters, narrative technique, and structure are not likely the result of literary interdependence. The five stories are examples of a common *Gattung* – the wisdom tale.²⁶

My own argument is not dependent on the discernment of a particular literary genre. Nevertheless, Nickelsburg's suggestion helpfully recognises the culturally-recognisable motifs in the Wisdom of Solomon's portrayal of the vindication of the one suffering under the persecution of rulers.

Epistle of Enoch

Loren T. Stuckenbruck's introduction to the Epistle of Enoch immediately recalls the dual motif of the condemned boastful ruler and the vindicated righteous sufferer as it has been seen so far:

Throughout these three sections [of the Epistle], "the sinners" are often described as socially elite, wealthy, idolators and as propagators of false teaching; in stark contrast, the "righteous", with whom the writer identifies, are oppressed, without social influence and recipients of revealed Enochic wisdom.²⁷

The souls of the "righteous dead" are directly addressed, comforting them with the assurance that divinely granted reversal is inevitable:

²⁶ Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 75. The suggestion is not new. W. Lee Humphreys reports, "From early Jewish tradition through modern scholarly study of the biblical materials, similarities and connections have been suggested between the tales of Joseph, Esther and Mordecai, and Daniel and his companions.... When the tale of Ahiqar is considered in this context, it becomes clear that we are dealing with a common literary type that was quite popular in the Near East of this period: the tale of the courtier.... The tale concludes with a notice of his [the courtier's] exaltation to higher rank and reward and a comparable punishment of his foe if such is appropriate." W. Lee Humphreys, "A Life-Style for Diaspora: A Study of the Tales of Esther and Daniel," *JBL* 92/2 (1973): 211-223; 217.

²⁷ Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91-108* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 3.

1 Enoch 102:4-5

Be courageous, souls of the righteous who have died – souls of the righteous and godly – and do not grieve that your souls have descended into Hades with grief and your body of flesh has not been treated in accordance with your holy ways in your life.

This encouragement is followed by a depiction of the oppressive sinners as those who mock the idea of future post-mortal vindication, and rather choose to “eat, drink and be merry” in the present, in 102:6-9.

As in Daniel and the Wisdom of Solomon, the “righteous” trust in the God who reveals his “mysteries” to his persecuted people:

1 Enoch 103:1-3

I swear to you.... I understand this mystery.... That goodness and joy and honour have been prepared and written down for the souls of those who have died while godly.

Stuckenbruck reads this as a promise of reversal:

In the passage [103:1-4] the Enochic author promises the righteous a reversal of the hard circumstances they have endured on earth; not only will they be restored to life (v.4), they will be given an existence that is even better than “the lot of the living”²⁸

The motif of reversal thus pervades this work, and invites hearers to patiently endure the role of the righteous sufferer, as post-mortal vindication is awaited.

²⁸ Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch*, 518.

In 2 Maccabees, as in Daniel, the situation of persecution under a king is depicted. The evil ruler who has “authority among *humans*” (Ἐξουσίαν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἔχων) is explicitly denied resurrection (7:14-16), while those who suffer for God under the king’s reign expect to experience resurrected vindication. A distinction is thus made between the mortal (7:16: φθαρτός) king and the divine “king of the world”:²⁹

2 Maccabees 7:7-9

And after the first brother had died in this way, they led the second up for their mockery. And, having torn off the skin of his head with the hair, they asked him, “Will you eat rather than have your body punished, one part at a time?” But he replied in the language of his father and said, “No”. Therefore this brother also received mistreatment as had the first. And when he was at his last breath, he said, “You accursed wretch! You destroy our life in the present, but the king of

²⁹ As Collins points out, the contrast between *human* and *divine* kingship is pervasive in Jewish works of this period that hold to an expectation of eschatological reversal: “The common denominator of all eschatological formulations of the kingdom... in addition to the postulate of divine sovereignty, was rejection of foreign rule. The implementation of the kingdom of God, whether by a messiah or a direct heavenly intervention, implied the destruction of the kings and the mighty of this world”. Collins, *Seers, Sybils and Sages*, 114. Martin Hengel’s work on the Zealots indicates that the theme of divine war in apocalyptic literature was also taken up by those in the Maccabean/Zealot tradition as part of an expectation of a future involving *earthly* fighters against foreign rulers: Martin Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations Into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period From Herod I Until 70 A.D.* (trans. David Smith; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989); trans of *Die Zeloten. Untersuchungen zur jüdischen Freiheitsbewegung in der Zeit von Herodes I. bis 70 n. Chr.* (AGAJU 1; 2nd ed.; Brill: Leiden, 1976). David M. Goodblatt rightly cautions that a defiant emphasis on divine kingship did not *normally* (apart from the Sicarii) entail the rejection of every form of present human rule: “Neither the belief that God is the ruler of the universe nor resistance to foreign domination entails rejection of all human lords”. David M. Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 90. Christopher Bryan helpfully characterises a “stream of biblical voices” in which divine and foreign kingship are accepted concurrently, as a reality for the present age: “According to a consistent stream of biblical voices, God *chooses* that there shall be empires. Thus, Egypt (Gen. 47.7-10), Assyria (Isa. 10.5-6, 37:26-27), Babylon (Jer. 25.9, 27.5-6; Dan. 4.17-34), and Persia (Isa. 44.24-45.7) are all, in their time and place, said (in the case of Egypt) to be blessed and to prosper, and (in the case of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia) to rule over other nations by God’s mandate. Early postbiblical voices speak in a similar way of the Greeks under Ptolemy II Philadelphus (*Letter of Aristeas* 15b, 19-21). But always such power is granted within the limits of God’s sovereignty. Those who exercise such power are called to obey God’s command, for the Lord alone is truly king”. Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13.

the world will raise us up and give us eternal life, because we have died for his laws”.

The mother of the seven martyrs urges her sons not to fear the mortal ruler, but to accept death and look forward to resurrection:

2 Maccabees 7:28-29

I beg you, child! Look up to heaven and to the earth, and see everything that is in them, and know that God did not create them out of existing things – and so it is also with the human race. Do not fear this executioner, but be worthy of your brothers in also accepting death, in order that in His mercy, I might receive you back along with your brothers.

Jan Willem Van Henten points out that this reference to God as creator indicates the ground of the mother’s hope for resurrection: there is an ultimate distinction between human and divine capability:

As creator of the material world... and of humankind, the Lord is able to recreate the martyrs after their violent deaths. This is an adaptation of a tradition which can be found in the book of Psalms as well as in Isaiah (e.g. 44:2, 24), where the promise of a future deliverance of Israel or of an individual Israelite is confirmed by a reference to the Lord’s creation of individual human beings and of the heaven and earth.³⁰

³⁰ Jan Willem Van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 177-8. This distinction between the creative (and therefore re-creative) ability of *God* as opposed to *humans* is also important in much apocalyptic literature. Rudolf Schnackenburg comments, “These apocalypses place the strongest possible emphasis on God’s sovereign action and his final intervention without any co-operation on man’s part.... According to the *Sibylline Oracles* (V, 348) God assumes the direction of things.... This is an exclusively divine action as on the morning of creation. ‘Through myself alone and no other were (the works of creation) fashioned: so too will the end arrive through myself alone and through no other’ (4 Esdras 6:6)”. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *God’s Rule and Kingdom* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 67; repr. of *God’s Rule and Kingdom* (trans. John Murray; New York: Herder & Herder, 1963); trans. of *Gottes Herrschaft und Reich* (Freiburg: Herder, 1963).

As in Daniel and the Wisdom of Solomon, the king is urged to repent and acknowledge that divine sovereignty belongs to God alone:

2 Maccabees 7:37-38

And I, like my brothers, give both body and soul for the laws of the ancestors, calling upon God to be merciful soon to the nation, and with afflictions and plagues to make you confess that there is one God, and through myself and my brothers to bring the wrath of the Almighty, which has been rightly brought upon our whole race, to a standstill.

The dual motif of the condemned boastful *human* ruler and the vindicated righteous *God-reliant* sufferer is thus well attested here.

3 Maccabees

The book of 3 Maccabees similarly paints a picture of persecution and vindication under a threatening king. The boastful persecutors end up being disgraced and defeated (6:34), while those who have remained faithful and entrusted their cause to God eventually receive vindication:

3 Maccabees 7:21-23

And, before their enemies, they [the formerly-persecuted but now-vindicated Jews] were held in greater esteem, with honour and fear, not having their possessions wrested by anyone. And everyone recovered all of their possessions, in accordance with the registration, so that any who had them returned them with great fear. The Most High God perfectly accomplished great things to bring about their salvation. Blessed be the Rescuer of Israel, for all time. Amen.

It is notable that God is here defined as the “rescuer” of Israel: his practice of vindicating the persecuted is seen as essential to his identity.

Judith

The distinction between the *human* and the *divine* is important in the book of Judith, in which mortal military power is overcome by dependence on God. As in Daniel, 2 Maccabees, and the Wisdom of Solomon, the boastful rulers are directly challenged for their presumptuous claims to divine sovereignty (cf. 6:2):

Judith 8:12-14

And now, who are you to put God to the test today, and to stand in place of God in the midst of humans? And now you are testing Almighty God, but you will never have knowledge. For you are not able to search out the depths of the human heart, and you are not able to access the thoughts of the human mind. So when it comes to God, who has made all of these things, how will you search out and come to know his mind, or come to understand his thinking?

As in Daniel, the Wisdom of Solomon and the Epistle of Enoch, the distinction between reliance on mortal wisdom and reliance on God is expressed in terms of divine revelation. God shares his mysterious wisdom with his own people, and cannot be discerned by presumptuous humans.

Judith 8:16

But you do not control the decisions of the Lord our God, because God is not like a human, who can be threatened, or like human offspring, who can be bribed.

Judith's prayer emphasises this ultimate distinction between *divine* and *human* knowledge and power. Those rulers who presumptuously boast in their own power will ultimately be

condemned by God, while those who humbly entrust themselves to God will ultimately receive his powerful vindication:³¹

Judith 9:7-9

For see: the Assyrians have increased in their power, exalting themselves on account of horse and rider, priding themselves in the strength of their army, placing their hope in shield and spear and bow and sling; and they do not know that you are the Lord who crushes wars. The Lord is your name. You throw down the strong in your power, and you bring down their might in your wrath. For they have conspired to pollute your holy places, to defile the resting place of your glorious name, to cut down the horns of your altar with iron. Look at their arrogance, and send your wrath upon their heads.

As in 3 Maccabees, God's practice of vindicating the persecuted is seen as essential to his identity:

Judith 9:11, 14

For your might is not in numbers, nor your power in the strong; but you are God of the humble, helper of the inferior, protector of the weak, shelterer of the weary, saviour of the despairing.... and make your whole nation and every tribe know that you are God, God of all power and might, and that there is no other defender of the people of Israel except you!

Interestingly, this understanding of the identity of God is expressed in liturgy, as Judith sings of the God who condemns boasters and vindicates the meek (16:1-17), recalling the hymnic celebrations of divine reversal in the Psalms, Exodus 15, and 1 Samuel 2 (and seen also in the Magnificat).

³¹ Lawrence Mitchell Wills compares the story of Judith with preceding Jewish storylines and concludes that in Judith, the condemnation of the wicked and the vindication of the humble are distinctively brought together into the same event: reversal and deliverance are seen together as "one great triumph". Lawrence Mitchell Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 157.

These examples illustrate the pervasive presence of this motif of reversal in Jewish literature. The figures of the condemned boaster and the vindicated sufferer are important recognisable characters in much Jewish narrative, demonstrating the character of God as the one who powerfully accomplishes or promises reversal.

Reversal as *Interpretative Motif*

The motif of divinely orchestrated reversal is more than a liturgical theme or a literary pattern. It is also a lens through which history may be read and evaluated. The history of Israel was commonly (internally) interpreted and summarised using the motif of divine reversal, involving the downfall of enemies and the vindication of the suffering people of God.

A summary of Israel's history in Philo: Special Laws 2

Philo recalls Deuteronomy 26 in describing the worship that involves the presentation of harvest-fruits at the temple. He depicts this act of worship as centrally involving the recitation of a common history, which summarises Israel's identity by using the themes of corporate persecution and subsequent corporate vindication by God:

Philo, *Special Laws* 2.217-219

This is the sense of the song: "The originators of our race left Syria and migrated to Egypt. Being few in number, they grew to become a nation of many people. Their descendants underwent numerous sufferings at the hands of the land's inhabitants; and when it was apparent that there could be no further aid from humans, they became pleaders before God, seeking refuge in his help. Their pleas were accepted by the one who is kind to all those who suffer injustice; and he entangled their oppressors with signs and wonders and strange phenomena and all the other spectacles that occurred at that time. And those who were being

abused, and attacked by every evil desire, he rescued. And he not only brought them into freedom, but also gave them a fertile land. From the fruits of this land, O Benefactor, we bring you the firstfruits”.

It is significant that Philo mentions the inability of *humans* to provide the necessary vindication of the people of God. As in the Psalms and other literature explored above, it is emphatically only God who can bring about necessary reversal – which includes both condemnation of oppressors and rescue of the oppressed.

A summary of Israel's history by Achior: Judith 5

The report of Achior to Holofernes in Judith 5 sums up the history of Israel as a story of persecution and vindication. Firstly, Israel was persecuted by the people of Chaldea, and so they fled to Mesopotamia. Secondly, they experienced famine in Canaan, so they went to Egypt. Thirdly, they were exploited by the king of Egypt, but miraculously rescued by God. Fourthly, they were defeated in battle and had their temple destroyed, but returned to God, and thus to prosperity. This pattern is then read into the present situation, with Achior concluding that God would defend his people Israel if attacked unjustly.

A summary of Israel's history by Eleazar: 3 Maccabees 6

Eleazar's prayer in 3 Maccabees 6 reads the history of Israel as a series of divinely rendered vindications of those “who are perishing as foreigners in a foreign land” (6:3). Pharaoh of Egypt and Sennacherib of Assyria are viewed as typical Gentile rulers who have arisen against the people of God, only to face divine condemnation. The “three companions”, Daniel, and Jonah are presented as typical faithful Jews who rely upon God in their suffering, and experience vindication. God is called to act once again in accordance with this reliable pattern, and to “reveal” himself in the face of mortal tyranny.

According to Acts 7, Stephen's speech³² presents the history of Israel as a series of significant persecutions (of individual righteous people), most of which are followed by divine vindication. Firstly (7:1-8), Abraham is depicted as being promised that his descendants will be mistreated and enslaved, before God judges their captors and gives them the land of inheritance. Secondly (7:9-16), Joseph is depicted as being sold, before God rescues him from affliction and appoints him to a position of favour. Thirdly (7:17-22), Moses is depicted as being abandoned as a baby, before being adopted into royalty. Fourthly (7:23-36), the adult Moses is depicted as being misunderstood and rejected by his fellow Israelites, before being appointed by God to liberate the people from slavery. Fifthly (7:37-43), Israel is depicted as rejecting Moses in favour of idolatry – and no vindication is mentioned. In 7:44-50, the impossibility of humans providing for God is emphasised. Finally, in 7:51-53, the pattern of persecution of the righteous is applied to Jesus, "the Righteous one". Jesus' vindication is hinted at in Stephen's subsequent vision of Jesus "at the right hand of God"; and Stephen's own death (without apparent vindication) is reported immediately subsequent to this.

The pattern of persecution-vindication is clearly used to read Israel's history; but it is evident that for Christ and his followers, full vindication is still awaited.

³² Views on Acts 7 range from the opinion that it is an historically reliable record of Stephen's speech to the opinion that it is a Lukan composition. My argument here neither depends upon nor denies an earlier date for this material than the date of the composition of Acts, such as the view of Marcel Simon, *St. Stephen and the Hellenists in the Primitive Church* (London: Longmans, 1958). My broad intention is to demonstrate that various interpretations of Hebrew history, even into the Christian period, utilise the motif of reversal. With regard to Stephen's speech in particular I seek to draw attention to the fact that the episodes depict not only popular rejection of the prophets, but also divine vindication. As Charles H. Talbert notes, "it was the rejected one whom God made ruler and deliverer for them". Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*. (2nd ed.; RNT; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 62.

A summary of Israel's history in 2 Peter

That “the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous in punishment until the day of judgement” is considered axiomatic in 2 Peter (2:2), where formative events in Israel’s history are recalled as evidence. The holding of disobedient angels, the punishing flood, and the condemnation of Sodom and Gomorrah are paradigms of God’s ultimate future judgement of evildoers; while the rescues of Noah and of Lot are paradigms of God’s ultimate future rescue of the suffering righteous.

Again, then, formative Hebrew narratives are summed up using the motifs of condemnation and vindication. God vindicates those who trust in him while suffering under enemies. It is essential to the argument of 2 Peter 2 that the vindication occurs according to a divine, rather than human, schedule.

A summary of Israel's history by Josephus: Jewish War 5

Josephus reviews the history of Israel as a series of persecutions followed by divinely-timed vindications. His discussion of the exodus events is illustrative of this review in general, and of the formative significance of the exodus “reversal” in particular:

Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.382-383

Should I mention the migration of our ancestors to Egypt? Though they were oppressed and made subject to foreign rulers for four hundred years, and could have defended themselves with weapons and violence, did they not turn to God? Who does not know about Egypt being filled with all manner of beasts, and perishing with all manner of disease, the fruitless land, the failing Nile, the ten successive plagues, and how because of these things our ancestors were sent out with a guard, without bloodshed, without risk, as God led his holy people?

Josephus presents himself as attempting to persuade his fellow Jews that they must await vindication from God, rather than fruitlessly fight against the established pattern of divinely-timed reversal.

The Motif of Reversal as an Influential Cultural Conceptualisation

The presence and function of this motif of reversal in such a diversity of liturgy, literature, historical interpretation, and divine address suggest a shared cultural conceptualisation. That is, the motif represents important conceptual imagery, informing early Jewish identity, worship, story-telling, and interpretation of history.

Clearly the motif was flexible enough to be understood and utilised differently in different circumstances. For the Maccabees, Judith, and the Zealots, for example,³³ it seems that the time of divine vindication could be prompted or hurried by human activity,³⁴ whereas for Daniel, the Epistle of Enoch, and Josephus, the time of divine vindication was to be patiently awaited. Nevertheless, the pattern itself appears to be pervasive. The Maccabees, Daniel, Judith, the Epistle of Enoch, the Zealots and Josephus agree that divinely granted reversal is inevitable, involving the downfall of boastful rulers and the vindication of the righteous.

It seems that this shared cultural conceptualisation was engaged and renegotiated with the reception of Jesus among the earliest Christians.

³³ And perhaps those involved in the Bar Kokhba rebellion. Roland Deines argues that this revolt was largely inspired by the theological calculation that the seventh decade following the destruction of the temple marked the divine timing of Jerusalem's vindication – a vindication pre-empted by the rebellion. Roland Deines, "How Long? God's Revealed Schedule for Salvation and the Outbreak of the Bar Kokhba Revolt," Forthcoming.

³⁴ Hengel writes: "The insistence on the 'sole rule of God' that was so closely associated with the revolt against Roman rule was for the Zealots the first step towards bringing about the kingdom of God, *the coming of which was at least partly dependent on the personal participation of God's people*". Hengel, *The Zealots*, 228; emphasis mine.

3. Reversal and Christological Interpretation

At many points, the New Testament writers utilise the theme of reversal, and see it as coming to fulfilment in the events associated with the coming, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and return of Jesus Christ. From Mary's song (Luke 1:46-55) to the New Song (Revelation 5:9-14), the gospel of Jesus Christ is presented as a message of impending (but inaugurated) reversal. It seems that the events of Jesus Christ were interpreted in the light of the reversal motif, and prompted a renegotiation of that motif.

Three instances of this christological adaptation of the reversal motif will be noted here: the parables of reversal in the teaching of Jesus; the use of psalms of reversal in Mark's Gospel; and the attitude to "rulers" in Acts.

The Historical Jesus and the Motif of Reversal

The interpretative Christological motif of reversal goes back to Jesus himself. John Dominic Crossan³⁵ points to a number of parables that he views as "parables of reversal" spoken by the historical Jesus, and suggests that "Such double and opposite reversal is the challenge the Kingdom brings to the complacent normalcy of one's accepted world".

Of course, the question of which parables fit this category might be debated. Related to this, the extent to which Jesus' teaching claims an *immanent* or a *deferred* reversal (or some combination of the two) is not agreed upon among interpreters.

Interestingly, Jesus is depicted in Mark's Gospel as explaining his use of parables with a quotation from Isaiah that itself hints at reversal (Mark 4:12): those who think that they can see will be blinded by the parables (while, presumably, those who know themselves to be blind will have their eyes opened). Perhaps Jesus is self-consciously taking on the role of the Isaianic Servant.

³⁵ John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge, 1992), 73-74.

Jesus as the Vindicated Sufferer in Mark

Mark's Gospel especially presents Jesus as the one who personifies the Davidic figure of the Psalms of royal lament.³⁶ Mark 3:20-21 reports the reproach of Jesus' family concerning his mission, a motif of Psalm 69. In Mark 9:12 Jesus says that it is written that the Son of Man must be treated with contempt, arguably an allusion to the Greek version of Psalm 22:7. Mark 14:18 sees Jesus betrayed by one who eats with him, an evocation of Psalm 41:9. In Mark 14:34 "it seems that Mark takes a recurring phrase from Pss 41:6,12 [that is, 42:5, 11] and 42:5 [that is, 43:5] and weaves it into his story by putting it on the lips of Jesus":³⁷ the downcast soul of the Psalmist is personified in Jesus. The casting of lots for the divided clothing of the Davidic Psalmist in Psalm 22:18 is evoked in Mark 15:24, in the actual experience of Jesus. Mark 15:29-30 evokes the common Psalmic motif of the figure who is reviled by passers by, a motif utilised in relation to the Davidic persona in Psalm 22:7. Mark 15:34 brings this use of the Psalms firmly into the foreground, with Psalm 22:1 heard from the lips of the dying Jesus: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And Mark 15:36 is reminiscent of Psalm 69:21, with the suffering figure offered vinegar to drink.

For Mark then, the identity and project of Jesus may be approached by hearing him as the speaker of the Davidic lament psalms, in this way identifying himself with Israel, as a figure whose sufferings cry out for divine vindication, and constitute a path for the community to follow.³⁸ These Christians for whom Mark writes are summoned to express

³⁶ Here I draw especially on two resources aside from the Gospel of Mark itself: Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, *The Psalms of Lament in Mark's Passion: Jesus' Davidic Suffering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and A.Y. Collins, "The Appropriation of the Psalms of Individual Lament by Mark," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (ed. C.M. Tuckett; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 223-241. My references are to the Psalms as numbered and versed in the Christian tradition.

³⁷ Ahearne-Kroll, *Psalms of Lament*, 67.

³⁸ Donald Juel rightly notes: "The Psalter played a critical role in the development of the passion tradition. In all the Gospels, the story of Jesus' death is narrated with features taken from Psalms 22, 31, and 69, to name the most obvious.... Nor is it surprising that Jesus' followers turned to the Psalter to understand his crucifixion.... In numerous psalms, innocent sufferers bring their case before God in the form of complaints and

their incorporation into this Messiah of Israel by following him in the way of the cross, and crying out with him for divine vindication. They are to believe in his resurrection and look forward to the implied endpoint of this resurrection, the “final harvest”³⁹ vindication of the Messiah and his community.

Earthly Rulers and Opponents as the Condemned Boasters in Acts

The book of Acts presents the apostles as interpreting present-day powerful opponents to be the scornful-but-condemned opponents foreshadowed in the Psalms and prophets.

In Acts 4 the Jerusalem church is depicted as quoting Psalm 2 in a prayer to God, explicitly equating its doomed human “rulers” with Herod and Pilate, who opposed Jesus, and with the authorities who presently threaten the church itself:⁴⁰

Acts 4:23-29

Master, you who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them, spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David your son, saying,

Why do the nations rage

And the people imagine vain things?

petitions”. Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1988), 89.

³⁹ Cf. the seed parables of Mark 4. Hays comments on the reception of the psalms of lament: “Israel’s historical experience had falsified a purely immanent literal reading of the texts; the line of David had in fact lost the throne, and Israel’s enemies had in fact seized power. Thus, the promise that God would raise up David’s seed and establish his kingdom forever (e.g., 2 Sam 7:12-14; Ps 89:3-4) *had* to be read as having reference to an eschatological future. How, then, would the royal lament psalms be understood? They would be construed – by many Jews, not only by Christians – as paradigmatic for Israel’s corporate national sufferings in the present time, and their characteristic triumphant conclusions would be read as pointers to God’s eschatological restoration of Israel. Thus ‘David’ in these psalms becomes a symbol for the whole people and – at the same time – a prefiguration of the future Anointed One... who will be the heir of the promises and the restorer of the throne”. Hays, *Conversion*, 110-111.

⁴⁰ Talbert is right to perceive this utilisation of Psalm 2 as eschatological, messianic, and, specifically, “applicable to Jesus’ passion”. Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 46. Witherington’s addition, furthermore, is essential: “it is often taken to refer to events in the life of Jesus, *but the narrative here is about events in the life of the church*”. Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 200; emphasis original. The pivotal events associated with the Messiah, and their programmatic influence on the church, are given common expression in the liturgical language of reversal.

The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers [οἱ ἄρχοντες] gather together
Against the Lord and against his Christ.

For, truly, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the nations and the people of Israel, gathered together in this city against your holy son Jesus, whom you anointed, in order to do as much as your hand and your decision had fore-ordained would happen. And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and give all boldness to your servants, to speak your word.

In Acts 13, Paul is presented as quoting Psalms 2, 16, and 55, as well as Habakkuk 1, in order to prove the point that it was necessary for the Messiah to be raised from the dead in the face of persecuting, unbelieving scoffers – who would themselves perish. Once again, Pilate and the “rulers” are seen as fulfilling the scriptural role of persecutors and would-be destroyers:

Acts 13:27-30

For those living in Jerusalem and their rulers [οἱ ἄρχοντες], having failed to recognise him or the words of the prophets that are read each Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. And despite finding no grounds for a charge deserving death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. And when they had fulfilled all of the things written about him, they took him down from the tree and put him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead.

The present generation of would-be persecutors is warned that the trajectory set by their scoffing ends in their own condemnation (Acts 13:40-41).⁴¹

The early churches, it seems, heard the Psalms of their corporate recitation and the scriptures of their inheritance as expressing the story of Jesus, the suffering Messiah,

⁴¹ Of course, there are questions regarding the extent to which this represents a speech by Paul or an *apologia* by Luke: see, for example, Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP; Collegeville, Minn.: Order of St. Benedict, 1992), 239. The early christological application of reversal is evident in either scenario.

whose persecution at the hands of worldly “rulers” had resulted in death, but whose resurrected vindication would one day reach cosmic manifestation with the condemnation and judgement of these rulers. The reversal motif has been renegotiated to express the “gospel” or *kerygma* of the death, resurrection, and deferred cosmic vindication of Jesus, the Christ.

4. The Imagination of the Apostle and the Flow of 1

Corinthians

Paul’s Rhetoric

I contend that this reception of Jesus is evident in the creative theology and rhetoric of Paul, the self-confessed “Hebrew of Hebrews”.

In seeking to be attentive to the arrangement of Paul’s communication it is necessary to move beyond the examination of *genre* (or *form*, or *rhetorical convention*), to consider broader issues of flexible *mental imagery* and *cultural conceptualisation*. Additionally, it is necessary to move beyond the practical assumption of a monolithic Greco-Roman rhetorical culture, to emphasise, within the complexity of Paul’s identity and literary manner, the significant influence of his *kerygma* “in accordance with the Scriptures”. Just as it would be naïve to think that early Christianity, Judaism and Hellenism are completely separable, it would also be naïve to think that the interpretative and communicative motifs of Judaism – or of the Messianic sect to which Paul was converted – were effectively dissolved in the conventions of Greco-Roman oratory.⁴²

⁴² There is a parallel in the communicative strategies of Australian Aboriginal cultures: Ian G. Malcolm’s research (my father, Emeritus Professor at Edith Cowan University, Western Australia) has concerned the ways in which Australian Aboriginal users of English frequently use the language in distinctive (and sometimes culturally subversive) ways. Discourse is often distorted and misunderstood if it is interpreted using the imagery and communication-patterns of non-Aboriginal Australian English. It is essential, he argues, that Aboriginal English discourse be understood on its own terms. See, for example, Ian G. Malcolm and Farzad Sharifian, “Aspects of Aboriginal English Oral Discourse: An Application of Cultural Schema Theory,” *DisS* 4/2 (2002): 169-181; and Ian G. Malcolm and Susan Kaldor, “Aboriginal English: An Overview,” in *Language in Australia* (ed. Suzanne Romaine; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 67-84. This perspective is not peripheral, and influences educational and judicial processes in

Paul identifies himself to the Corinthians as an “apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1) who has been called to “proclaim the gospel” (1:17) to them; and it would be unhelpfully restrictive to seek to understand Paul’s discourse without reference to the shared imagery and communicative motifs of this utterly self-conscious sub-cultural identification. Thus, while it need not be denied that Paul met “expectations for ‘cultural literacy’ of a Greek-speaking Diaspora Jew in the first century”⁴³, this should not result in the conclusion that the rhetorical resources available to him were limited to those that were generic across the Greco-Roman world.

Paul’s Biography

I suggest that for Paul himself, the Damascus Road experience involved unexpectedly coming to view Jesus as the one in whom Israel and the world’s hope of reversal lay.⁴⁴

Paul had been zealously pursuing the cleansing of Israel;⁴⁵ but he now came to view his actions as presumptuous,⁴⁶ having been blind to what God was doing in the death, resurrection, and deferred manifestation of Jesus.⁴⁷

Australia. In a resource for Australian school teachers, Diana Eades writes, “To people not trained in linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis, it might appear that Aboriginal English is simply an uneducated variety of English. However, this would be an erroneous assumption, for while there are a number of features (particularly grammatical features) which AE shares with other non-standard varieties of English, there are many others which are distinctively Aboriginal. These features testify to the fact that Aboriginal ways of using language and communicating have survived and remained strong – despite the extinction of traditional languages all over the continent”. Diana Eades, “Aboriginal English,” Primary English Teachers’ Association, Pen 93 (1993): 2. Cited 23rd July 2010. Online: <http://www.elit.edu.au/mediaLibrary/documents/pens/PEN093.pdf>. For legal applications see, for example, Diana Eades, *Aboriginal English and the Law: Communicating with Aboriginal English Speaking Clients: A Handbook for Legal Practitioners* (Brisbane: Queensland Law Society, 1992).

⁴³ Margaret M. Mitchell, “Pauline Accommodation and ‘Condescension’ (συγκατάβασις): 1 Cor 9:19-23 and the History of Influence” in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 197-214; 199.

⁴⁴ Ciampa and Rosner rightly note, “For Paul, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were the decisive events in the history of Israel and even the world”. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, Forthcoming) 10.

⁴⁵ Numerous scholars have connected Paul’s actions with the “zeal” that characterised the tradition of Phinehas and the Maccabees. Richard Bell comments: “The pre-Christian

Thus Paul's formative experience of Jesus, as one whose resurrected Lordship had been startlingly hidden by the outrageous shame of his crucifixion, renegotiated the reversal motif by applying it prototypically to the death, resurrection, and awaited manifestation of Jesus, the "hidden" Christ. Belonging to God's people now had to mean belonging to this Christ.

Terrance Callan argues:

Paul, as Haacker argues, most probably saw his persecution of Christians in this tradition stemming from Phineas.... It would therefore seem likely that Paul belonged to the radical end of the Pharisaic spectrum". Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 306. G. Walter Hansen comments: "In Galatians Paul describes his life 'in Judaism' as having been characterized by an extremely zealous devotion to the Jewish traditions (1:14). His zeal was a mark of the Jews of his time who fought to maintain the purity of the Jewish way of life from pervasive Hellenistic influences". G. Walter Hansen, "Paul's Conversion and His Ethic of Freedom in Galatians," in *The Road From Damascus: The Impact of Paul's Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 213-237; 216. Martin Hengel argues that such "zeal" had become pervasive in the Judaism of the era: "[Z]eal for God's cause, that is, for the law and the Sanctuary, was a phenomenon that had characterized the whole of Palestinian Judaism in general from the time of the Maccabees and in particular the groups of Essenes and Pharisees who had emerged from the Hasidim. Even early Christianity had been at least to some extent influenced by its Jewish inheritance. This 'zeal' was based on a consciousness of Israel's election and separateness and it was therefore experienced in a completely positive way. It was not until the catastrophes of 70 and 135 A.D. that the rabbinate, influenced by those events, began to develop a more critical attitude towards certain aspects of this zeal". Hengel, *The Zealots*, 224.

⁴⁶ By this I mean that Paul came to perceive that in zealously pursuing the purity of Israel, he had been effectively pursuing a manifest "reversal" that had in fact already been initiated by God in a hidden way, in Christ. Hengel similarly characterises the approach of the Zealots as an attempt to anticipate and generate divine reversal: "the attempt to achieve by every possible means the 'purity of Israel' was at the same time an attempt to prepare the way for the eschatological coming of God". Hengel, *The Zealots*, 228.

⁴⁷ As Hengel and Roland Deines note, Paul later emphasises that he had mis-perceived Jesus: "The assertion of [Jesus'] former followers that God had raised him from the dead, had exalted him to himself 'in power' (Rom.1.3f.) to the right hand of God and appointed him Messiah, Son of God and coming judge of the world, had to be opposed with all resolution. Like many responsible and learned men in Jerusalem, Sha'ul too will have shared this view – and in so doing have completely misjudged the crucified Messiah of Israel, as he himself later confesses, 'in a fleshly way'". Martin Hengel and Roland Deines, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1991), 64.

[D]ying and rising with Christ as part of the body of Christ is central both to Paul's understanding of Jesus as Savior and to his understanding of Christian life.⁴⁸

S.A. Cummins succinctly summarises this "corporate Christology" in Paul:

For the apostle Paul, an integral aim and outworking of God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ is the incorporation of the whole of humanity into Messiah Jesus and his Spirit, and thereby into the divine life that is eternal communion with the triune God. The historical and theological dimensions of such a claim involve at least two key interrelated aspects of Paul's Christology: namely, that Jesus' messianic identity and destiny encompass an Israel-specific life and death transposed into his exaltation as universal living Lord, and that this pattern and path are replicated in the lives of all those who are incorporated into him as the messianic and Spirit-empowered eschatological people of God.⁴⁹

In reacting to perceived presumptuous/autonomous spirituality in Corinth, then, Paul was able to interpret and respond to the situation by means of the reversal motif that had, beginning at the Damascus Road, become focused in his *kerygma* of the Christ.⁵⁰ Those who were engaging in boastful, presumptuous status games were effectively blinded by the shame of the crucified Christ, preferring to play the role of the boastful ruler. They

⁴⁸ Terrence Callan, *Dying and Rising with Christ: The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 8.

⁴⁹ S.A. Cummins, "Divine Life and Corporate Christology: God, Messiah Jesus, and the Covenant Community in Paul" in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 190-209; 190. Cummins' summary unfortunately lacks recognition of the *hiddenness* of Christ's exaltation. Callan rightly gives some attention to this theme: "Thus Christians have died but not yet risen with Christ; or their death and resurrection with Christ has not yet been revealed; or their life is an ongoing death and resurrection with Christ. All of this is so because salvation has not yet fully arrived". Callan, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, 128.

⁵⁰ Hengel and Deines make a similar connection: "When Paul explicitly stresses around twenty years later that the crucified Christ – here one could almost speak of the crucified Messiah – is a stumbling block to the Jews (I Cor.1.23), he is describing not only his present experience of mission but the personal offence which he had taken to the message of the crucified Messiah as a Pharisaic scribe on the basis of his understanding of the Torah, when he still knew Christ 'after the flesh'". Hengel and Deines, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 81.

must therefore be reminded of the necessity of sharing in Christ's death – and hiddenness – before sharing publicly the manifestation of Christ's resurrected glory. The main body of 1 Corinthians ends up exhibiting what might be called *kerygmatic rhetoric*, moving from a corrective summons to identify with the *cross* in chapters 1–4 through to a corrective summons to await the fullness of *resurrection* in chapter 15:

1 Corinthians 1–4: *Divisive boasting* is set against inhabitation of *Christ's cross*

1 Corinthians 5–14: *The cross applied*

1 Corinthians 15: *Disregard for the dead* is set against the expected manifest inhabitation of *Christ's resurrection*⁵¹

I will examine this in more detail after briefly considering Paul's other letters.

Paul's Other Letters

As 1 Corinthians is the only New Testament letter to come from Paul and Sosthenes as co-senders, it should not be surprising if it has distinctive features. However, what I have described as *kerygmatic rhetoric* may be seen to arise flexibly to some degree in other letters of Paul.

2 Corinthians

Paul's subsequent (canonical) letter to the Corinthians begins by summing up his apostolic ministry as one of *death in hope of resurrection*. Indeed, God is *defined* there as the one “who raises the dead” (2 Corinthians 1:9). Paul Barnett opines that Paul has drawn on a

⁵¹ I use the terminology of “inhabitation” here, even though such imagery is seldom explicit in 1 Corinthians itself (although see 10:16). Such terminology is an attempt to capture the letter's insistence on human indebtedness to God-in-Christ for status (1:2), present calling (1:5-7), and future hope (1:8). The Corinthians are summoned not only to emulate Christ as a great example, but to recognise that their very life and identity comes from union with him (1:30); and they are thus to subject their conceptions of their own status, life, and conduct to an acknowledgement of *his* (crucified and exalted) identity.

Jewish conception of God, which has become crystallised in his own gospel of the resurrected Christ:

[I]t may be no coincidence that, as he adapted the First Synagogue Benediction in his epistolary benediction, he now alludes to the Second Benediction,⁵² whose subject is resurrection. Paul's own piety has been shaped by the synagogue, which he is unashamed to betray. Yet, the experience of the Risen One has permanently altered the structure of his thought.⁵³

This fits well with the argument of this dissertation. The "structure of [Paul's] thought" has been shaped by his encounter with the Christ who has died and risen; and the *kerygma* about this Christ, informed by the Jewish imagery of reversal, suggests motifs and patterns for historical interpretation and discourse.

Romans

Similarly, in what is largely agreed to be his next (canonical) letter, Paul's conception of the identification of believers with the death-and-resurrection of the Christ plays an essential role. Moo suggests that this conception has become for Paul "an unbreakable 'law of the kingdom'". Moo expands:

For the glory of the kingdom of God is attained only through participation in Christ, and belonging to Christ cannot but bring our participation in the sufferings of Christ.⁵⁴

⁵² Ralph P. Martin quotes this Benediction as "Thou, O Lord, art mighty forever, thou makest the dead to live". Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1985), 15.

⁵³ Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 87.

⁵⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 506; emphasis mine.

Philippians

This “law of the kingdom” perhaps provides structure to Paul’s letter to the Philippians, with one example after another of its embodiment:

1:12-26: *Paul* is shown to “suffer” and to expect “deliverance”

1:27-30: *Philippians* are urged to “suffer” as they live in accordance with the “gospel of Christ”

2:1-11: *Jesus* is presented as the paradigm of one who willingly accepts “death on a cross” before being “exalted”

2:12-18: *Paul* is depicted as being “poured out” as a libation in the hope that he might boast “on the day of Christ”

2:19-24: *Timothy* is presented briefly as an exemplar of one who is not self-interested but rather serves Christ “in the work of the gospel”

2:25-30: *Epaphroditus* is commended for his willingness to come “close to death” for the sake of Christ

3:1-16: *Paul* is shown to have suffered the “loss of all things” in order to “share in Christ’s sufferings”, and one day “the resurrection of the dead”

3:17-4:1: *Philippians* are urged to become “imitators” of Paul rather than enemies of “the cross of Christ”

It would seem possible that here, the identification of believers with the death and resurrection of Christ – Moo’s Pauline “law of the kingdom” – has combined with the Greco-Roman moralistic commonplace of Exemplary Argumentation to produce a particular expression of *kerygmatic rhetoric*.

Rollin A. Ramsaran comments on the converging conclusions of a variety of approaches to the study of the arrangement of Philippians:

It is generally recognized that Philippians 1:27-30 marks an important imperatival exhortation (epistolary; oral/aural) or functions as the letter's propositio or propositional statement (rhetorical). Most hold that Paul's use of πολιτεύεσθε in 1:27 and πολίτευμα in 3:20 forms a ring device around 1:27-3:21, and Paul's argumentation within the smaller sections is built on key examples (Christ, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Paul).⁵⁵

Ramsaran identifies the assertion "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" as a key maxim of the letter, and notes:

A careful and attentive reading of 1:12-4:1 identifies the theme of life and death as central to the series of examples contained therein.⁵⁶

It may well be that the converging conclusions of a variety of interpretative approaches could be further illuminated by considering the *conceptual imagery of the kerygma* as a rhetorical resource.

Colossians

Colossians, similarly, whether a product of Paul or a Pauline heir, appears to exhibit what I am calling *kerygmatic rhetoric*, allowing the motif of death and resurrection with/in Christ to give overall shape to the main body of the letter:

1:1-2:5: Christ in you; you in Christ

2:6-4:1: Walking in Christ

- Sharing Christ's death
- Sharing Christ's resurrection

⁵⁵ Rollin A. Ramsaran, "Living and Dying, Living is Dying (Philippians 1:21): Paul's Maxim and Exemplary Argumentation in Philippians," in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts* (ed. Anders Eriksson et al.; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2002), 325-338; 325-326.

⁵⁶ Ramsaran, "Living and Dying," in *Rhetorical Argumentation* (ed. Eriksson et al.), 332.

4:2-18: Service of Christ in the world and the church

Indeed, James D.G. Dunn, in summing up the theme of the letter, points out:

Paul insists that the other teaching [i.e. the “Colossian heresy”] has failed to understand *the gospel of the cross* properly (Col. 2:8-15).⁵⁷

The utilisation of the motif of death and resurrection in Colossians is different to its utilisation in 1 Corinthians. In Colossians (as in Romans 6), death and resurrection are both to be claimed in the present; while in 1 Corinthians (as in Philippians), death is to be claimed in the present, and resurrection to be awaited as a future destination. The application of the renegotiated motif clearly retains flexibility.

A full examination of these letters, however, is unnecessary here. My purpose is simply to point out that the idea of a *kerygmatic rhetoric* in 1 Corinthians would not be greatly divergent to what is found in the rest of the Pauline Corpus. On the contrary, other parts of the corpus may be examined fruitfully in such a light.

1 Corinthians: From Boastful Rulers to Hopeful Sufferers

I contend, then, that 1 Corinthians may be heard as expressing the fundamentality of identification with Christ in his death and resurrection, in order to move the Corinthian church from *presumptuous autonomy* to *dependence on God in Christ*.

Paul’s letter confronts the Corinthians with a choice: Will they align themselves with those who boastfully scorn the meek – the “rulers of this age” who “crucified the Lord of glory” – or will they become imitators of Christ’s apostles who “have been condemned to death” and “die every day”? Will they assume the role of the boaster who awaits condemnation, or the sufferer who awaits vindication?

⁵⁷ James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 136; emphasis mine.

I seek to demonstrate in the rest of this dissertation that this is a defensible and attentive reading of the letter. Here, I provide an overview of such a reading:

Chapters 1–4

The choice is set up in the opening four chapters of the letter. Paul raises the problem of squabbling divisions over leadership in the church, divisions that he sees as expressive of a human-confident orientation, rather than a God-dependent orientation. So he calls the Corinthians to choose whether they desire to be aligned with rulers who are honourably wise in this age (who will be condemned), or apostles of the cross (who will be vindicated):

For the word of the cross, *to those who are being destroyed*, is foolishness; but *to us who are being saved*, it is the power of God. For it is written, “*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will reject the understanding of those with understanding*”. (1:18-19)

Paul attempts to persuade the Corinthians not to see themselves as the mighty rulers, but as the poor “nothings”, and he uses the familiar terminology of the God who brings reversal:

For consider the situation of your calling, brothers and sisters: not many of you were *wise* according to the flesh, not many were *powerful*, not many were of *noble pedigree*. But God has chosen the *foolish* things of the world in order to *shame the wise*; and God has chosen the *weak* things of the world in order to *shame the strong*. (1:26-27)

Paul seems to be imaginatively hearing their divisive, boastful desire for esteem as a desire to be in the position of the haughty worldly rulers who are heading for destruction.

He presents the apostles (most notably, himself and Apollos) as an alternative embodiment of spirituality – shaped by the apparent weakness and foolishness of the cross. In the tradition of Daniel, the Wisdom of Solomon, 1 Enoch and Judith, Paul presents himself as being the recipient of the revealed “mystery” of divine wisdom, as opposed to the “wise men” in positions of elite influence:

And in coming to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come with *eminence of speech or of wisdom*, proclaiming the *mystery* of God to you. For I decided not to know anything among you except for Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. (2:1-3)

Paul goes on to make it clear that it is the lowly apostles, those who follow this path of Christ crucified, who have true wisdom from *God* – while the boastful *human* rulers of this age are really blind:

But we speak a certain wisdom among the mature, but *not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers* [τῶν ἀρχόντων] of this age, who are *coming to nothing*. But we speak *God’s wisdom, hidden in a mystery*, which God fore-ordained before the ages for our glory, which *none of the rulers* [τῶν ἀρχόντων] of this age have known – for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the lord of glory. But as it is written, “That which eye has not seen, and ear has not heard”, and *human* heart has not perceived – these things *God* has prepared for those who love him. (2:7-9)

The summons for the Corinthians is clear:

So then, let no one *boast in humans!* (3:21)

For Paul, the Corinthians’ puffed up divisions are expressive of the stance of those who are the boastful enemies of God, headed for destruction – rather than the stance of the

humble crucified, who are awaiting vindication. Paul draws this contrast to a sharp climax in chapter 4:

Already you have become *satisfied*! Already you have become *wealthy*!
Without us [apostles] you have begun *to reign*! And I wish that you really had begun to reign, in order that we might be reigning with you. For it seems to me that God has flaunted us apostles as *last*, as those *condemned to die*, making us a spectacle to the world before angels and humans. (4:8-9)

Paul is calling the Corinthians to give up the position of the boastful ruler, and assume the position of the crucified. He concludes these opening chapters by urging them:

Become imitators of me. (4:16)

Chapters 5–14

The following ten chapters of the letter spell out what this will mean in relation to further culturally-driven problems in the Corinthian community. They spell out how the Corinthians are to imitate Paul in assuming the position of the crucified, both as individuals and as a church body.

In chapters 5–7 this corrective of the cross is applied to issues concerning the congregation's presumptuous entertainment of sins related to the *personal body*:

Your boasting [related to the allowance of a man's sexual immorality] is not good. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole dough? Clean out the old yeast, in order that you might be new dough, as in fact you are unleavened. For our Passover lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. (5:6-7)

In chapters 8–14, the corrective of the cross is applied to issues concerning the congregation’s presumptuous entertainment of sins related to interaction within the *ecclesial body*:

So the weak one is destroyed by your knowledge – this brother or sister, for whom Christ died. And thus, sinning against brothers and sisters and damaging their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother or sister to stumble, I will not eat meat ever again, in order that my brother or sister might not stumble. (8:11-13)

Chapter 15

Finally, chapter 15 bears the promise of *reversal*. It seems that, regardless of what was actually going on in terms of the denial of resurrection in Corinth, Paul creatively hears this denial of “the resurrection of the dead” as the ultimate refusal to accept the validity of the dead (and thus, the validity of the crucified). He insists on the necessity of taking the path that leads from *death* – or a deathly way of life – to God-given *resurrection*:

Christ has been raised *from the dead* as the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (15:21)

I die every day! (15:31)

Fool! That which you sow will not come to life *unless it dies*! (15:36)

For Paul there can be no attaining of glory or immortality apart from following the path of the Christ, whose own death was followed by resurrection – a resurrection that ensures both the future vindication of those who belong to him and the destruction of cosmic “rulers”:

But each in their own turn: Christ the firstfruits, *then* those who belong to Christ, *at his coming*. *Then* the end will come, when he will hand over the kingdom to

God the Father, when *every rule and all authority and power have been brought to nothing*. For it is necessary for him to reign until “all enemies should be placed under his feet”. (15:23-25)

Here, Paul quotes Psalm 110 – the Psalm most utilised by early Christians to express what God is doing in Jesus: finally, those who belong to the crucified one will share in his complete vindication, while the rulers of this age will be brought to nothing. The Corinthians can be assured that the pathway of “Christ and him crucified” will lead ultimately to God-given resurrected vindication.

And so this climactic chapter ends with an insistence that, as mortals, *humans* cannot attain glory; but there is hope for the Corinthians if they will inhabit Jesus the Messiah:

This is what I am saying, brothers and sisters: *Flesh and blood* is not able to inherit the kingdom of God; and neither is the perishable able to inherit the imperishable....

But thanks be to *God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*.

So, my beloved brothers and sisters, remain firm, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain *in the Lord*.

(15:50...57-58)

Chapter 16

The closing chapter then provides a concluding application for the presenting problem in Corinth that had especially prompted the letter: the divisive issue of external and local leadership. The Corinthians are urged to honour those who *labour*.

5. A Kerygmatic Rhetoric of Dual Reversal

The Motif of Reversal

I have argued that the theme of divinely granted reversal was an important conceptual motif in early Judaism and in the reception of Jesus, especially involving the stereotypes of the *condemned boastful ruler* and the *vindicated righteous sufferer*. This theme, I have argued, is not best thought of as a literary form, but more broadly as a shared cultural conceptualisation, which may be expressed in liturgy, in narrative, in historical interpretation and divine address. I have suggested that it was significant for early Christianity as a means of interpreting Jesus, and became renegotiated as Christian *kerygma*. This motif of reversal, focused as Christian *kerygma*, was utilised by Paul as an interpretative lens and flexible rhetorical resource.

My argument may thus be read as a critical alternative to applications of a narrow concept of Rhetorical Criticism to the macro-structure of Paul's letters. Rather than attempting to detect formal or functional adherence of letter sections to conventional elements of oratorical construction,⁵⁸ this chapter represents an attempt to detect the creative utilisation of a *conceptual motif* (specifically, that of the inherited-but-modified Pauline

⁵⁸ I consider that Rhetorical Criticism, *as applied to the macro-structure of Pauline epistles*, is often essentially a variation and extension of Form Criticism. Frank W. Hughes, in describing the application of (Greco-Roman) Rhetorical Criticism to the Pauline letters, writes: "Rhetorical Criticism of Pauline Letters based on Greco-Roman rhetoric was a logical way to go beyond the form criticism of letters pioneered by Paul Schubert's justly famous dissertation. Since many rhetorical critics of Pauline Letters had cut their teeth on form criticism of letters, it is not surprising that most Pauline rhetorical critics focused more on arrangement than on other matters, at that time [the 1980s]. I used to tell my students that form critics could tell you *that* a letter was structured a certain way, but rhetorical criticism could tell you *why* it was structured that way". Frank W. Hughes, "George Kennedy's Contribution to Rhetorical Criticism of the Pauline Letters," in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament* (ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2008), 125-138; 127. Troy W. Martin explores problems associated with evaluating the arrangement of a Pauline letter by appeal to position and form, noting a change in emphasis in scholarship: "Pauline rhetorical critics came to emphasize function rather than form as the most advantageous exegetical use of rhetorical arrangement". Troy W. Martin, "Invention and Arrangement in Recent Pauline Rhetorical Studies: A Survey of the Practices and the Problems," in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 48-118; 71.

kerygma of identification with the Christ who died, rose, and will appear in cosmic vindication).

This movement toward *concept*-based analysis is in harmony with developments in cultural anthropology and cognitive linguistics. Although *genre* analysis has existed for some time, Gary B. Palmer argued in 1996 that communication within a culture utilises common conceptual *schemas*, which may prove more fruitful for understanding discourse:

It is likely that all native knowledge of language and culture belongs to cultural schemas and that the living of culture and the speaking of language consist of schemas in action.... Wallace Chafe (1990:80-81) described schemas as “ready made models” and “prepackaged expectations and ways of interpreting,” which are, for the most part, supplied by our cultures.... ...Charles J. Fillmore (1975:127) defined schemas quite loosely as “conceptual schemata or frameworks that are linked together in the categorization of actions, institutions, and objects....as well as any of the various repertoires of categories found in contrast sets, prototypic objects, and so on”.⁵⁹

Farzad Sharifian clarified in 2003 that such “cultural conceptualisations” need not be static or entirely common to the whole population of a culture in order to be effective. Members of a cultural group renegotiate their shared conceptualisations over time, through various communicative and routine activities.⁶⁰ These cultural schemas are said to guide the way that history is interpreted and communication is made effective. Studies of “cultural memory” affirm the significance of such shared conceptualisations, which are particularly observable in the history of Judaism.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Gary B. Palmer, *Toward a Theory of Cultural Linguistics* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1996), 63.

⁶⁰ Farzad Sharifian, “On Cultural Conceptualisations,” *JCC* 3/3 (2003): 187-207.

⁶¹ For example, the work of Jan Assman: “Cultural memory has its fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passing of time. These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance). We call these ‘figures of memory.’ The entire Jewish calendar is based on figures of memory”. Jan Assman and

Clearly, there are parallels to my own examination in this chapter. Perhaps the Jewish motif of reversal, involving the condemnation of the boastful ruler and the vindication of the righteous sufferer, might fruitfully be thought of as a “cultural schema” that received further negotiation with the reception of Jesus among the earliest Christians.

The Terminology of Reversal

It may be noticed that particular terminology is frequently associated with the Jewish motif of reversal, especially in the wisdom tradition: there are the “rulers” (ἀρχή/ ἄρχων/ βασιλεύω etc.)⁶² who are emphatically “human” (ἄνθρωπος),⁶³ who defiantly “boast” (καυχάομαι),⁶⁴ and think themselves to be “wise” (σοφός),⁶⁵ but who will be “destroyed” (καταργέω/ φθείρω etc.);⁶⁶ and there are the “righteous” (δίκαιος)⁶⁷ who are the genuine recipients of revealed “wisdom” (σοφία) from God in the form of a “mystery” (μυστήριον),⁶⁸ and who come close to (or experience) “death” (θάνατος/ νεκρός/ ἀποθνήσκω),⁶⁹ but can expect divinely granted “victory” (νίκη),⁷⁰ perhaps in the form of “resurrection” (ἐγείρομαι/ ἀνάστασις).⁷¹

What is interesting is not simply that these concepts and words are found in 1 Corinthians, but that they are strikingly arranged, appearing disproportionately in the opening and

John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *NGC* 65 (1995): 125-133; 129.

⁶² For example, Daniel 2:2, where Nebuchadnezzar is βασιλεύς, or Psalm 2, in which the ἄρχοντες conspire against the LORD and his anointed.

⁶³ For example, Psalm 9:20-21, where the opponents are emphatically ἄνθρωποι.

⁶⁴ For example, Wisdom of Solomon 6:1-5, where the rulers of the earth are addressed as those who καυχόνται.

⁶⁵ For example, every σοφός is summoned to the king in Daniel 2.

⁶⁶ For example, 2 Esdras, where καταργέω is used 4 times to mean ‘destroy’, or Wisdom of Solomon 16:5, 19, 22, 27, in which those people and possessions that suffer divine punishment are φθειρόμενον.

⁶⁷ For example, the *Psalms of Solomon*, in which a continual distinction is made between sinners and the δίκαιοι.

⁶⁸ For example, Daniel 2, in which the superior wisdom of Daniel is made evident as he receives a μυστήριον from God.

⁶⁹ For example, 1 Enoch 102:4-5, in which the souls of the righteous dead are addressed, or Esther 4:8, in which God is said to rescue his people from θάνατος.

⁷⁰ For example, 1 Maccabees 3:19, in which it is insisted that νίκη is only granted by God.

⁷¹ As in 2 Maccabees 7 and Daniel 12.

closing of the letter body. Noting the distribution of occurrences of the Greek words mentioned above may be illustrative:⁷²

| | |
|------------------|----|
| 1 Corinthians 1 | 19 |
| 1 Corinthians 2 | 18 |
| 1 Corinthians 3 | 13 |
| 1 Corinthians 4 | 6 |
| 1 Corinthians 5 | 0 |
| 1 Corinthians 6 | 3 |
| 1 Corinthians 7 | 4 |
| 1 Corinthians 8 | 0 |
| 1 Corinthians 9 | 1 |
| 1 Corinthians 10 | 0 |
| 1 Corinthians 11 | 2 |
| 1 Corinthians 12 | 1 |
| 1 Corinthians 13 | 7 |
| 1 Corinthians 14 | 3 |
| 1 Corinthians 15 | 40 |

This fits the way in which I have suggested the “rhetoric of reversal” is utilised in the letter, with the opening and closing of the letter body especially applying the dual motif of the condemned boaster and the vindicated sufferer, while chapters 5–14 serve the function of an extended ethical application.

The Impact of a Rhetoric of Reversal

A number of the instances of liturgy and literature examined in this chapter utilise the motif of reversal in order to direct human hope to divine ability and timing. Josephus calls his hearers to wait for God to bring about a change of fortunes, rather than attempt to force such a change through violent means. The book of Daniel and the Epistle of Enoch summon their hearers to be patient and righteous in the present as they look ahead to a divine reversal of fortunes. Mark calls his readers to carry the cross, and only by so doing, to perceive God-given resurrection.⁷³

⁷² Of this selection, the words that are present (or in a related form) in both chapters 1–4 and chapter 15 are: ἀρχή/ἄρχων; ἄνθρωπος; καταργέω; φθείρω; μυστήριον; θάνατος.

⁷³ Craig Hovey reads Mark’s Gospel as calling the Christian church to enter into the cross-bearing identity of its Messiah, and only from this vantage point, to know the meaning of glory and resurrection: “It means that the church is characterized by the life of the resurrection only insofar as it undergoes the pain of the cross”. Craig Hovey, *To Share in the Body: A Theology of Martyrdom for Today’s Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2008), 27.

The question of why Paul defers discussion of the resurrection to the end of 1 Corinthians is indeed perhaps parallel to the question of why Mark is so reticent in his presentation of the resurrection in chapter 16. The resurrection cannot be seen or grasped by would-be rulers in the present; but is attained by pursuing the way of the cross, which is its necessary pre-requisite. It is only in union with the Messiah (a union which is expressed liturgically and ethically in the way of the cross) that humans can, with him, inherit resurrection in the kingdom of God.

The impact of a rhetoric of reversal in these instances is thus corrective, restraining presumptuous human autonomy and directing hope to the God who is the lord of time and the gracious raiser of the dead.

Reversal in 1 Corinthians

I have sought to argue that 1 Corinthians evidences this *kerygmatic rhetoric of dual reversal*. Drawing on the dual-motif of the *condemned boaster* and the *vindicated sufferer*, this letter summons the believers of Corinth into the story of Christ's own passion. They are called to give up their boastful, status-driven divisions and inhabit Christ's death in the present, looking ahead to sharing in the manifestation of his vindication in the future. Paul has imaginatively evaluated the various situations in Corinth as having a common theological significance, and so has allowed the *kerygmatic* motif of reversal – foreshadowed in the Hebrew Bible and Jewish literature, recited in liturgy, and renegotiated in the Christ event – to give theological shape to his response.

It might be asked whether the Corinthians would have perceived this arrangement. Three factors suggest that Paul might have expected the recipients to perceive such a movement in the flow of the letter. Firstly, it is clear that Paul expected the Corinthians to recognise his “gospel” of the death and resurrection of Christ. 1:18 sums up this gospel as being about the cross, and 15:1-2 adds that this proclamation was also fundamentally about

resurrection. Thus, even if the Corinthians were not familiar with the motif of reversal in Jewish literature, they were expected to be familiar with Paul's *kerygma*. Secondly, it is evident from 14:26 that the Psalms were utilised in Corinthian worship, suggesting an awareness of the Psalmic categories and stereotypes upon which the letter draws.⁷⁴ Thirdly, it is important to recall that Paul's letter was to be read and interpreted communally. Thus it was not essential that each individual be able to recognise literary devices or allusions.⁷⁵

I go on in the next chapters to demonstrate in further detail that this interpretation provides a satisfying account of the arrangement of the letter.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

In this chapter I have argued that an appreciation of Paul's argumentation in 1 Corinthians must do justice to the decisive influence of his *kerygma* on his rhetorical arrangement. This *kerygma* especially draws on and renegotiates the motif of dual reversal, found in a range of Jewish liturgy, literature, and historical interpretation, and informing early Jewish identity, worship, story-telling, and analysis of history. Early Christianity utilised and transformed this theme of reversal in grappling with the Christ event; and Paul's own biography suggests that this motif was influential in the development of his own conception of the *kerygma*. Paul's other letters reinforce the notion that this motif of reversal, renegotiated as Christian *kerygma*, was significant in his interpretation and expression of the Christian faith.

⁷⁴ Indeed, Ciampa and Rosner detect expected familiarity with a variety of Jewish cultural references and technical terms: Ciampa and Rosner, *First Letter*, 8.

⁷⁵ I am grateful to Richard Bauckham, who added this point in discussion of a paper that I presented at St Andrews University on *The Rhetoric of the Psalms and the Imagination of the Apostle* in 2009. Bauckham makes a similar point in relation to the Gospel of John elsewhere: "Finally, it is essential to remember that few 'ordinary readers' of an early Christian work such as the Fourth Gospel would read it alone, with only the resources of their own knowledge to assist their comprehension, as modern readers do. Reading (which for most 'ordinary readers' was hearing) took place in community. Aspects of the text that were not obvious could be explained by teachers who had some training in scriptural exegesis and who may have given time and trouble to studying the text". Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 284.

In 1 Corinthians in particular, chapters 1–4 and chapter 15 evidence the *kerygmatic* dual motif of the condemned boaster and the vindicated cruciform sufferer, while chapters 5–14 serve as an extended ethical application. The function of this rhetorical arrangement is to summon the Corinthians to “inhabit” Christ the cruciform sufferer in the present as they await his manifestation, rather than to emulate the boastful “rulers of this age” who await condemnation.

Chapter 2

The Unity and Coherence of 1 Corinthians

1. The Unity of 1 Corinthians

From Weiss (1910) to Welborn (2005), questions concerning the literary integrity of 1 Corinthians have endured within New Testament scholarship over the last century. L.L. Welborn comments:

I do not regard canonical 1 Corinthians as a unified text. Almost one hundred years ago, Johannes Weiss, whose commentary on 1 Corinthians remains unsurpassed, expressed doubts about the integrity of canonical 1 Corinthians, noting breaks in the train of thought, discrepancies in reports of events, sudden changes of tone, and differences in outlook and judgment. In my view, the questions raised by Weiss have not been answered by recent attempts to defend the integrity of 1 Corinthians on the basis of rhetorical analysis. Hence, I follow Weiss in the hypothesis that 1 Cor. 1.1–6.11 was originally an independent letter, the last of three substantial fragments preserved in canonical 1 Corinthians.¹

Following Weiss, there have been numerous attempts to be attentive to apparent partitions in the flow of canonical 1 Corinthians, resulting in various suggestions of pre-redaction Pauline letters. Helmut Merklein usefully summarises side by side the partition theories of Weiss, Héring, Schmithals, Dinkler, Schenk, Suhl, Schenke and Fischer, and Senft.² The literary reconstructions of these scholars range from positing two original letters to nine original letters behind canonical 1 Corinthians.

Objections to the Unity of 1 Corinthians

It will be useful to consider two fundamental objections to the unity of 1 Corinthians: a *lack of unified literary coherence*; and *evidence of an editor*.

¹ L.L. Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1-4 in the Comic-Philosophic Tradition* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 13.

² Helmut Merklein, "Die Einheitlichkeit des ersten Korintherbriefes," *ZNW* 75 (1984): 153-183.

Lack of Unified Literary Coherence

Jean Héring crystallises the primary reason that certain scholars maintain reservations about the literary integrity of 1 Corinthians:

[T]he most serious argument against the unity of 1 Corinthians is afforded by an examination of this long letter itself, certain parts of which accord ill with others, even if allowance is made for longer or shorter interruptions in its dictation.³

Schmithals concurs:

The arrangement of the letters itself forces us to recognize that Paul cannot possibly have written them thus.⁴

Harry Gamble usefully summarises particular expressions of such “ill accord” (many of which I will consider in detail later in this chapter):

[T]he literary difficulties with which Paul’s letters are rife: anacoloutha, repetitions, abrupt shifts of subject matter and tone, seemingly distinct situations presupposed within what is presented as the text of a single letter, etc. Theories of redaction have sought to make these phenomena intelligible as the consequence of secondary editorial reworking.⁵

It is, then, an assumption of Redaction Criticism that significant literary incongruities in a letter are more likely a feature of *editorial attempts* at achieving coherence than *original compositional* coherence.

³ Jean Héring, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock; London: Epworth, 1962), xiii; trans. of *La première épître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens* (2nd ed.; CNT 7; Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1959).

⁴ Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians* (3rd ed.; trans. John E. Steely; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1971), 87.

⁵ Harry Gamble, “The Redaction of the Pauline Letters and the Formation of the Pauline Corpus,” *JBL* 94/3 (1975): 403-418; 403.

Evidence of an Editor

Gerhard Sellin argues that an editorial purpose in canonical 1 Corinthians is both reasonable and observable.⁶ He suggests that after the time of Paul, it became useful and necessary to systematise Pauline thought for contemporary guidance. Thus, letter-portions of a similar character were brought together, resulting in two editorial collections (canonical 1 and 2 Corinthians).

For Harry Gamble, this direction of argument is important if redaction theories are to be taken seriously:

[T]he redaction of a letter must have a *Sitz im Leben*, and the cogency of a redactional hypothesis will necessarily depend not only on its ability to overcome the literary aporias but also on its capacity to rationalize the redactional effort *as such*, i.e., to clarify the editorial *Sitz im Leben* in its various aspects. This would entail consideration of the questions how, when, by whom, and to what purpose the supposed editorial work may have been undertaken.⁷

Robert Jewett⁸ and Khiok-Khng Yeo⁹ argue at length for a redactional *Sitz im Leben* that justifies viewing the canonical letters as editorial products. Influenced by Schmithals, Jewett argues for the detection of distinct historical situations in 1 Corinthians. These distinct situations are responded to by Paul with distinct material, which can be described broadly as potentially pro-Gnostic and charismatic on the one hand, and insistently anti-Gnostic and institutional on the other hand. Yeo discerns these two different backgrounds behind different parts of 1 Corinthians 8–10, thus suggesting a later editorial combining of different letters:

⁶ Gerhard Sellin, "Hauptprobleme des ersten Korintherbriefes," *ANRW* II, 25/4 (1987): 2940-3044; 2981.

⁷ Gamble, "Redaction," 403.

⁸ Robert Jewett, "The Redaction of 1 Corinthians and the Trajectory of the Pauline School," *JAAR* 44/4 Supplement (1978): 398-444.

⁹ Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction*.

In letter B, the style is authoritative, making use of traditional, Hellenistic Jewish, and scriptural material, with hardly any dialogue with the audience. In Letter C, however, the dialogical rhetoric is obviously visible in both chapter 8 and the end of chapter 10. Paul uses creedal and scriptural material, but he also interacts substantively with the audience's material. In each rhetoric the content corresponds to the style. In the earlier piece, the apologetic rhetoric admonishes, charges, and warns the Gnostics to flee from idolatry. In the later piece, the rhetoric of knowledge and love opens up a forum for the Gnostics, the "weak," and Paul to interact with one another.¹⁰

Thus an alleged issue in first century Christianity (the development of Gnosticism, and its opposition on the grounds of institutional apostolic orthodoxy) is suggested as a realistic redactional situation that makes good sense of the diversity of material that is found in 1 Corinthians. An authoritarian Pauline school manipulated the potentially pro-Gnostic Pauline letter, to make it fit into a redacted product that was, overall, anti-Gnostic in stance: canonical 1 Corinthians. Arguments for incipient Gnosticism in the first century have diminished in credibility in the last several decades; however it may still be appropriate to envisage early disputes between different models of leadership and authority.¹¹

These, then, are two fundamental objections to the unity of 1 Corinthians: *lack of literary coherence*, and arguable *evidence of an editor* – complete with a conceivable editorial situation.

Because these arguments are largely about literary flow and coherence, they require a largely literary response. Most recent arguments for the unity of 1 Corinthians have

¹⁰ Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction*, 210.

¹¹ 1 Clement, for example, would hint that this was the case in Corinth in the late first century. On dating, see the discussion in footnote 19.

indeed been along these lines – most notably that by Margaret M. Mitchell.¹² However it also seems worthwhile to consider briefly the issue of historical plausibility.

Redaction Reconstructions and Historical Plausibility

Of the various redaction theories regarding 1 Corinthians, I find those of Walter Schmithals and Robert Jewett to be most attentive to historical questions, and so it is with their two reconstructions that I will engage at this point.¹³

In short, Schmithals¹⁴ argues that 1 Corinthians was redacted by the collator of an early Pauline Corpus. This early Corpus formed the archetype for later copies of the Pauline letters, which explains why no significantly dissenting versions of 1 Corinthians have been attested. Jewett, as noted above, argues that 1 Corinthians was redacted by a conservative Pauline party, which wanted to crowd out competing claims to carry the tradition of the apostle. Both Schmithals and Jewett thus hold that the redaction was essentially an aggressive move, designed to cement an authoritative Pauline tradition, at the cost of the

¹² 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, 1991).

¹³ Although Sellin is aware of the relation of redaction theories to the issue of the formation of a Pauline Corpus, his investigation of this issue is not as detailed as that of either Schmithals or Jewett: “Doch kann dieser Vorrang [that is, the precedence of the text-critical end-product over alleged text parts] keineswegs ein absoluter sein, da die Möglichkeit, daß mehrere an denselben Adressaten gerichtete Paulus-Briefe im Zeitraum zwischen ihrer Erstrezeption und der handschriftlichen Vervielfältigung im Rahmen eines überregionalen Corpus Paulinum redaktionell zu einer Briefeinheit kombiniert wurden, nicht generell von der Hand zu weisen ist, wie der immer noch bestehende große Konsens in der gegenwärtigen Einschätzung des 2 Kor eindrücklich belegt”. Gerhard Sellin, “1 Korinther 5-6 und der ‘Vorbrief’ nach Korinth: Indizien für eine Mehrschichtigkeit von Kommunikationsakten im ersten Korintherbrief,” *NTS* 37 (1991): 535-558; 535. Schrage, likewise, shows an awareness of the difficulties associated with the formation of the Pauline corpus in relation to redaction theories, but does not deal with such difficulties in any detail. See Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther (1 Kor 1,1-6,11)* (EKKNT; Zürich: Neukirchener, 1991), 71. Hurd rightly objects to a simplistic appeal to the case of 2 Corinthians: “[T]he redaction of 2 Corinthians at whatever level of intelligence offers little support for theories of redaction in 1 Corinthians. The positing of a redactor for 1 Corinthians is an independent step in the chain of argument, and appeal cannot be made to creative redactional activity in 2 Corinthians”. John C. Hurd, “Good News and the Integrity of 1 Corinthians” in *Gospel in Paul: Studies in 1 Corinthians, Galatians and Romans* (ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 38-62; 52.

¹⁴ Schmithals’ understanding of the work of the Corinthian redactor can be found in his work *Gnosticism in Corinth*, and on pages 287-8 of his article “Die Korintherbriefe als Briefsammlung,” *ZNW* 64 (1973): 263-88.

original integrity of the pre-redaction Corinthian correspondence. Two questions of plausibility are worth noting in relation to such reconstructions: that of *an aggressively singular Pauline Corpus*; and that relating to *the utilisation of 1 Corinthians by Clement*.

An Aggressively Singular Pauline Corpus

Schmithals' proposal, that an early redacted Pauline Corpus was pushed to become the archetype for subsequent copies of the Pauline letters, would provide an explanation for the general commonality of text and order in early manuscripts,¹⁵ and would explain why no attestation of pre-redaction versions has survived.

However, Gamble argued convincingly in 1975 that Schmithals' position does not fit the evidence of the significant variation in the textual tradition of Romans:

[I]t is, after all, only a hypothesis and not a matter of established fact that the textual tradition has but a single source. That this assumption is, indeed, mistaken seems to be clearly demonstrated by the textual peculiarities of the letter to the Romans.¹⁶

The significant "textual peculiarities" related to the ending of Romans include attestation of fourteen-chapter text forms (for example, the eighth century Codex Amiatinus, which appears to view Romans as including 1:1-14:23 and 16:25-27); fifteen-chapter text forms (the Chester Beatty Papyrus, in which the closing doxology is displaced, occurring between

¹⁵ In 1975, Gamble claimed, "[T]he forms of the Pauline letters remain fundamentally the same in all known witnesses. Except in the case of Romans, the tradition preserves no textual evidence that any of the letters ever had basically different forms than the forms in which we know them". Gamble, "Redaction," 418. By "basically different forms" Gamble seems to imply major rearrangement such as is found in Romans. Porter, furthermore, comments on the "amount of commonality between the early manuscripts" in terms of *ordering* within the corpus: "In the light of this [the closeness of letter destinations resulting in the possibility of easy early collation], it is not surprising that variation in the Pauline corpus occurs within relatively narrow parameters... the fluctuation in placement of Hebrews is the only real variable – there is otherwise virtual fixity to the manuscript ordering". Stanley E. Porter, "When and How Was the Pauline Canon Compiled? An Assessment of Theories," in *The Pauline Canon* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 95-128; 122, 123.

¹⁶ Gamble, "Redaction," 415.

15:33 and 16:1); and sixteen-chapter text forms (as adopted in the Nestle Aland 27, with expressed uncertainty about the placement of the doxology).¹⁷ These textual differences argue against an aggressively exclusive single-corpus archetype for the Pauline letters: Why were major variations in the manuscript tradition of Romans able to persist if there was an early policy of elimination of alternatives to the one authoritative corpus tradition?

This objection has not been satisfactorily answered since it was first raised by Gamble. It would seem that an exclusive single-corpus textual archetype is not as plausible an explanation for this evidence as a more free development of a Pauline Corpus, allowing for both general commonality and the exception (at least) of major variation in the ending of Romans.

The Utilisation of 1 Corinthians by Clement, in 96, in Rome

The letter of 1 Corinthians appears to have received particular interest from Patristic writers.¹⁸ 1 Clement is especially important, given its clear reference to 1 Corinthians, in what was itself a letter to the Christians at Corinth, dated about 96 CE.¹⁹

1 Clement 47:1-3

Take up the letter of the blessed Paul the apostle. What is it that he first wrote to you in the beginning of the gospel? In truth he wrote to you spiritually,

¹⁷ For Gamble's work on this topic, see Harry Y. Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans: A Study in Textual and Literary Criticism* (Studies and Documents 42; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977).

¹⁸ Mark Harding notes the extensive examination of Albert Barnett in 1941 in which there is early citation of "*1 Corinthians* by Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Justin". Mark Harding, "Disputed and Undisputed Letters of Paul," in *The Pauline Canon* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 129-168; 130. Jewett cites Mitton: "It is clear that 1 Corinthians is the letter of Paul which has most clearly impressed itself on the minds of early Christian leaders. This epistle is confidently known early in the second century in the churches of Rome and Asia Minor, and perhaps in Syria". Jewett, "Redaction," 431.

¹⁹ This date is commonly accepted. Although Welborn suggests that 1 Clement may be dated as late as 140 CE, chapter 44 seems to indicate that some still-living leaders had been appointed by the apostles, suggesting a date before the end of the first century. See L.L. Welborn, "On the Date of First Clement," *BR* 29 (1984): 35-54. For the purpose of my argument here, it only matters that Jewett accepts this dating.

concerning himself and Cephas and Apollos, because also then you had split into factions.

Further, 1 Clement appears to allude to other Pauline letters, or adopt their perspectives or terminology. The mention of “pillars” (στῦλοι) of the church in 1 Clement 5:2, for example, may draw on Galatians 2:9. The reference to Paul’s stoning later in the same chapter may recall 2 Corinthians 11:25.

Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher Mark Tuckett indicate a range of scholarly opinion on Clement’s familiarity with the Pauline Epistles, and ultimately agree with the modest conclusions of Carlyle:

Clement can be shown to have used both Romans and 1 Corinthians, and there is some slight evidence that he may also have used 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Timothy and Titus.²⁰

Clement’s assumption that the Corinthians needed no explanation as to how he had access, in Rome, to a copy of the (perhaps “first”²¹) letter sent to their community, as well as possible access to other Pauline letters, hints that some Pauline letter collection, which included 1 Corinthians, was known as available by 96 CE.

²⁰ Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher Mark Tuckett, *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 143.

²¹ It is possible that “first” (πρῶτον) in 1 Clement 47:1-3 refers to the beginning of the epistle. If so, this is confirmation that the letter to which Clement had access was not at odds with the ordering of canonical 1 Corinthians, given that he cites chapter 1. However, it seems just as likely, if not preferable, that “first” identifies the letter to which Clement is making reference. If indeed this Corinthian letter is thought of by Clement as being “first”, this is striking, because it is not generally regarded as *chronologically* the first of Paul’s letters to Corinth; but it is the first letter to Corinth in every *Pauline Corpus*. E. Randolph Richards notes this and points out that if Clement were using a corpus of Pauline letters, he would assume that 1 Corinthians was “first”, without necessarily having any awareness of “Corinthians A and C”. E. Randolph Richards, “The Codex and the Early Collection of Paul’s Letters,” *BBR* 8 (1998): 151-166; 166. For a development of this argument see Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2004). Richards’ speculation is that Clement was using Paul’s personal set of letter copies.

Indeed, Jewett acknowledges Clement's access to a canonically-recognisable version of 1 Corinthians at this time:

Since 1 Corinthians was cited by Clement in A.D. 96, with citations coming from the various component parts in such a way as to make it clear that he had the canonical letter, the most likely time for the redaction of 1 and 2 Corinthians is the early 90s.²²

However, it would seem extraordinary for Clement to urge the Corinthians to shun partisanship by citing a letter that had been significantly redacted, in a location removed from its Corinthian origins, less than six years earlier, *as an essentially fictive response to partisanship*. In Jewett's reconstruction:

[The redactor's location] must have been a location in the Aegean realm, in a church founded by the Apostle Paul, where competitive groups were vying for the proper interpretation of their mentor's legacy. If the redactor and his circle were not in Ephesus, they were at least in a similar city in the region where a vigorous struggle was underway with substantial intellectual resources available on both sides.²³

Would Clement really expect the Corinthians to accept as convincing an exhortation to unity cited from a fictionally "first" letter, which had recently been taken out of their own hands and substantially reworked? I find this improbable. Such a reconstruction requires Clement to have expected that the Corinthians' problems with ecclesial authority would be reversed by barefaced appeal to the obviously deceptive work of that authority.

Gamble's critique of Schmithals is also apt here:

²² Jewett, "Redaction," 432.

²³ Jewett, "Redaction," 432.

[I]f Paul's letters had been known and used beforehand... it is difficult to imagine that an editor could have succeeded with such a promiscuous recasting.²⁴

It would seem that the redaction theories of Schmithals and Jewett regarding 1 Corinthians – that is, those redaction theories most attentive to historical issues – leave significant questions of historical plausibility.

A plausible historical reconstruction would appear to involve the following three elements: firstly, some sort of Pauline letter collection available in Rome by the mid-90s, including a canonically-recognisable 1 Corinthians; secondly, the possibility of other collections or editions of the individual letters (i.e. there was not one aggressively exclusive textual archetype); and thirdly, a degree of consistency between Clement's adoption of the rhetorical force of what "the blessed Paul the Apostle... first" wrote, and its original reception by the Corinthian church (i.e. Clement's citation was not transparently hollow).

If, then, it can be demonstrated that the apparent *literary* incongruities in 1 Corinthians can be explained as actually having some sort of literary coherence, it would seem plausible to receive 1 Corinthians as an originally unified letter.

Conceptions of the Unity of 1 Corinthians

The inattentiveness of redaction theories to Paul's pattern of argumentation seems to be an important factor in the preference for conceptions of the letter's literary coherence in much recent scholarship. There is, however, a variety of conceptions of the letter's unity.

²⁴ Harry Y. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf & Stock, 2002; repr., GBS. Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1985), 39.

Linda Belleville argues that the flow of issues in 1 Corinthians is understandable in the light of Greco-Roman letter forms:

That 1 Corinthians is a type of request letter is... supported by the fact that its overall structure and form correspond to the structure and form of the Hellenistic private letter of request: (1) letter opening: A to B χαίρειν, (2) background to the request (in 1 Cor. introduced by the formula 'For it was shown to me concerning you, my brethren, that', 1:11), (3) request period, introduced by a request formula (in 1 Cor. a παρακαλῶ formula), and (4) letter closing: greetings and farewell.²⁵

As illustrated in this summary by Belleville, Epistolary Analysis has been most helpful in the examination of the beginnings and endings of Pauline letters, which bear some similarity to epistolary conventions of the time.²⁶

John D. Harvey summarises the development of this sort of analysis:

In 1912 Paul Wendland identified the basic components of the openings and closings of Paul's letters. The openings generally followed the form: salutation and thanksgiving; the basic components of the closings were: doxology, greeting, and benediction. Eleven years later Francis X. J. Exler's dissertation clarified the basic parts of the Hellenistic letter (opening, body, closing) and the conventional phrases present in each part.²⁷

²⁵ Linda L. Belleville, "Continuity or Discontinuity: A Fresh Look at 1 Corinthians in the Light of First-Century Epistolary Forms and Conventions," *EQ* 59/1 (1987): 15-37; 22.

²⁶ For example, the opening thanksgiving/prayer can be seen in the papyrus letter from Serenos to Isadora: *Oxyrhynchus papyrus* 528 (*Second century CE*): "Serenos, to Isadora, sister and lady: Heartiest greetings. Before everything else, I pray for your health; and each day and evening I bow down for you before Theoris who loves you". Such elements are, of course, shaped to the writer's own purposes. Perhaps the most well-known Pauline modification is the Christianised version (χαρίς) of the conventional epistolary "greetings" (χαίρειν).

²⁷ John D. Harvey, *Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 16.

Comparison of Pauline letters with Hellenistic epistolary handbooks and actual letters has also been conducted with the aims of considering “letter type” and considering the flow of the “letter body”. This has been a less certain exercise, because there is greater variety in these areas, and the handbooks themselves do not provide concise rules for letter-writing, so much as examples of epistolary possibilities in various situations. Likewise, the “model letters” provided by ancient epistolary theorists allow great flexibility:

The model letters emphasize not the details of the narrative portion of the letter (which are situation specific and known, one presumes, to the writer), but instead provide conventionally acceptable phrases for the social interaction of which the letter is part.²⁸

Thus an attempt to understand the argumentation of the main body of Pauline letters is only partially enlightened by comparison with the formal structures of other Hellenistic letters:

Paul paid attention to formal conventions and topics associated with letters and, like other more “literary” letter writers, did not hesitate to modify those conventions to serve the purpose of his argument. However, it is clear, and a source of continuing frustration for scholars, that his letters are not like others, whether from the tradition of literary letters, official correspondence, or the private letter. They cannot be neatly categorized.²⁹

Given this uniqueness, attempts have been made to consider epistolary conventions displayed *within* the Pauline corpus. Harvey comments on the influence of White in this regard:

²⁸ Carol Poster, “A Conversation Halved: Epistolary Theory in Graeco-Roman Antiquity,” in *Letter-Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present: Historical and Bibliographic Studies* (ed. Carol Poster and Linda Mitchell; Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 21-51; 32.

²⁹ James D. Hester, “Rhetoric and the Composition of the Letters of Paul,” n.p. [cited 4th May 2007]. Online: <http://rhetjournal.net/HesterComp.html>

White argued that the Greek letter-body was composed of three sections: the body-opening, the body-middle, and the body-closing. The same basic structure can be found in Paul's letters: the body-opening is introduced by one of several formulae; the body-middle is divided into two parts: a theological argument and a practical section; the body-closing begins with a motivation-for-writing formula and ends with the apostolic parousia. White's examination of the letter-body has been foundational for subsequent work on the form of Paul's letters.³⁰

Harvey offers an account of the argumentation of 1 Corinthians based on the insights of Epistolary Analysis, as do both Belleville and Hermann Probst.³¹ These accounts are worthy of consideration, while keeping in mind the limitations of the relative uniqueness of Pauline letter-bodies, and the formal flexibility allowed for letter-bodies by epistolary convention in general. Hans-Josef Klauck's brief account of the ordering of 1 Corinthians in the light of ancient epistolary conventions is appropriately mindful of these limitations, but is correspondingly general.³²

Rhetorical Criticism

More recently, Rhetorical Criticism has (re-)arisen as a tool for analysing Pauline letters. Broadly, this development aims to do justice to Pauline texts as *argumentation*. Specifically, Rhetorical Criticism usually seeks to understand Pauline argumentation in the light of patterns of *speech rhetoric* seen in handbooks and textual examples of the Aristotelian tradition. The broader aim is admirable:

³⁰ Harvey, *Listening to the Text*, 20.

³¹ Hermann Probst, *Paulus und der Brief: Die Rhetorik des antiken Briefes als Form der paulinischen Korintherkorrespondenz (1 Kor 8-10)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991).

³² Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006).

[B]ecause Paul's letters, unlike most letters, consist largely of argumentation, ancient rhetoric provides one of the most useful tools for analysis, because it structured formal patterns for argumentation.³³

Analyses of Pauline letters and letter-sections in the light of Rhetorical Criticism are now abundant.³⁴ The most influential application to 1 Corinthians is by Mitchell, who argues that the letter ought to be seen as a "merging" of the letter genre with the conventions of Aristotelian speech rhetoric. 1 Corinthians, she argues, is an example of "deliberative rhetoric", and can thus be interpreted in the light of the flexible structural conventions and general intentions of this genre:

It is of particular importance to this study of a text which is quite clearly a letter, 1 Corinthians, that deliberative rhetoric was commonly employed within epistolary frameworks in antiquity. Because deliberative rhetoric is compatible with the letter genre, Paul's use of it in 1 Corinthians is not anomalous in ancient literature, and is fully appropriate to both the epistolary and rhetorical elements which combine in this way.³⁵

However, a number of scholars are unconvinced that ancient rhetorical conventions for speeches provide a great deal of enlightenment in approaching the flow of ancient letters.³⁶ Philip Kern³⁷ and R. Dean Anderson³⁸ argue vigorously against this sort of application. Stanley Porter critiques Mitchell's project in particular, questioning her methodology in attempting to demonstrate the "deliberative letter type", and drawing

³³ Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3-4.

³⁴ The influence of Rhetorical Criticism on commentators is surveyed in Thomas H. Olbricht, "Rhetorical Criticism in Biblical Commentaries," *CBR* 7/1 (2008): 11-36.

³⁵ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 20.

³⁶ The debate is surveyed by Martin, who reports an impasse: "In the minds of proponents, analysis of Paul's letters according to rhetorical arrangement is useful and a proper extension of rhetorical criticism, but in the minds of opponents, it is not useful and an overextension". Martin, "Invention and Arrangement," in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. Sampley and Lampe), 59.

³⁷ Philip H. Kern, *Rhetoric and Galatians: Assessing an Approach to Paul's Epistle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³⁸ R. Dean Anderson Jr., *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, (rev. ed.; Leuven: Peeters, 1999).

attention to doubts about the application of oratorical descriptive categories to genuine letters. As Porter points out, this debate raises questions about Mitchell's conclusions regarding the letter's unity.³⁹

It would seem that, although it is unquestionably useful to analyse Pauline letters in terms of the movement of their lengthy argumentation, there is no certainty that ancient letter-writers (or, more particularly, Paul) made reliable or predictable use of conventions of speech rhetoric *in considering macro-structure*. Jeffrey T. Reed explains this well:

The three standard epistolary components (opening, body, closing) share some similarity with the four principal patterns of rhetorical arrangement (*exordium*, *narratio*, *confirmatio*, *conclusio*). But the similarity is functional, not formal.⁴⁰

An example will illustrate the ambiguity that this functional similarity brings to rhetorical investigations of letters. The following standard first-century letter of recommendation may be seen to possess a number of the flexible elements that Mitchell finds important in her identification of 1 Corinthians as "deliberative rhetoric";⁴¹ but the resemblance here clearly expresses the pragmatic similarity that occurs across a breadth of Greco-Roman communication, rather than a merging of rhetorical and epistolary approaches:

³⁹ Stanley E. Porter, "Understanding Pauline Studies. An Assessment of Recent Research: Part One," *Them* 22/1 (1996): 14-25; 19-20.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey T. Reed, "Using Ancient Rhetorical Categories to Interpret Paul's Letters: A Question of Genre," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 292-324; 307-8. Cf. Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (HTA; Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 2006), 46. Peter Lampe is optimistic about the combination of oratorical and literary approaches more generally: "Only both approaches, the epistolographical analysis, which considers the written status, and the rhetorical, which reflects oral speeches, do justice to the text – but only if both work together in scholarship". Lampe goes on to indicate that creative compromise may need to occur between the two perspectives. Lampe, "Rhetorical Analysis," in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. Sampley and Lampe), 16.

⁴¹ "If we go right to the heart of deliberative rhetoric, identify its constitutive features, and demonstrate that 1 Corinthians has all those features, then we have some basis to proceed, albeit still cautiously, with an investigation of 1 Corinthians as deliberative rhetoric". Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 13. Mitchell identifies such "constitutive features" as a focus on the future; the use of a set of appeals (usually to advantage); proof by example; and the consideration of appropriate *topoi*, such as the need for concord.

Oxyrhynchus papyrus 292 (25 CE)

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Epistolary introduction</i> | Theon, to the honourable Tyrannus: Many greetings! |
| <i>Statement of facts [narratio]</i> | Herakleides, the one bringing this letter to you, is my brother. |
| <i>Thesis statement utilising language of exhortation (παράκαλῶ); future orientation; topos related to association [exordium]</i> | Therefore I urge you with all of my power to bring him into your company. I have also asked Hermias the brother, via letter, to tell you about him. |
| <i>Conclusion: appeal to advantage (in terms of social honour) [conclusio]</i> | You will be doing me the greatest act of kindness if you will take note of him. |
| <i>Epistolary closing</i> | Above all, I pray that you might have health, be free from harm, and do well. Goodbye. |

Edgar Krentz describes his own change of position, which seems to be illustrative of a development in much study of Pauline rhetoric over the last two decades, from narrow expectations regarding certain conventions of speech rhetoric as a background for understanding Pauline letter structure, to a broader acknowledgment of Paul's creative freedom, allowing him to draw on a variety of rhetorical tools and influences:

I began this paper intending to urge the use of rhetorical analysis in terms of ancient rhetoric. To my own surprise, I ended by taking an ambiguous stance, recognizing the great value of Aristotle's discussion of proofs for analysis of Paul's letters, wishing that I had had more time to work through the *topoi* he listed and to evaluate the use of ornamentation and figures of thought, but quite disenchanted with the value of *analysing the structure* of 1 Thessalonians rhetorically. I did not find any advance over nonrhetorical analysis, and as much disparity in the rhetorical disposition as in the older formal and literary analysis.⁴²

The narrative is far more flexible than the handbooks lead one to expect. One should guard against making rhetorical theory a Procrustean bed to which, willy-

⁴² Edgar Krentz, "1 Thessalonians: Rhetorical Flourishes and Formal Constraints," in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?* (ed. Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beutler; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 287, note 1; emphasis mine.

nilly, texts must conform. Rhetorical criticism is most fruitful when it does not overpress its claims. That applies especially to the use of the divisions of an oration, when applied to a nonratorical genre.⁴³

Duane F. Watson urges that such flexibility must be acknowledged by New Testament interpreters, who all too often confidently align whole letters to one or other of the three assumed rhetorical species (epideictic/deliberative/forensic), and draw structural or exegetical implications on the basis of such classification:

New Testament scholars often treat rhetorical species as firm genres. They look to see how the characteristics of Paul's epistles "fit" the features of the three rhetorical species. However, scholars can free themselves from rigid genre analysis by examining Paul's rhetorical strategies on their own merits.... Scholars can discover both where Paul conforms to the abstraction of rhetorical species and where he is creatively different.⁴⁴

Thus Mitchell's approach, which seeks to identify the "deliberative genre" as the (flexible but comprehensively determinative) governor of the arrangement of 1 Corinthians, appears somewhat out of step with developments in rhetorical analysis.⁴⁵ Olbricht's comment is illustrative of this disparity:

⁴³ Krentz, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Thessalonians Debate* (ed. Donfried and Beutler), 316. Olbricht makes a similar point, and suggests "church rhetoric" as an alternative conception: "The focus of 'church' rhetoric is on the present, but as informed by the past mighty acts of God (Rom 9:1-5); for Paul, more specifically on the salvific actions in Christ (Rom 5:6-11)". Clearly, this bears similarity to my conception of *kerygmatic rhetoric*. Thomas H. Olbricht, "The Foundations of the Ethos in Paul and in the Classical Rhetoricians," in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse* (ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 138-159; 144.

⁴⁴ Watson, "Three Species," in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. Sampley and Lampe), 43. Mitchell (*Paul and the Rhetoric*, chapter 2), Witherington (cited below) and Collins (Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (SacP 7; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 18-19) effectively limit Paul's rhetorical options to one (or mostly one) of these three species, even though they allow for variation and idiosyncrasy in the expression of the species themselves. J. Paul Sampley views 1 Corinthians as evidencing a mixture of the three species: J. Paul Sampley, Robert W. Wall, and N.T. Wright, *The New Interpreter's Bible: Acts – 1 Corinthians* (vol. 10; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2002).

⁴⁵ I do not see my own task as comprehensively demonstrating limitations with the theory of Mitchell's approach; for this focus see especially the investigations of Anderson and

Such identification [of a biblical book with one of the three supposed classical species] is often inconclusive and controverted, and in the end not especially efficacious in providing new insights.⁴⁶

These hesitations about the ability to discern confidently a governing conventional species, corresponding structure, and resulting unity for Pauline letters call into question not only Mitchell's conception of the literary integrity of 1 Corinthians (as a "deliberative letter" consistently advising concord⁴⁷), but also Yeo's argument *against* the literary integrity of 1 Corinthians. Yeo formulates his fundamental objection to the unity of 1 Corinthians in relation to the problems of Mitchell's project:

While I agree with Mitchell's main thesis that Paul's intention in using the deliberative genre is to persuade the Corinthian church to be in concord as a body of Christ, I find that not all of 1 Corinthians relates to the thesis statement of 1 Cor 1:10 as she contends. For example, chapter 15 (on resurrection) and 6:12-20 (on fornication) have little if anything to do with dissension in the Corinthian church. There are discrepancies in the single thematic understanding of Paul's argumentation in 1 Corinthians taken as a whole composition, and that suggests possible fusion of two or more letters. It is possible that Paul's rhetorical intent (for concord of the Corinthian church) is the same as for the three or four separate letters he wrote to the Corinthians.⁴⁸

Kern, noted above. My task, rather, is the positive presentation of a credible alternative rhetorical reading, with greater explanatory power.

⁴⁶ Olbricht, "Rhetorical Criticism," 16.

⁴⁷ Mitchell's limitation to the three alleged options of classical rhetoric is clear: "But the overwhelming future emphasis in the letter, because it is, appropriately, a letter which gives advice about behavioural changes in community life, indicates that *of the three rhetorical species*, only the deliberative fits 1 Corinthians". Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 25; emphasis mine.

⁴⁸ Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction*, 76. Welborn, similarly, appears to frame his rejection of the literary coherence of the letter in relation to Mitchell's project: see the quotation at the beginning of this chapter.

Yeo's objection certainly draws attention to failings within Mitchell's project. As Yeo points out, Mitchell's explanation of chapter 15 – and verse 58 as the culminating finale – seems unacceptably forced, requiring one to read between the lines in order to discern what is allegedly a climactic conclusion to a consistent argument for congregational concord.⁴⁹ This calls into question Mitchell's suggestion and interpretation of 1:10 as the governing thesis statement of a "deliberative" structure, but does not adequately dispense with the literary unity of 1 Corinthians itself.

Witherington rightly sees that an analysis of the rhetoric of the Pharisee Paul (who, it should be noted, co-sent 1 Corinthians with Sosthenes – the synagogue leader?) must be open to broader possibilities:

[T]he primary and first task is to ask the appropriate historical questions about the NT text and what its ancient authors had in mind. When that is the prime mandate then only analysis on the basis of Greco-Roman *or ancient Jewish* rhetoric is appropriate.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Mitchell writes, "[T]he whole argument in 15:1-57 serves to culminate Paul's appeal throughout 1 Corinthians, so 15:58 need only draw the connections implicit in that extensive argument". Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 291. Mitchell's argument is that in chapter 15 Paul brings to culmination an extended appeal that the Corinthians see congregational *unity* as being advantageous, and thus worthy of their dedicated pursuit. Verse 58 is then interpreted along these lines: "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord [that is, to the pursuit of unity], because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain [that is, it is to your advantage]". In Mitchell's own words, "The conclusion is short and to the point, and amounts to a restatement of the central argument of the letter: seek the upbuilding of the church in concord, even when it entails sacrificing what appears to be to your present advantage, because this is the appropriate Christian behaviour of love (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ κυρίου) which will lead to eschatological advantage (οὐκ ἔστιν κενὸς ἐν κυρίῳ)" (290). That chapter 15 forms the climactic proof of an argument against factionalism, however, is not at all apparent in the text. Gordon Fee rightly notes that "nothing in Paul's response suggests that the Corinthians are divided among themselves on this matter. As before, the issue seems to be between some of them – who have influenced the whole – and the apostle Paul". Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; 2nd rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 713-14. This is in broad agreement with John Chrysostom's view: "For although they were arguing with one another in other matters, in this matter they all conspired, as with one mouth, insisting that there is no resurrection". Homily 39 on 1 Corinthians; PG 61.339. For my reading of 15:58, see chapter 5, footnote 68.

⁵⁰ Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene, Oreg.: Cascade Books, 2009), 6-7; emphasis mine.

Witherington notes that Paul would have had a “thorough grounding in Jewish traditions”, and that “Paul would have been thoroughly grounded in the Scriptures”.⁵¹ He reasons:

Paul would surely have learned certain methods of debating or persuading, of arguing, for example, from current experience to scriptural proof in midrashic fashion (see 1 Cor 9:7-14), or of using a form of what could be called *peshet* or even allegory to make a point (Gal 4:21-31).⁵²

And yet, disappointingly, Witherington’s ensuing discussion of “Paul the Rhetor” limits Paul’s rhetorical resources to the familiar three species of Greco-Roman speech rhetoric:

[T]here were three primary kinds of rhetoric, each tooled to suit a particular setting: (1) judicial or *forensic* rhetoric for use in the law courts; (2) *deliberative* rhetoric, meant to be used in the assembly; and (3) *epideictic* rhetoric, meant to be used in funeral oratory or public speeches lauding some event or person, or in oratory contests in the market place or the arena.⁵³

Rhetoric then reveals to us a Paul committed to and drawing on a great Greco-Roman heritage.⁵⁴

It should not be denied that Paul was aware of, and frequently drew on, Greco-Roman rhetorical devices;⁵⁵ but to deny the possible influence of Paul’s Hebrew heritage – or,

⁵¹ Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 100.

⁵² Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 102.

⁵³ Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 121; emphases original.

⁵⁴ Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 154.

⁵⁵ C. Jan Swearingen, for example, argues: “The Greek audience at Corinth... [is] addressed in terms, in genres, and through shifts in ethos that assume some familiarity with a rhetorical vocabulary, concepts, and argumentative genres. Pairs such as *sophia-logos*, *pneuma-gramma*, and *nomos-agape* were well-established rhetorical terms linked in a variety of paired *topoi* and contrastive argumentation. However, I would emphasize that this is no simple case of Paul’s use of contemporary rhetorical practices. In his uses of terms, antitheses, and multiple voices Paul gives Greek rhetorical and Hellenistic Jewish terms new meanings, and crafts argumentative genres with unprecedented rhetorical purposes”. C. Jan Swearingen, “The Tongues of Men: Understanding Greek Rhetorical Sources for Paul’s Letters to the Romans and 1 Corinthians,” in *Rhetorical Argumentation*

more significantly still, his apostolic *kerygma* – on the macro-structure of his letters seems unnecessarily limiting and exegetically unsatisfying. Christopher Forbes argues that such an approach (aligning a Pauline letter with one of the “three kinds of rhetoric”) is an anachronistic over-simplification. He concludes:

In brief, then, I have doubts about the historical usefulness of much current macro-level rhetorical analysis.⁵⁶

Pastoral Rhetoric; Pragmatic Coherence

Hurd interacts to some degree with Epistolary Analysis, but hints that formal conventions are subject to a more fundamental determiner of structure in 1 Corinthians, namely Paul’s pastoral strategy. Hurd’s opening question below relates to a table in which Hurd suggests, respectively, oral and written sources of Paul’s information, to which 1 Corinthians is an ordered response:

Is there a simple explanation for the two blocks of text that float in the columns opposite to their neighbours? My suggestion is that in two instances a topic in the oral information related to a topic in the written. In order to simplify his presentation Paul brought the relevant sections together.⁵⁷

Thus Paul’s particular didactic/pastoral intention allows him to break with a formal structure that might otherwise be expected.

in Biblical Texts (ed. Anders Eriksson et al.; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 2002), 232-242; 232.

⁵⁶ Christopher Forbes, “Ancient Rhetoric and Ancient Letters: Models for Reading Paul, and Their Limits,” in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 143-160; 148. Forbes goes on to point out that, unlike normal letters, Paul’s letters were “congregational letters” to be read to communities. Thus they certainly make use of rhetorical features at a micro-level.

⁵⁷ Hurd, “Good News,” in *Gospel in Paul* (ed. Jervis and Richardson), 59.

Hurd sees Paul as being literarily creative in inventing or employing textual patterns that serve his pastoral purposes, despite perhaps appearing at first to involve literary incongruities such as unnecessary repetition:

It seems to be characteristic of Paul that he will present an argument, then bring in a new theme, and finally re-argue the original topic in a new way. I call it Paul's "sonata" form. When one begins to look for this pattern, numerous examples appear.⁵⁸

Similarly, D.W.B. Robinson accounts for initially discordant elements in Paul's argumentation by appeal to a particular style of pastorally sensitive rhetoric in which he gives apparent ground to his opponents before revealing a paradigm-challenging perspective. He cites Henry Chadwick, who makes a similar point:

[T]he chapter [1 Corinthians 7] is wholly intelligible as a rearguard action in which the apostle manages to combine an ability to retreat so far as to seem to surrender almost everything in principle to the opposition with an ability to make practical recommendations not easily reconciled with the theory he virtually accepts.⁵⁹

John Calvin deals with the apparently incongruous placement of chapter 15 by appealing to this sort of creative "pastoral" rhetoric:

It is asked, however, why it is that he has left off or deferred to the close of the Epistle, what should properly have had the precedence of everything else? Some reply, that this was done for the purpose of impressing it more deeply upon the memory. I am rather of the opinion that Paul did not wish to introduce a subject of such importance, until he had asserted his authority, which had been

⁵⁸ Hurd, "Good News," in *Gospel in Paul* (ed. Jervis and Richardson), 61.

⁵⁹ Cited in D.W.B. Robinson, "Charismata versus Pneumatika: Paul's Method of Discussion," *RTR* 21/2 (1972): 49-55; 49.

considerably lessened among the Corinthians, and until he had, by repressing their pride, prepared them for listening to him with docility.⁶⁰

It is this creative and potentially unpredictable “pastoral” dimension of Paul’s rhetoric that may be preserved in Merklein’s conception of coherence. Merklein argues that a tension in terms of a certain dimension of coherence need not prematurely necessitate the conclusion of *incoherence*:

Bei der Kohärenzanalyse – und dies gilt insbesondere für die Kohärenzanalyse brieflicher Texte – bleibt zu berücksichtigen, daß ein Text *mehrere Dimensionen* besitzt, die hier mit Syntax, Semantik und Pragmatik wiedergegeben seien. Kohärenzbrüche auf der Ebene nur einer Dimension konstituieren nicht unbedingt ein inkohärentes Textgebilde.⁶¹

Thus Merklein believes that the apparent incongruities in 1 Corinthians are not reason enough to dissolve the essential connections and overall coherence of the letter:

Wie bereits gesagt, ist die Dekomposition an keiner Stelle zwingend. Zum anderen läßt sich eine ganze Reihe struktureller Verknüpfungen feststellen, die positiv auf eine einheitliche Briefsituation schließen lassen.⁶²

A Unified Situation Behind 1 Corinthians

Such “unpredictable” pastoral rhetoric is sometimes conceived as responding to a set of problems in Corinth that itself exhibits a unifying coherence. Once this (entextualised) situational coherence is recognised, apparent inconsistencies in literary flow (either of the whole epistle or of a section) may become less troublesome. Such (broad) situational

⁶⁰ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (trans. John Pringle; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1979) Vol.1:7-8.

⁶¹ Merklein, “Die Einheitlichkeit,” 158.

⁶² Helmut Merklein, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther, Kapitel 1–4* (ÖTKNT 7; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1992), 48.

coherence has been characterised variously in terms of primarily problematic behaviour (*disunity* according to Mitchell;⁶³ secular-inspired *conflict and compromise* according to Bruce Winter;⁶⁴ *elitism* according to Gerd Theissen;⁶⁵ *social distinctions* according to David G. Horrell;⁶⁶ *rhetorical competitiveness* according to Duane Litfin;⁶⁷ *lack of Godward holiness* according to Ciampa and Rosner⁶⁸), or primarily problematic beliefs (*Gnostic or mystery religiosity* according to Helmut Koester;⁶⁹ *over-realised eschatology* according to Thiselton;⁷⁰ competing conceptions of *wisdom* according to James A. Davis⁷¹ and David R. Hall⁷²).

⁶³ “1 Corinthians is a unified deliberative letter which throughout urges unity on the divided Corinthian church”. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 296.

⁶⁴ See both: Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001); and Bruce W. Winter, “The ‘Underlays’ of Conflict and Compromise in 1 Corinthians,” in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict* (ed. Trevor J. Burke and J. Keith Elliot; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 139-155.

⁶⁵ “[T]he Corinthian congregation is marked by internal stratification. The majority of the members, who come from the lower classes, stand in contrast to a few influential members who come from the upper classes”. Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 69.

⁶⁶ “I... seek to outline a number of situations revealed in 1 Corinthians in which there is some evidence that social distinctions or social factors play a part in creating the problems which Paul addresses. This is not to deny that sociological factors may have played some role in other aspects of the church’s life which Paul addresses, nor that theological factors are also bound up in the situations of social tension and conflict”. David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 101.

⁶⁷ See Duane Litfin, *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁶⁸ “The main problem for the Corinthian Christians is actually signalled in the opening verses of Paul’s letter. He writes in 1 Corinthians 1:2 to ‘the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified, called to be holy’”. Ciampa and Rosner, *First Letter*, 6.

⁶⁹ “The entire polemic of 1 Corinthians must be seen as an argument against understanding the new message about Jesus as a mystery religion, and as a plea for understanding the ‘new existence’ as entrance into the community of the new age”. Helmut Koester, “The Silence of the Apostle,” in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (HTS 53; ed. Daniel N. Schowalter, and Steven J. Friesen; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), 339-350; 346.

⁷⁰ For this influential emphasis see especially Thiselton’s earlier work, Anthony C. Thiselton, “Realized Eschatology at Corinth,” *NTS* 24 (1978): 510-526.

⁷¹ “The central issue of the letter would be the one highlighted within this opening section, namely, the issue of deciding upon the locus, content, source and purpose of the wisdom which would guide the community and the individuals within it into proper sorts of Christian behaviour. What sort of wisdom was to govern their morality, their response to food that had been dedicated to idols, the conduct of their worship, and the shape of their hope for the resurrection?” James A. Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit: An Investigation of 1 Corinthians 1:18-3:20 Against the Background of Jewish Sapiential Traditions in the Greco-Roman Period* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 145.

⁷² “Paul regards the ‘wisdom’ criticized in chs. 1-4 as a common feature of all the parties, and when discussing the behavioural problems resulting from that ‘wisdom’ in chs. 5-16, addresses his remarks to the church as a whole”. David R. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 30.

Of course, these varying characterisations of a unified set of problems in Corinth need not be seen as utterly incompatible with one another. Indeed it may be observed that there is a degree of agreement that the problems in Corinth involved community conflict in combination with deficient, exclusivistic religiosity. Such characterisations of entextualised situational coherence may indeed prove fruitful in alleviating literary incongruities, and so ought to be attended to in the consideration of exegetical tensions within 1 Corinthians.

Theological Unity

Certain scholars maintain that, in connection with his conception of the problems in Corinth, Paul exhibits a unifying theological thesis that directs his creative pastoral strategy, and which helps explain apparent literary incongruities. Such scholars do not generally deny that social and religious factors fruitfully illuminate the Corinthian situation to which Paul responds, but they see in Paul's response a unified theological theme. Thus both the framing of the Corinthian problems and the organisation of Paul's response are to be understood as evidencing a theologically driven rhetoric. This is not to say that those in Corinth consciously held theological views divergent from the apostle; rather, the apostle perceives that the Corinthians' religious and social manifestations betray a deep theological problem, and so he responds with a letter that is organised in such a way as to present a primarily theological correction.

Although Karl Barth assumes some sort of Gnostic influence, he characterises the core problem as "unrestrained human vitality", a theological issue that expresses itself in different ways throughout the letter until it is climactically answered in chapter 15.⁷³ Humans should place their confidence in the *God* who raises the dead – and this should be

⁷³ A. Katherine Grieb comments: "Barth's 'theological exegesis' enabled him to hear the theologian Paul and protected him against the historicizing tendencies of the NT scholars of his day". A. Katherine Grieb, "Last Things First: Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis of 1 Corinthians in *The Resurrection of the Dead*," *SJT* 56/1 (2003): 49-64; 49.

attested in their religious beliefs and behaviours.⁷⁴ Thiselton captures the theological coherence of (Luther and) Barth's reading:

If resurrection entails an act of new creation which lies entirely beyond the capacities of the human self to achieve, there emerges a clear and a close parallel between the grace of God which bestows new life out of nothing, and the grace of God which bestows a new relationship or "putting to rights in righteousness" which transcends all human capacity or competency to achieve.⁷⁵

That is, the flow of 1 Corinthians is directed by Paul's concern to pit the grace of God in Christ against the theologically problematic human confidence that is evidenced in the Corinthians' communal life.

Ackerman argues that Paul's theological conception of Corinthian problems is best thought of as "spiritual immaturity", and that Paul's centrally theological response can be fruitfully summed up as "Christ-ideology":

This Christ-ideology stands behind Paul's rhetoric in 1 Corinthians. Paul builds his arguments upon the revelation of the cross and the victory over death in Christ's resurrection (chs 1-2, 15). His Christ-ideology also serves as his primary conceptual tool to motivate the Corinthians to live according to his example. In other words, the past and future provide the means and motivation for fellowship with Christ in the present. Paul criticizes the Corinthians because they had not

⁷⁴ Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf & Stock, 2003); repr. of *The Resurrection of the Dead* (trans. H. J. Stenning; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933); trans. of *Auferstehung der Toten* (Munich: Kaiser, 1924).

⁷⁵ Anthony C. Thiselton, "God will be All in All: Luther and Barth on 1 Corinthians 15: Six Theses for Theology in Relation to Recent Interpretation," in *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works with New Essays* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006) 767-792; 772; repr. p 258-289 in *The Bible, the Reformation and the Church: Essays in honour of James Atkinson*. (JSNT Supplement series 105; ed. W. P. Stephens; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

applied his Christ-ideology in their context and had not allowed it to transform their behaviour and form their community in holiness and love.⁷⁶

It is certainly worthy of note that canonical 1 Corinthians begins with an extended reflection on the significance of the cross, and ends with an extended reflection on the significance of resurrection. As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, these events are both described as constitutive of Paul's "gospel", initially received by the Corinthians with "faith", but since endangered by possible retreat into "vanity". As I have suggested, these striking echoes give cause to take seriously attempts to detect a fundamental theological unity in the letter.⁷⁷

Theological Unity Expressed in Patterns from a Theological Heritage

A few Pauline scholars have explored the possibility that Paul employs patterns of rhetorical formulation from his theological heritage (particularly the Old Testament and early Judaism) in order to give shape to a unified theological force in his letter. Olbricht, in particular, has often urged the exploration of "church" or "biblical" rhetoric as a category in its own right. He argues that, just as the rhetorical settings of the law court, the assembly, and situations of praise and blame allowed for the distinction of the three supposed genres of Greco-Roman oratory, the distinct setting of early churches, informed by formative scriptures, narratives, and convictions, should allow for the distinction of a separate genre of rhetoric, with characteristic content and construction.⁷⁸

Ciampa and Rosner posit a resonance in 1 Corinthians with the ethical concerns of Second Temple Judaism (in particular, responding to the "Gentile" problems of sexual immorality

⁷⁶ David A. Ackerman, *Lo, I Tell You a Mystery: Cross, Resurrection, and Paraenesis in the Rhetoric of 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2006), 24. However, although Ackerman perceives this theological unity as influencing the structure of the letter, he also follows Mitchell in labelling the letter as (Aristotelian) "deliberative" rhetoric (see page 5).

⁷⁷ Grayston comments: "Thus, whether by design or accident, the epistle is constructed as a development and qualification of the early formula 'Christ died and rose again'". Kenneth Grayston, *Dying, We Live: A New Inquiry into the Death of Christ in the New Testament* (London: Longman and Todd, 1990), 16.

⁷⁸ See, for example, Olbricht, "Rhetorical Criticism," 17-18.

and idolatry),⁷⁹ resulting in a theologically driven appeal for holiness in response to Corinthian worldliness:

- I. Letter Opening (1:1-9)
- II. True and False Wisdom and Corinthian Factionalism (1:10-4:17)
- III. 'Flee Sexual Immorality' [and Greed] and 'Glorify God with your Bodies' (4:18-7:40)
- IV. 'Flee Idolatry' and 'Glorify God' in Your Worship (8:1-14:40)
- V. The Resurrection and Consummation (15:1-58)
- VI. Letter Closing (16:1-24)⁸⁰

A similar pattern of argumentation is said to exist in other Pauline letters, although the parallels mentioned are conceptually limited and involve a flow of a few verses within various epistles, rather than equivalent examples of extended argumentation.

Nevertheless, attentiveness to possible parallel patterns of argumentation across Paul and in his conscious theological heritage suggests itself as a worthy pursuit.

Michael J. Gorman likewise sees a theological coherence in 1 Corinthians that is expressed in rhetorical patterns from Paul's theological heritage. Gorman views chapters 1–4 as focusing on the cross; 5–7 as exploring moral consequences; 8–14 as exploring liturgical consequences; and chapter 15 as presenting the vindication of the cross in resurrection.⁸¹

Gorman briefly identifies four patterns of reversal in Scripture and Jewish tradition, which could have provided Paul with a background for "a narrative pattern of reversal":

⁷⁹ "It is widely recognized that in early Jewish and Christian thinking Gentiles were consistently characterized by two particularly abhorrent vices: sexual immorality and idolatry". Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, "The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians: A Biblical/Jewish Approach," *NTS* 52 (2006): 205-218; 207.

⁸⁰ Abridged from Ciampa and Rosner, "Structure and Argument," 212-213.

⁸¹ Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 238.

God's exaltation of the humble, God's vindication of the persecuted and of righteous sufferers, God's ultimate resolution of messianic "birth pangs" in the new age, and God's raising of the dead.⁸²

It is more precise and helpful to consider this narrative pattern of reversal as two closely related patterns, one of death followed by resurrection, the other of humiliation followed by exaltation. Both patterns clearly preceded Paul and also survived after him, but few early Christians exploited them as fully as did Paul.⁸³

This seems to me to be a fruitful direction of exploration, and in a number of ways this dissertation represents a continued investigation along this trajectory, detecting Paul's *kerygmatic* renegotiation of the Jewish motif of (*dual*) reversal. As Watson notes:

Paul is an apostle of a new gospel.... As Janet Fairweather has pointed out [in relation to Galatians], while Paul does employ many features of classical rhetoric in his epistles, his conceptual framework and the bases of his argumentation are distinct and innovative. It is a Christ-based logic that diverges from pagan sophistic.⁸⁴

C.K. Robertson has warned:

While strong cases have been made for a theological, or ethno-religious, or socio-economic basis underlying a given dispute, an exegetical danger arises when any one of these bases is then assumed to underlie *all* the issues addressed in the letter, as if congregational conflict in the first-century Corinthian ἐκκλησία was more unifacted than in any other period.⁸⁵

⁸² Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 305.

⁸³ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 313.

⁸⁴ Watson, "Three Species," in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. Sampley and Lampe), 44.

⁸⁵ C.K. Robertson, *Conflict in Corinth: Redefining the System* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001), 81.

Robertson's caution is worth heeding. However, it ought to be recognised that in 1 Corinthians we are not presented with the comprehensive facts about congregational conflict in Corinth; rather we are presented with Paul's pastorally-motivated entextualisation of the situation in Corinth according to his own rhetorical purposes. So it should not be considered unlikely that such a framing should have a certain coherence or unified theological flavour.

Listening to the Text in Expectation of Otherness

Robertson's caution does, however, point toward a valuable reminder. Investigating a text should involve the expectation of encounter with that which cannot be immediately under our mastery, because it is *other*:

The most important thing is the question that the text puts to us, our being perplexed by the traditionary word, so that understanding it must already include the task of the historical self-mediation between the present and tradition. Thus the relation of question and answer is, in fact, reversed. The voice that speaks to us from the past – whether text, work, trace – itself poses a question and places our meaning in openness.⁸⁶

Schenk's redactional analysis⁸⁷ is perhaps illustrative of an overly swift dismissal of the "perplexing". Schenk's analysis seems so quick to start deciding which letter-parts belong to which original letters that there is no space for the discomfort of canonical 1 Corinthians' exegetical tensions to provoke and stretch contemporary expectations of appropriate literary flow. This does not mean that all tensions must be unthinkingly accepted as simply features of original epistolary "otherness" – but that this possibility should at least be seriously entertained and explored. If Paul is to be received in his own

⁸⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall; 2nd rev. ed.; London: Continuum, 2004) 366-367; trans. of *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960).

⁸⁷ Wolfgang Schenk, "Der 1 Korintherbrief als Briefsammlung," *ZNW* 60 (1969): 219-243.

particularity, and not simply generically as a literarist or theologian, we must respect the possibility that in some letters he will be heard by us in ways that are both literarily and theologically unexpected or provocative.⁸⁸ Thus a desire to make sense of apparent “ill accord” should involve openness and careful attentiveness. With this intention I now turn to an examination of exegetical tensions in canonical 1 Corinthians.

2. Exegetical Tensions in Canonical 1 Corinthians

Significant Explanatory Patterns

A number of exegetical tensions that have been identified in the letter may be addressed with reference to certain significant explanatory patterns. Before looking at the exegetical tensions themselves, I draw attention to three such patterns that will influence my approach to a number of the interpretative difficulties: Paul’s *pastorally-driven rhetoric*; *ethical persuasion*; and *ABA’ patterning*.

Pastorally Driven Rhetoric

As outlined in the previous chapter, my thesis is that the letter as a whole may be read fruitfully as the creative application of *kerygmatic rhetoric* to a theologically interpreted set of culturally driven problems in Corinth. In chapters 3, 4, and 5 I will attempt to demonstrate that this reading is exegetically defensible. For the purpose of this examination of exegetical tensions, however, it is worth signalling the way in which such a reading understands the movement between 1 Corinthians 1–4 and 1 Corinthians 5–14. In short, the divisive problems relating to wisdom and leadership in 1 Corinthians 1–4 are taken by Paul to be paradigmatic of the Corinthian orientation of *boastful, present-obsessed human autonomy*, an orientation countered by the message of *the cross*. In 1

⁸⁸ George D. Castor criticises Weiss in an early review: “Has Weiss... allowed sufficiently for this private quality of the letter and the necessarily obscure historical situation? Surely exegetical difficulties are not to be explained so exclusively by an appeal to corruptions of the text”. George D. Castor, “Johannes Weiss’s Commentary on 1 Corinthians,” *AJT* 15/4 (1911): 628-630; 629.

Corinthians 5–14 this corrective of the cross is applied to an observable pattern of ethical issues.

Although Hall concedes to de Boer that the cross is prominent in chapters 1–4 but “missing” from chapters 5–16,⁸⁹ this seems unjustified. As Grayston argues, the cross is decisive in chapters 1–4, and can be seen as shaping the exhortation of the subsequent chapters:

In contrast to the ebullience of some competing Corinthian Christians, Paul expects the apostolic commission to be marked by deprivation, social rejection, and self-sacrifice. In that measure, the apostolic norm was the crucifixion of Christ.⁹⁰

[H]e had to develop in them an awareness of the crucifixion as the critical principle for assessing their manner of life.⁹¹

Hoskyns and Davey concur:

[T]he references to the death of the Christ with which St Paul punctuates the Epistle are in no sense casual; in no sense do they lie on the periphery of what he is saying. Every aspect of Corinthian piety is described, criticized, and judged in the light of Christ’s death, and throughout St Paul not only speaks as the apostle of Christ Jesus but (as he himself had said) is determined to know nothing among them but Christ, and him crucified (1 Cor. 2.2).⁹²

H.H. Drake Williams III argues vigorously for the centrality of the cross in Christian ethics in general, and in 1 Corinthians in particular. This is reflected in the letter’s

⁸⁹ Hall, *Unity*, 44.

⁹⁰ Grayston, *Dying, We Live*, 27.

⁹¹ Grayston, *Dying, We Live*, 50.

⁹² E.C. Hoskyns and Noel Davey, *Crucifixion-Resurrection: The Pattern of the Theology and Ethics of the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1981), 125.

emphasis on the cross as foundation in chapters 1–4 (including its apostolic example in Paul), and the echoes of death in the remainder of the letter.⁹³ Williams hears echoes of this fundamental cruciform corrective in the reference to the paschal lamb of chapter 5, the disregarding of one’s own rights in chapter 6, the self-sacrifice of chapters 8–11, and the “death-proclaiming” Lord’s Supper in chapter 11.

Thiselton rightly summarises:

The whole thrust of 5:1–14:40 concerns living out the identity of those who stand under the criterion of the cross and its implications of self-renunciation for the sake of the “other” and the whole community.⁹⁴

It seems quite reasonable that in chapters 5–14, the summons to imitate Paul’s cruciform commitment of 4:14–21 is applied to particular instances of self-assertion in Corinth. This passage (4:14–21) may thus be seen as a crucial transition between chapters 1–4 and chapters 5–14.

Ethical Persuasion in Paul

Again, it is worth signalling a theme that will be explored in much greater detail in a later chapter. My conception of chapters 5–14 is that they represent a “normal” flow of issues for a Pauline ethical section, albeit elongated. I will argue in chapter 4 that this section follows a pattern that is observable in hortatory sections of numerous Pauline letters, with a movement from issues raised in relation to sexual immorality, impurity and greed of bodies (chapters 5–7), to issues raised in relation to interpersonal relationships and love within the body of Christ (chapters 8–14).

⁹³ H.H. Drake Williams III, “Living as Christ Crucified: The Cross as a Foundation for Christian Ethics in 1 Corinthians,” *EQ* 75/2 (2003): 117–131. See also Schnabel, *Der erste Brief*, 48–49.

⁹⁴ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 39.

ABA' Patterning

It may be noted that a number of disputed sections in 1 Corinthians involve questions about their location within another (related but slightly different) discussion. It may be that the ethical section of 1 Corinthians (chapters 5–14, as outlined above) consistently makes use of mnemonic patterning in an *ABA'* format,⁹⁵ with the middle segment providing a complementary and transitional perspective to the issues on either side:

- 5:1-13: Sexual Immorality (the refusal to judge)
 - 6:1-11: Greedy exploitation (an apparent inability to judge)
- 6:12-7:40: Sexual Immorality, the body, marriage
- 8:1-13: Meat offered to idols (using rights to endanger weaker brothers and sisters)
 - 9:1-27: Paul's example/defence (foregoing rights for others & self)
- 10:1-11:1: Meat offered to idols (foregoing rights for self and others)
- 11:2-16: I praise you for keeping the traditions I passed on (public worship)
 - 11:17-22: I do *not* praise you (in both v17 and v22)
- 11:23-34: I passed on to you what I also received (Lord's Supper)
- 12:1-31: Gifts within the body (mutual interdependence)
 - 12:31-13:13: Love
- 14:1-40: Gifts (for ordered edification of the whole)

John Chrysostom draws attention to Paul's use of *digression*, indicating that Paul was well versed in this rhetorical technique:

For this also is customary for him: not only to develop the issue at hand, but also to depart from there to correct whatever seems to him to be related, and then to return to the earlier topic so that he might not seem to have abandoned his theme.⁹⁶

Aristotle had recommended that epideictic oratory ought to include digressions of praise.

This is illustrative of a broader rhetorical strategy:

⁹⁵ I am following the model of Harvey, *Listening to the Text*, in formulating this as *ABA'*, although it is also sometimes formulated as *ABA*¹.

⁹⁶ Homily 37 on 1 Corinthians; PG 61.318.

Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 3.17.1

And in epideictic, it is necessary for the speech to have episodes of praise, just as Isocrates does. For he always brings someone in. And this is what Gorgias used to say, that he was never left without something to say. For if he is speaking about Achillea, he also praises Pelea, then Aiakos, then God. Likewise also he praises courage, that it does this or that, or is like such-and-such.⁹⁷

Of course I have argued that Paul is by no means rigidly dependent on Aristotle in terms of macro-structure; but it is clear that he makes use of a number of conventional literary and rhetorical devices. This particular device recalls Hurd's "sonata form",⁹⁸ and is also identified as a recurring rhetorical tool by Fee,⁹⁹ Collins,¹⁰⁰ and Ciampa and Rosner.¹⁰¹

Exegetical Tensions, Passage by Passage

Reports of Division in 1:10-14 and 11:18-19

Schmithals believes that discrepancy in reports of division in chapter 1 and chapter 11 is a certain sign of epistolary partition:

The decisive observation for the fact that our canonical 1 Corinthians contains pieces from various Pauline letters is to be made at I,11:18ff. Paul hears of schisms in the community. He believes in the correctness of this rumor [and it is necessary that there are divisions among you, in order that those who are approved might be revealed]. If one compares this passage with Paul's

⁹⁷ In context, Aristotle is advising that speeches in praise of a certain person might do well to have digressions in praise of another. William Wuellner concludes on the basis of Paul's use of digression that 1 Corinthians should be identified as epideictic rhetoric. William Wuellner, "Greek Rhetoric and Pauline Argumentation," in William R. Schoedel and Robert L. Wilken (eds.) *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1979), 177-88.

⁹⁸ Hurd, "Good News," in *Gospel in Paul* (ed. Jervis and Richardson), 61.

⁹⁹ Fee, *First Epistle*, 15-16.

¹⁰⁰ Collins, *First Corinthians*, 14-15.

¹⁰¹ Ciampa and Rosner, *First Letter*, 367.

statements in I,1–4, it is simply inconceivable that both attitudes toward disputes could come from the same epistle.¹⁰²

Yeo likewise calls this a “contradiction” that necessitates theories of partition.¹⁰³ The tension would appear to be twofold. Firstly, it seems odd that ten chapters after responding at length to a testimony about significant division, Paul suddenly recounts a less clear report of division, as if this issue had not already been on the agenda. Secondly, in the former passage Paul is utterly opposed to the reported divisions, while in the latter, he appears to be resigned or even positive about them.

In relation to the first tension, Hurd suggests that whereas the divisions in chapters 1–4 are general, the divisions in chapter 11 relate specifically to the issue of the Lord’s Supper.¹⁰⁴ Schmithals utterly rejects this possibility, although it is not entirely clear on what basis he does so.¹⁰⁵ Schrage appears equally certain that the two passages must be seen as envisaging different situations.¹⁰⁶

Thiselton is convincing here:

There is a fundamental difference between 1:10-12 and the point here [11:18], however. In 1:10-12 the **splits** seem to reflect tensions between *different ethos of different house groups*. The splits are “external” to given groups, although internal to the whole church of Corinth. Here, however, *the very house meeting itself reflects splits between the socially advantaged and the socially*

¹⁰² Schmithals, *Gnosticism*, 90. Schmithals’ numbering system consists of a capital Roman numeral that represents the letter (i.e. I = 1 Corinthians), followed by the chapter and/or verses.

¹⁰³ Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction*, 80.

¹⁰⁴ John C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1965), 81.

¹⁰⁵ Schmithals says that such a possibility is “completely ruled out”: *Gnosticism*, 90.

¹⁰⁶ “Nun darf man aber die σχίσματα in 11,18f nicht einfach mit den in Kap.1-4 angesprochenen Parteiungen identifizieren. Die σχίσματα in 11,18f sind vielmehr auf die Mißstände und „Spaltungen“ zwischen Armen und Reichen beim Herrenmahl zu beziehen”. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther (1 Kor1,1-6,11)*, 67.

disadvantaged. They are “internal” even within a single gathered meeting, i.e., ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, when they meet *in one place as a church*.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, Paul’s descriptions of the divisions are plainly dissimilar. In chapter 1 the issue (ostensibly) relates to competing allegiances to external figureheads; in chapter 11 the issue relates to internal conflict caused by inappropriate behaviour. Schmithals’ complete rejection of a differentiation of situation seems inattentive to these essential differences.

In relation to the second tension, Schrage’s comment illustrates the difficulty of understanding Paul’s apparently accepting attitude in chapter 11:

[V]or allem wird man V 19 nicht als resigniert oder ironisch verstehen dürfen, allerdings auch nicht so, als ob Paulus den σχίσματα hier eine positive Seite abgewinne bzw. sie auf die leichte Schulter nehme.¹⁰⁸

Hans Conzelmann is right to begin by giving attention to the force of δεῖ:

It is more natural simply to take δεῖ with the appended ἵνα-clause: the objective fruit of the divisions is the visible separation of wheat and chaff.¹⁰⁹

Guided by this reading, it may be appropriate to conclude that Paul is not presented as pleased with the divisions; he rather warns that they have an ironically revealing outcome. Ironic, because – as Paul goes on to demonstrate – those who are revealed as the δόκιμοι are not those who apparently consider themselves praiseworthy for their lavish celebration of the Lord’s Supper. This interpretation admittedly has its drawbacks: perhaps “it construes Paul’s pastoral response as unusually sharp and sarcastic”.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 857; emphases original.

¹⁰⁸ Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther (1 Kor 1,1-6,11)*, 67.

¹⁰⁹ Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (trans. James W. Leitch; Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1975) 194; trans. of *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969).

¹¹⁰ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 860.

Thiselton, drawing on Paulsen, offers another possibility, in which Paul is seen as quoting a Corinthian slogan about the eschatological necessity of divisions.¹¹¹ This would distance Paul from the problems of the apparent approval of divisions; but again, this is not certain. However, on either reading, there is no contradiction with Paul's dismay at divisions in chapter 1. Thus, although there are questions about the interpretation of this verse, it would seem that Schmithals and Yeo go too far in holding that this apparent tension demands partition in the letter.

The Coming of Paul and Sending of Timothy in 4:14-21 and 16:8-11

There are two tensions here. Firstly, in the former section Paul implies that he will come to Corinth soon, while in the latter section he makes it plain that he has no intention of coming to Corinth until later. Secondly, in the former passage Paul says that he has "sent" Timothy to Corinth, while in the latter passage he gives instructions on how Timothy should be treated "if" he should come to Corinth.

These tensions are noted by Weiss, who is followed, amongst others, by Schenk and Schmithals in attributing the passages to different preceding letter parts.

Schrage suggests that the former passage does not concern actual travel plans, but rather expresses a willingness to deal personally with the problem of "puffed-upness" as hastily as is required.¹¹² Similarly, Hall sees 4:19 as a threat rather than a promise.¹¹³ It does seem that Paul's choice of words distances himself from definite immediacy, making his coming contingent upon the Lord's own will:

ἐλεύσομαι δὲ ταχέως πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐὰν ὁ κύριος θελήσῃ

Gordon Fee thus sees smooth congruity between the two sections:

¹¹¹ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 858ff. According to this reading, the strong in Corinth use the slogan "dissensions are unavoidable".

¹¹² Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther (1 Kor 1,1-6,11)*, 69.

¹¹³ Hall, *Unity*, 45-46.

Paul quickly affirms [in 4:19-20] his own plans to return to Corinth. The details of this plan are given in 16:5-9. That passage also indicates that “very soon” is a relative term. He does intend to come, and it will be “without delay,” which here must mean as soon as it is possible for him to do so. The emphasis is on the *certainty* of the visit, not its immediacy.¹¹⁴

Schmithals’ conjecture that 4:17 assumes Timothy’s presence in Corinth, with the future tense designed as an encouragement to his continued energetic work,¹¹⁵ is possible, but rather unlikely, as it makes the reference to having “sent” Timothy somewhat redundant. Rather, the reference to sending, coupled with the future tense in relation to Timothy’s activity (ὅμᾱς ἀναμνήσει τὰς ὁδοὺς μου), would seem to imply that Timothy is not yet present in Corinth. Indeed, Hall argues:

The wording of 4.17 implies that Timothy has not yet arrived at Corinth – he ‘will remind you’ when he arrives. The word ἔπεμψα could be an epistolary aorist (I am sending Timothy with this letter) or a constative aorist (I have already sent Timothy). The latter translation is supported by the statement in Acts 19.22 that Paul sent Timothy from Ephesus to Macedonia (presumably with a view to his then proceeding from Macedonia to Corinth).¹¹⁶

If the “sending” of Timothy did indeed envisage a trip that included several destinations and purposes, the tension of Paul’s request in chapter 16 that Timothy be received well “if” he should come is somewhat alleviated.

Merklein usefully makes the point that the two sections certainly present themselves as having contrasting purposes.¹¹⁷ The emphasis of the former section is not on Timothy’s arrival but on his task in relation to Paul’s own ministry; the latter section does speak of

¹¹⁴ Fee, *First Epistle*, 191.

¹¹⁵ Schmithals, “Korintherbriefe,” 266.

¹¹⁶ Hall, *Unity*, 45.

¹¹⁷ Merklein, “Die Einheitlichkeit,” 159-160.

Timothy's work (notably with terminology reminiscent of the recent climactic exhortation of 15:58), but presents this within an appeal concerning his reception, as is fitting for a letter ending.

Thus, although there is some tension here, it is going too far to claim that the respective passages are directly contradictory, and consequently there is not a necessity to assign the passages to separate preceding letter parts.

4:14-21 as Apparent Letter Closing

Related to the above issue is the question of whether 4:14-21 gives the appearance of a letter-closing. Schmithals claims that this section contains the personal details and denial of shaming-intention that are indicative of a Pauline letter ending, thus suggesting that this was originally the end of a letter.¹¹⁸ Martinus C. de Boer likewise sees this section as confirming a division between chapters 1–4 and 5–16.¹¹⁹

There are certainly features of this section that indicate a more “personal” interaction with the addressees, and this is indeed characteristic of letter endings. However, Merklein counters that such features (particularly personal example or self-reference) are not exclusively used in letter endings for Paul.¹²⁰ Hall follows Kenneth Bailey in arguing further that there are verbal and conceptual connections between 4:14-21 and the subsequent chapter that suggest a close connection:

Kenneth Bailey has drawn attention to the links between 4.17-21 and 5.1-11.

Chapter 4 ends with a threat: some people are puffed up on the grounds that Paul is not coming to Corinth; but he will come, if the Lord wills, and will discover not the fine words of these puffed up people but their power (4.18-19). It is for the Corinthians to choose whether his next visit will be friendly or disciplinary

¹¹⁸ Schmithals, “Korintherbriefe,” 266.

¹¹⁹ Martinus C. de Boer, “The Composition of 1 Corinthians,” *NTS* 40/2 (1994): 229-245; 240.

¹²⁰ Merklein, “Die Einheitlichkeit,” 159.

(4.21). This threat is immediately followed by a specific instance of Corinthian puffed-upness (5.1-2). Paul, though physically absent, has already passed judgment on the man's action as though he were present (5.3), and expects the Corinthians to ratify his judgment.¹²¹

Applying Epistolary Analysis, Belleville and Harvey concur that 4:14-21 forms the ending of the "letter body" – although not as a separate epistle to which more has later been added. Rather, in drawing the themes of chapters 1–4 to a conclusion, this section is said to form a transition to an extended paraenetic section, from chapter 5. Similarly, Ackerman asserts that chapters 5–14 form the paraenetic part of the letter:

After the imperative in 4:16, "Become imitators of me," Paul gives the church some practical advice, urging them to model his imitation of the divine paradox. To do this, he uses a form of rhetoric called *paraenesis*. Paraenesis is exhortation and was often used in the Greco-Roman world to address moral issues.¹²²

Regardless of whether the designation *paraenesis* is exactly appropriate,¹²³ this seems to be an attentive reading of the movement of this section, as I suggested earlier. Indeed, many of the conventional features of moral exhortation¹²⁴ included in chapters 5–14, such as the terminology of moral persuasion, the use of examples, the call to imitation, and the use of reminders and warnings, are anticipated in this brief transitional section. The Corinthians are summoned to imitate Paul, provided with the example and reminder of Timothy, urged to respond, and provoked with a warning.

¹²¹ Hall, *Unity*, 33-34.

¹²² Ackerman, *Lo, I Tell You a Mystery*, 108.

¹²³ See Malherbe's distinctions in the footnote below. Wayne Meeks refers to the letter of 1 Corinthians as the "richest example of Christian paraenesis that survives from the first century". Wayne Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (London: SPCK, 1986), 130.

¹²⁴ Abraham J. Malherbe writes, "The responsible teacher who adapted himself to the conditions of his hearers knew a wide range of styles of persuasion and was sensitive to how appropriate or inappropriate they were to any particular circumstance.... [Protrepis, Paraenesis and Diatribe] are related by the practicality of their aims, their unadorned language, and the devices they use". Malherbe goes on to illustrate devices such as comparison, reminder, example, admonition and interlocution. Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation, A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia, Pa.: The Westminster Press, 1986), 121.

Repetition in Chapters 5–6 and the Relation of 6:1-11 to its Context

Schmithals considers it “strange” that Paul takes up the issue of *porneia* in 6:12-20 after he has just apparently dealt with the same issue in 5:1-13.¹²⁵ Indeed, this repetition, along with the function of the section on lawsuits in between these two passages, seems to be one of the most significant exegetical tensions in the letter: Why direct a critique of the Corinthian church from sexual immorality to lawsuits between believers, and then again to sexual immorality?¹²⁶

Harvey’s comment is of interest here, recalling the device of digression discussed above:

[T]here exists an ABA’ pattern for chapters 5 and 6. Inclusion and anaphora establish the basic division of the chapters, link-words unify the different sections, and the theme of immorality begun in 5:1-13 is resumed in 6:12-20. The careful way in which Paul makes his transitions from one section to another serves to pull the apparently disparate topics together into a unified discussion.¹²⁷

Merklein suggests that the former passage relates to an individual case, while the latter refers to sexual immorality in general.¹²⁸ Brian S. Rosner posits the view that:

in 1 Cor. 6:12-20 Paul is opposing the use of prostitutes, not, strictly speaking, of either the sacred or the secular variety, but rather the prostitutes who offered their services after festive occasions in pagan temples.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Schmithals, *Gnosticism*, 91.

¹²⁶ Sellin comments: “Ich konzentriere mich dabei vorwiegend auf die Kapitel 5 und 6, weil ich dort die überzeugendsten Argumente gegen eine ursprüngliche Einheit gefunden habe”. Sellin, “1 Korinther 5-6,” 535.

¹²⁷ Harvey, *Listening to the Text*, 161.

¹²⁸ Merklein, “Die Einheitlichkeit,” 183.

¹²⁹ Brian S. Rosner, “Temple Prostitution in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20,” *NovT* 40/4 (1998): 336-351; 337.

With Ciampa, Rosner suggests that somehow the section as a whole (indeed all of 4:18-7:40) is about the problem of sexual immorality; and that the section on lawsuits represents a (digressionary?) exploration of the related problem of greed.¹³⁰ This perspective is shared by Hall.¹³¹

In favour of seeing an overall unity to the themes of chapters 5–6 is the fact that the theme of “judging”, which is prominent in 5:1-13 (where the congregation is called to exercise appropriate judgement in relation to the individual case of sexual immorality) continues into the section on lawsuits (where the Christian community is called to exercise competent judgement). Indeed, Thiselton observes that the target of Paul’s accusation in chapter 5 is the Corinthian church for its pride, rather than the particular man for his sin.¹³² This problem of Corinthian pride then appears to lie behind the subsequent problem of lawsuits (cf. Paul’s retort: “I say this to shame you”) and the ensuing discussion of sexual immorality (cf. the Corinthian slogan: “Everything is lawful for me!”). So each section of chapters 5–6 appears to involve the repudiation of Corinthian pride:

5:1-13: Repudiation of Corinthian pride in an act of sexual immorality that has brought impurity to the community

6:1-11: Repudiation of Corinthian pride in greedily making unjust gain at each other’s expense

6:12-20: Repudiation of Corinthian pride in (probably feast-related) sexual indulgence

I suggested earlier that Paul counters the problem of *proud, present-obsessed human autonomy* in Corinth with the message of the cross of Christ in chapters 1–4; a corrective which he then applies ethically in chapters 5–14, following an observable movement of Pauline moral argumentation from *sexual immorality, greed, and impurity* of bodies to *mutuality and love* within the body of Christ.

¹³⁰ Ciampa and Rosner, “Structure and Argument”.

¹³¹ Hall, *Unity*, 36, note 21.

¹³² Anthony C. Thiselton, “The Meaning of *Sarx* in 1 Corinthians 5:5: A Fresh Approach in the Light of Logical and Semantic Factors,” *SJT* 26 (1973): 204-27. See also Chrysostom, who notes that the congregation is at fault for boasting in this person, who may be one of the “wise” of the congregation: Homily 15 on 1 Corinthians; PG 61.122.

If this is the case, then a literary flow in chapters 5–7, in which Corinthian proud autonomy in relation to sexual immorality, greed and impurity is corrected by the application of certain aspects of cruciformity (especially non-self-ownership), is understandable.

The connections within chapters 5–7 are not thereby made completely transparent; but the tensions are arguably relieved somewhat. In each section, Paul depicts the Corinthians as boldly parading their assumed self-ownership, whether vicariously in celebrating a man who considers himself free to take his father's wife, or judicially in grasping external vindication, or licentiously in using prostitutes, or pseudo-nobly in denying conjugal commitments. And in each section, Paul challenges confident independence, alluding to the cross as that which demands humble submission to *divine ownership*.

Chapters 7–16 as a Separate Unified Letter, Responding to a Letter from Corinth

Schmithals reasons:

Now the observation that from I,7:1 on to the end of the epistle Paul makes reference in various ways to written inquiries addressed to him by the Corinthians is an important one. The sections introduced with *περὶ δέ* undoubtedly belong to the same letter of Paul.¹³³

Numerous commentators agree that from 7:1, especially as seen in sections beginning *περὶ δέ*, Paul is responding to a letter from Corinth. Hurd writes:

¹³³ Schmithals, *Gnosticism*, 91.

The passages beginning *περὶ δέ* (particularly the first) are the starting point in the attempt to identify the sections in 1 Corinthians which deal with the letter from Corinth.¹³⁴

Hurd agrees that there is significance in the apparently different sources of information for Paul. He argues that the sections which appear to respond to the Corinthian letter carry a tone which is calm, forward-looking, and persuasive, while the sections that appear to respond to oral reports about Corinth contrastingly carry an angry, one-sided, authoritative tone.¹³⁵ Thus there is an evident unity for (most of) chapters 7–16.

Similarly, Merklein argues that chapters 7–16 have an undeniable unity:

Insgesamt kann festgehalten werden: Die Gründe, die für eine literarkritische Aufteilung von 1 Kor 7–16 aufgeführt werden, sind zum Teil nicht stichhaltig, zum Teil zu hypothetisch, um wirklich überzeugen zu können, in keinem Fall aber – und dies gilt auch für das ganze Bündel der Gründe insgesamt – zwingend. Da sich außerdem an einer Reihe von sog. literarischen Bruchstellen eine übergreifende semantische oder pragmatische Kohärenz positiv aufzeigen läßt, kann eine literarkritische Teilung von 1 Kor 7–16 kaum aufrechterhalten werden.¹³⁶

However, neither Hurd nor Merklein holds that the apparent unity of chapters 7–16 is evidence against its original relatedness to the other parts of the letter.

Mitchell concurs that these chapters cannot be divided from the argument of the letter as a whole. Against Hurd in particular, however, she argues that the phrase *περὶ δέ* cannot be used to discern a separate information source behind Paul's letter; it can only be used to

¹³⁴ Hurd, *Origin*, 65.

¹³⁵ Hurd, *Origin*, 76; 82.

¹³⁶ Merklein, "Die Einheitlichkeit," 179.

note rhetorical movement. The rest of the New Testament and other ancient literature, she asserts, bear witness to this:

περὶ δέ does provide a clue to the composition of 1 Corinthians in that it is one of the ways in which Paul introduces the topic of the next argument or sub-argument. Despite the fact that in itself περὶ δέ can tell us nothing of the source or order of these topics, it is our most important clue to understand how Paul, on his own terms, chose to respond to the multi-faceted situation at Corinth of which he had been informed. Although that may be considerably less information than scholars have presumed that they could glean from its use, this proper understanding of the formula περὶ δέ remains an important starting point for the investigation of the composition and rhetorical structure of the letter.¹³⁷

It is arguable that Mitchell has not been entirely fair to Hurd's position,¹³⁸ but her general conclusion above seems persuasive, and weakens claims for a simple division of the sections of the letter represented by this phrase from other parts of the letter.

Apparent Contradiction Between Chapters 8 and 10

Like the tensions related to chapters 5–6, tensions regarding the unity of chapters 8–10 are among the most difficult in canonical 1 Corinthians. Schmithals sums up the issues that have been of concern since Weiss:

The statements about the worship of idols (10:1-22) by no means fit into this connection [of chapters 8–10]. They concern a basically different theme. In the treatment of the profane eating of meat sacrificed to idols there is nothing to

¹³⁷ Margaret M. Mitchell, "Concerning περὶ δέ in 1 Corinthians," *NovT* 31/3 (1989): 229-256; 256.

¹³⁸ See Hurd's response in his article cited above ("Good News").

indicate that at the same time some in Corinth had the inclination to take part in the pagan worship. Conversely, 10:1-22 treats only of cultic meals.¹³⁹

Yeo agrees that the situations behind 10:1-22 and the rest of chapters 8 and 10 are different, and he argues that Paul's responses to these two situations are very different in terms of content and style. In relation to the situation represented in the bulk of chapters 8 and 10, Paul is inclusive, engaging, interactive and persuasive: "Honour the weak"; while in relation to the situation represented in 10:1-22, Paul is authoritarian, exegetical and uncompromising: "Flee idolatry!" Yeo sees these differences as reflecting different stages of Paul's own thought, with the stricter section derived from an earlier letter, and the more compromising section derived from a later letter.¹⁴⁰

Schmithals is not hopeful for any way out of this tension that allows the section to remain intact.¹⁴¹ However, not all commentators are as convinced of the need for partition theories. Recalling Merklein's multi-dimensional concept of coherence, it is understandable that in a section with nuanced variations of situation, style, and content, different scholars will assign greater weighting to different dimensions and combinations of coherence "breach".

Merklein himself considers that variations in style are more than sufficiently accounted for by an underlying rhetorical strategy in which initial indirectness builds toward greater frankness. Two related but distinct situations (the eating of idol meat and participation in cult meals) lie behind chapters 8–10, although Paul only aims to forbid the latter. Thus:

8.1-13 und 10.1-22 lassen sich demnach auch unter pragmatischer Rücksicht als kohärenter Text lesen. Beide Textteile können verstanden werden als Reaktion

¹³⁹ Schmithals, *Gnosticism*, 92.

¹⁴⁰ For useful summaries of these points, see Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction*, 82-83; 209-210. In Yeo's application to Chinese hermeneutics, he strongly favours the "later" Paul, who is more tolerant and willing to compromise: 212ff.

¹⁴¹ Schmithals, "Korintherbriefe," 269.

auf einen einheitlichen, in sich zusammenhängenden Argumentationsgang bestimmter Korinther.¹⁴²

Hall agrees with Merklein that it is essential to be attentive to Paul's strategy of persuasion. Chapter 8 presents the main principle; chapter 9 presents Paul's own example; 10:1-22 draws a particularly strong ancillary argument about idolatry; and the remainder of chapter 10 provides further applications of the principle.

In these chapters he has been pointing out to the "strong" the practical consequences of adhering strictly to their slogan. One consequence is the damage done to other Christians (ch. 8); the other consequence is the spiritual danger to themselves, if they are disloyal to Christ and provoke God to jealousy (10.1-22).¹⁴³

Oropeza is likewise convinced that the whole argument is directed against the "strong" in Corinth, and that 10:1-22 represents the peak of a persuasive argument that has been building in intensity.¹⁴⁴

It could be objected that in 10:1-22, "the motives of right/freedom, conscience, and the 'weak' do not appear",¹⁴⁵ whereas they are crucial to the argument in chapter 8. However, there do appear to be closer connections between the sections than Yeo allows. As Schrage points out, one common motive can be seen especially in 8:4-6 and 10:14-19, and might be expressed as respect for Christ as Lord:

Nun sind die sachlichen Verbindungen zwischen Kap. 8 (speziell 8,4-6) und 10,14-19 nicht zu übersehen, aber ebenso deutlich sind die sachlichen Parallelen zwischen Kap. 8 und 10,23-11,1, und gerade das unterstreicht die enge

¹⁴² Merklein, "Die Einheitlichkeit," 169.

¹⁴³ Hall, *Unity*, 50.

¹⁴⁴ B.J. Oropeza, *Paul and Apostasy: Eschatology, Perseverance, and Falling Away in the Corinthian Congregation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 60-61.

¹⁴⁵ Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction*, 77.

Verzahnung des Gesamtkomplexes mit den grundsätzlichen Erwägungen von
Kap. 8.¹⁴⁶

And it should not be thought that the issue of the “strong” and the “weak” is absent from 10:1-22; indeed verse 12 hints, and verse 22 makes explicit, that the argument here is still directed toward those who foolishly believe themselves to be strong:

ὁ δοκῶν ἐστάναι βλέπῃ μὴ πέσῃ (10:12)

μὴ ἰσχυρότεροι αὐτοῦ ἐσμεν; (10:22)

Connected with this, Yeo’s summary of the point of Paul’s example of Israel in 10:1-22 may illustrate a failure to detect important resonance with chapter 8. Yeo summarises:

Paul uses the Israelites’ wilderness experience and the Lord’s Supper to illustrate the exclusive loyalty and trust Christians ought to have in the Christian God.¹⁴⁷

This seems inadequately attentive to important nuances of Paul’s argument here. In the example of Israel in chapter 10, it is not simply fidelity that is exemplified, but the responsibility of participation. Spiritual privilege (typified by Israel) brings with it corresponding responsible participation (in the body). This entails restraint for the sake of others.

The argument of 10:1-22 might be expressed as follows: Israel’s experience included equivalencies of the very spiritual realities about which the “knowledgeable” in Corinth boast: baptism and the Lord’s Supper (cf. 1:10-17). Those in Israel who took these spiritual privileges as reason or opportunity for bold autonomy and sin (including proud sexual sin) were destroyed. Sitting down to eat and drink their prototypical sacrament, they arose to play, provocatively grumbling and putting Christ to the test, while deceptively assured of their own standing. These things occurred as an example to teach

¹⁴⁶ Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther (1 Kor1,1-6,11)*, 68.

¹⁴⁷ Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction*, 82.

us not to be proudly assured of our own (autonomous) standing, such that we presumptuously entertain sin. We too must flee idolatry, understanding that the sacrament is not a gateway to *autonomy*, but a celebration of *dependent participation*: the Lord's Supper involves sharing in the blood of Christ and the body of Christ. This latter sense of participation emphatically requires unity. Thus, participating in Christ, it is out of the question to concurrently presumptuously parade assumed strength by participating in idols – and therefore in demons. We are left with the question: In whose strength are we confident? Ours or God's?

Read in this way, 10:1-22 has continuity with the argument of chapter 8. In chapter 8, Paul questions the way in which some presumptuously allow their strength and knowledge to crush the sensitive consciences of *the weak*; in chapter 10, Paul questions the way in which some presumptuously allow their strength and knowledge to utterly deceive *themselves*.¹⁴⁸ In both sections, Paul's argumentation fits the suggestion made earlier that in chapters 5–14, Paul is applying ethically the cruciform corrective of chapters 1–4, in which proud, presumptuous spirituality is called into question. Whereas in chapters 5–7 this is applied to issues raised in relation to sexual immorality, greed, and impurity of bodies, here in chapters 8–14 it is applied to issues raised in relation to interpersonal relationships within the body of Christ.

The Relation of Chapter 9 to its Context in Chapters 8–10

Related to the question of the unity of chapters 8 and 10 is the question of the placement of the intervening chapter. Probst explains that the chapter's questionable contextual relatedness leads to suggestions of partition:

¹⁴⁸ Similarly, Oropeza argues that the strong are in view in both sections: "In ch.8, the problem is that they are endangering others; in ch.10, the problem is that they are endangering themselves". B.J. Oropeza, "Laying to Rest the Midrash: Paul's Message on Meat Sacrificed to Idols in Light of the Deuteronomic Tradition," *Bib* 79 (1998): 57-68; 62.

Wird hier eine inhaltliche Beziehung zur Opferfrage sichtbar, die mehr ist als
blosse Stichwortassoziation? 1 Kor 9 kann ja statt vom Apostel, von einem
späteren Redaktor in seine jetzige Position gebracht worden sein!
Literarkritische Quellenscheidung ist anscheinend auch hier die gebotene
Lösung.¹⁴⁹

Oropeza sees chapter 9 as having an exemplary role:

In chapter 9, then, Paul uses himself as an example to convince the strong that
they should also exercise self-control by refraining from their right to eat at the
expense of the conscience of the weak.¹⁵⁰

Yeo objects:

Paul's apostolic defense in chapter 9 is clearly not just an exemplum for the
church; it is an apologia ("defense," 9:3) of Paul's apostleship, as Paul himself
puts it.¹⁵¹

Similarly, Schmithals objects that, although chapter 9 may be seen to provide an example
of self-restraint of freedom, this theme is not really made evident in 9:1-18 itself. The
passage itself, he claims, is just about Paul's self-defence in response to criticisms, and
does not express itself as simply an example, in the service of some other main point. It is
only the contextual placement of this section that makes it appear to be an "example".¹⁵²

There is a certain circularity to this argument: chapter 9 does not belong in its context
because it is actually independent; its independence, however, can only be demonstrated

¹⁴⁹ Probst, *Paulus und der Brief*, 5.

¹⁵⁰ Oropeza, *Paul and Apostasy*, 58-59. Robinson Butarbutar likewise states, "we submit that chapter 9 is primarily an example". Robinson Butarbutar, *Paul and Conflict Resolution: An Exegetical Study of Paul's Apostolic Paradigm in 1 Corinthians 9* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 88.

¹⁵¹ Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction*, 76.

¹⁵² Schmithals, "Korintherbriefe," 270.

by removing it from its context. Schmithals concedes that, contextually situated, chapter 9 has clear “editorial” coherence; but why should such coherence not be allowed originality?

Further, is it really true to say that within 9:1-18 there is no hint that it is to be taken as exemplary of an external point? If it is right to detect, with Ackerman and others, a crucial role for Paul’s statement “Become imitators of me” in 4:16, an exemplary function may well be implied. As pointed out above,¹⁵³ there are numerous places in canonical 1 Corinthians where Paul seems to reiterate and express this call for imitation of apostolic cruciformity – including in chapters 7, 9, 11, and 14.

The opening two verses of chapter 9 echo certain themes of chapters 1–4, in which Paul presented himself as the apostle who “planted” the Corinthian church:

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, I surely am to you – for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

In chapter 4, before making the summons to imitate himself, Paul provocatively presents his model of apostleship as subject to divine rather than human approval, marked ironically by servanthood (4:1), death (4:9), weakness (4:10), hunger and thirst (4:11). It is this model of cruciformity that he calls the Corinthians to imitate; and it is precisely this model that he exhibits significantly in 8:13, and at length in chapter 9:

If food causes my brother or sister to stumble, I will never eat meat again, in order that I might not cause my brother or sister to stumble.

¹⁵³ In the section ‘4:14-21 as Apparent Letter Closing’.

To the weak I have become weak, in order that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all, in order that in every way I might save some. And I do everything because of the gospel.

And these same themes – of self-restrained eating and drinking in imitation of apostolic Christlikeness – form the conclusion of the whole section in 10:31–11:1:

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Do not become a cause for the stumbling of Jews or Gentiles or the church of God, just as in everything I seek to please all, not seeking my own benefit, but that of the many, in order that they might be saved. Become imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Merklein seems justified in concluding:

Er müßte schon so kongenial gewesen sein, daß er fast die Züge des Apostels selbst annimmt, ganz abgesehen davon, daß es ein Zufall genannt werden müßte, wenn in unterschiedlichen Briefen Textstücke von einer derartigen semantischen Affinität und Relationalität bereitgelegen haben sollen.¹⁵⁴

By “defending” his apostleship, Paul forcefully clarifies the extent of his exemplary self-restraint, to those who are sceptical that such restraint is desirable or possible among those who have “knowledge”, “rights”, and “freedom”.

Contextually Questionable Praise in 11:2ff

Schmithals follows Weiss in finding the placement of 11:2 problematic: How can Paul say “I praise you for remembering me in *all* things” – when he has just been at pains to show

¹⁵⁴ Merklein, “Die Einheitlichkeit,” 172. Likewise, Butarbutar, *Paul and Conflict Resolution*, concludes that chapter 9 is integrally connected to chapters 8-10, as part of Paul’s pastoral strategy in dealing with the issue of food offered to idols.

that they *do not*? Perhaps this would fit better at the beginning of a letter. This certainly gives an initial impression of incongruence. However, it does seem that the range of “all things” is specified in the continuation of the sentence:

Now I praise you for remembering me in all things, and you keep the traditions
[τὰς παραδόσεις], just as I gave them to you.

The question immediately becomes a more limited problem: What is meant by τὰς παραδόσεις? This problem is limited further when it is recalled that this section is itself corrective, as verse 3 shows:

Θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι ὅτι...

This corrective function shows that Paul’s praise of the Corinthians for remembering him in “all things” cannot be meant in an unqualified sense, because he is about to critique their very practice of the traditions that they commendably remember. It would seem then, that Paul’s praise is for remembering to keep the (liturgical) traditions he passed onto them, even though their practice of those traditions may be questionable.

Thus the incongruity here is not really one of substance, but simply of abruptness in argumentational movement. Although this should not be ignored, Merklein’s concept of “pragmatic coherence” can usefully be recalled here, and his reminder that the breach of one dimension of coherence need not necessarily result in the conclusion of *incoherence*:

Doch muß dies bei Brieftexten nicht ungewöhnlich sein. Um so mehr ist nach einer möglichen pragmatischen Kohärenz (die erst durch Autor und/oder Leser konstituiert wird) zu fragen.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Merklein, “Die Einheitlichkeit,” 173-174.

The Relation of Chapter 13 to its Context in Chapters 12–14

Just as the place of 6:1-11 is questioned in relation to chapters 5–6, and the place of chapter 9 is questioned in relation to chapters 8–10, so the place of chapter 13 is questioned in relation to chapters 12–14. Weiss finds the connecting verses dubious, suggesting that chapter 13 is an editorial insertion:

Kurz, wenn schon der Übergang 12.31 nicht sehr organisch ist, so ist vollends der Zusammenhang zwischen Kap. 13 und 14 weniger einleuchtend als künstlich. Und wie flau ist der Übergang 14.1! Schon der Ausdruck [diokete t. agap.] wirkt nach Kap. 13 unerträglich matt.¹⁵⁶

William O. Walker Jnr. considers the contrast of chapter 13 with its surrounding context to be even starker, even though he concedes that there is no direct textual evidence indicating that chapter 13 is a non-Pauline interpolation:

It is my own judgement that 1 Corinthians 13 is not to be characterized as a digression or excursus. It is rather an interruption that both breaks the logical flow of chaps 12 and 14 and, in a literary style quite foreign to these chapters, declares essentially irrelevant the issues there being discussed.¹⁵⁷

Sellin disagrees, finding a smoothness from 12:1 through to 16:24.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, Smit seeks to demonstrate that the chapter can be seen as entirely fitting, if it is viewed from the perspective of the handbooks of Hellenistic rhetoric:

The manner in which Paul, by means of comparison, tries to change the estimation the Corinthians have regarding the charismata and the fact that for

¹⁵⁶ Johannes Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (KEKNT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), 310. Schmithals follows Weiss closely here: See Schmithals, “Korintherbriefe,” 268.

¹⁵⁷ William O. Walker Jnr., “Is First Corinthians 13 a Non-Pauline Interpolation?” *CBQ* 60/3 (1998): 484-499; 484.

¹⁵⁸ Sellin, “Hauptprobleme,” 2984.

doing so he chooses the form of an excursus is in complete correspondence with the rules of the demonstrative genre.¹⁵⁹

It is a devaluing speech in which Paul belittles the *charismata* by setting them against love on three accounts.¹⁶⁰

However, Smit's analysis might be questioned here. Does Paul actually set the *charismata* *in opposition* to love, or does he rather speak of what they are like *without* love?

Garland's comment is apt:

Rather than being a hymn glorifying how wonderful love is, this text becomes a subtle commentary on what is rotten in Corinth.¹⁶¹

As Garland's comment suggests, there are numerous verbal and conceptual parallels between chapter 13 and Paul's characterisation of the Corinthians elsewhere in the letter. For example: οὐ ζηλοῖ (cf. 3:3); καυχῆσθωμαι, περπερεύεται, φυσιοῦται (cf. 4:6 etc.); ἄσχημονεῖ (cf. 7:36). The critique of these attitudes is surely particularly cutting in the context of chapters 12–14, as they characterise the very attitude of proud, self-seeking *pneumatism* that Paul there opposes. Fitzmyer rightly concludes:

I hesitate to label the passage a digression or an insertion, because, as I see it, it is the *climax* to what Paul has been teaching in chap. 12 about the *pneumatika* and the diverse kinds of them, whether *charismata*, *diakoniai*, or *energēmata*.... In their own way and somewhat abstractly, these verses sum up what Paul has been saying elsewhere in this letter about the characteristics of the Christian life when lived in Christ.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Joop Smit, "The Genre of 1 Corinthians 13 in the Light of Classical Rhetoric," *NovT* 33/3 (1991): 193-216; 214.

¹⁶⁰ Smit, "The Genre," 215.

¹⁶¹ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 617.

¹⁶² Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 488.

Paul's Lowly Self-Depiction in Chapter 15, in Contrast with Chapter 9

Schmithals declares:

It is not conceivable that at the same time in which he writes I,9 [i.e. a self-defence] Paul declares that he is not [worthy to be called an apostle – i.e. chapter 15], thus precisely what people in Corinth are charging.¹⁶³

But such a sharp incongruence between the two sections is hard to maintain. There are elements in both sections of insistent justification of apostolic status as well as emphatic dissociation from exaltation. Arguably, in both sections, as well as in chapters 1–4 where similar themes emerge, the juxtaposition of apparently incongruous elements serves the same rhetorical purpose. Paul wants his own apostleship to teach the Corinthians dependence upon God, both by being revelatory (speaking God's word of life), and by being exemplary (living God's way of life). The two cohere in the theme of the cross of Christ.

Thus in chapter 9, Paul both insists on his own apostleship and presents himself as an example of cruciform self-restraint. In chapter 15, Paul likewise affirms his own foundational status, while presenting himself as the epitome of one whose life is marked by death.

Discrepancy Between Chapter 15 and 6:14

Sellin points out that Paul seems to carry different assumptions about the resurrection-beliefs of his hearers in 6:14 and in chapter 15.¹⁶⁴ In the former passage, Paul appeals without argument to an apparently common belief in future resurrection; in the latter

¹⁶³ Schmithals, *Gnosticism*, 92.

¹⁶⁴ G. Sellin, *Die Streit um die Auferstehung der Toten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 49.

passage, Paul argues at length against a Corinthian denial of future resurrection. Further, in the former passage, Paul appears to believe that “we” will be raised, whereas in the latter section, he says that “we” will not all die, but will be *changed*.

However, the first of these tensions needs to be adjusted by noting that there is at least one difference between resurrection in 6:14 (upon which there appears to be assumed agreement between Paul and the Corinthians) and resurrection in chapter 15 (upon which there is sharp disagreement). The denial of resurrection in chapter 15 is in relation to a particular object: *the dead*:

How is it that some of you say that there is no resurrection *of the dead* [νεκρῶν]?

Thus, rather than challenging the literary integrity of the letter, Paul’s apparent assumption about his hearers in 6:14 may serve to focus discussion of the issues behind chapter 15. Perhaps it is a Corinthian disapproval of *death* itself, or of the value of *dead bodies* that helps explain the denial of resurrection on the part of some in Corinth. I will engage further with these issues in chapter 5 of my dissertation, which will focus on 1 Corinthians 15.

In relation to the second tension, Thiselton rightly opposes a sharp division between 6:14 and chapter 15 (as expressed by U. Schnelle):

But this is to misread the careful dialectic between continuity and change which runs throughout 15:1-58. To be sure, Paul’s resurrection σώμα is a transformed σώμα; but it remains the *same self* which *also* retains “somatic continuity,” as Dahl well argues.... B. Byrne, contrary to Schnelle, constructively argues that Paul’s eschatology counters the dualism of those at Corinth who devalue the body by demonstrating how resurrection destiny is precisely what gives meaning, responsibility, and significance to bodily existence in the present.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 464-465.

Thus both of the tensions here may be addressed by giving careful attention to the situation and nuanced argumentation of chapter 15.

Chloe and Stephanas in Chapter 16 and Chapter 1

Two tensions arise from Paul's personal greetings in chapter 16. Firstly, it is surprising that Paul does not greet, or offer greetings from, "Chloe's people", from whom he reports having heard significant news about the Corinthian church in chapter 1. Secondly, it is surprising to find that Stephanas appears to be present with Paul in chapter 16, given that Paul seems initially not to remember him in chapter 1, and makes no reference to his presence at that point.¹⁶⁶

Merklein does not find either of these issues to be particularly significant.¹⁶⁷ He asserts that it is enough to mention Chloe's people in chapter 1, without needing to reiterate an acknowledgement of them at the close of the letter. Similarly, Merklein appeals to the pragmatics of a letter text to suggest that a reference to Stephanas' presence in chapter 1 is unnecessary, given that this would have been known to the Corinthians anyway.

It could further be pointed out that there is no information as to whether Chloe's people were even part of the Corinthian church at all, or their whereabouts at the time of the sending of the letter. Likewise, Paul provides few details from which to reconstruct Stephanas' movements.

But what of Paul's apparent failure to recall Stephanas in chapter 1? Schenk considers such a failure to be unthinkable if Stephanas were in fact present – as Schenk believes is

¹⁶⁶ Again, Schmithals finds that these tensions point undeniably to partition. He points to "the question which has caused exegetes much racking of the brain, as to how Paul could be silent in I,1:11 about Stephanas and his companions but in I,16 about the people of Chloe – a puzzle that is in fact insoluble if one holds to the unity of 1 Corinthians. Rather, Epistle A is delivered by Stephanas, and Epistle B has been prompted by those of Chloe. It would indeed be most strange if Paul had only belatedly recalled in I,1:16 Stephanas who was *present with him*". Schmithals, *Gnosticism*, 94; emphasis original.

¹⁶⁷ Merklein, "Die Einheitlichkeit," 162.

implied in chapter 16.¹⁶⁸ It is worth considering, however, whether Paul may have had a rhetorical reason in chapter 1 for singling out the people he baptised and for separating the mention of Stephanas. Baptism is mentioned six times in this crucial section that introduces the issue of divisions (1:10-17); and nowhere else in the main body of the letter are people from Corinth named – not even the man who has publicly committed sexual immorality in chapter 5. These facts may hint that there was something about this issue of baptism, and the particular people Paul first names, that was known both to Paul and the Corinthians in relation to the divisions, but which is now obscure. It may be, for example, that Paul wanted to separate the mention of Stephanas (a local leader whom he commends in chapter 16) from any hint of the squabbling over baptism. Of course, this cannot be insisted upon; but the fact that it can neither be emphatically denied again illustrates Merklein's point that there will necessarily be obscurities and apparent incongruities in dealing with a letter text, which carries pragmatic coherence between author and primary audience.

Apparent Editorial Interpolations

Redaction Criticism is often accompanied by the suggestion of editorial interpolations that aim to improve overall coherence, and to sharpen the letter's application to the redactional situation. It has already been noted that Sellin is unconvinced by most of the suggestions of editorial interpolations in 1 Corinthians, although he does, for example, think that 1:2c is given away as an interpolation by a catholicising tendency.¹⁶⁹

Such assertions of interpolation, without manuscript evidence, are hard to evaluate, particularly because they require an accessible redactional situation that makes better sense of them than their literary context. I remain unconvinced that it can be argued with sufficient certainty that original circumstances could not have supplied adequate reason for – specifically – reminders of catholicity. Indeed, such reminders do not appear at all out of place in a letter that argues vigorously against proud autonomy.

¹⁶⁸ Schenk, "Der 1 Korintherbrief als Briefsammlung," 223.

¹⁶⁹ Sellin, "Hauptprobleme," 2983.

There are, of course, numerous other passages (besides those that are argued to have an editorial catholicising tendency) that have been identified as possible interpolations in 1 Corinthians. Murphy-O'Connor discusses claims of interpolation in relation to 2:6-16; 4:6; 6:14; 7:29-31; 10:1-22; 11:3-16; 13; 14:34-5; 15:21-2; 15:29-34; 15:31-2; 15:44b-48; and 15:56.¹⁷⁰ Aside from those discussed above, however, these instances generally relate to individual possible additions, rather than alleged elements of a comprehensive redaction of the letter. Thus I do not discuss them here, as my focus is on the general unity and coherence of the letter, a coherence that would not be jeopardised by the odd questionable verse.

3. *Kerygmatic Rhetoric* and the Coherence of 1 Corinthians

My thesis, that the arrangement of 1 Corinthians be viewed as exhibiting *kerygmatic rhetoric*, essentially pursues the credible possibility that Paul draws on, but creatively transforms, certain conceptual motifs from his cultural-theological heritage in order to present a pastorally strategic response to a set of problems in Corinth that he conceives as having major theological significance. This allows a smoother reading of the letter than a more limited application of Rhetorical Criticism has provided, particularly in relation to the meaning and function of the resurrection chapter.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

In this chapter I have acknowledged that the literary integrity of 1 Corinthians has often been challenged, resulting in various redaction theories, as well as a range of conceptions of the letter's coherence. Objectors to the compositional unity of the letter point to a lack of unified literary coherence, and possible evidence of an editor. Redaction theories, however, face problems of historical plausibility, both in terms of the claim for an aggressively singular Pauline Corpus, and in relation to the utilisation of 1 Corinthians by Clement of Rome.

¹⁷⁰ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians" in *Keys to First Corinthians* (rev. and enl.; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), 257-287.

Various conceptions of the literary unity of the letter have therefore been offered. The background of Greco-Roman letter forms has been of limited benefit, given that the letter “body” is so flexible. Rhetorical Criticism has commendably sought to be attentive to the flow of the letter’s argumentation, but has often been limited to rhetorical patterns that were allegedly generic across the Greco-Roman world, rather than creative rhetorical resources expressive of Paul’s particularity. Numerous scholars have noted that Paul’s pastoral motivation results in a literary coherence that is pragmatic between author and first audience. The situation/s behind the letter have been investigated and evaluated as having a certain entextualised coherence by various commentators. Some have argued that Paul’s response to these situations exhibits a theological unity, perhaps drawing on patterns from Paul’s theological heritage. My own perspective continues this trajectory of thought, but emphasises that such patterns from Paul’s theological heritage have been renegotiated in the light of the Christ event, to become focused as *kerygma*.

The exegetical tensions in canonical 1 Corinthians may be somewhat relieved by this perspective. In particular, Paul’s pastorally driven rhetoric, his distinctive approach to ethical persuasion, and his adoption of *ABA*’ patterning into his overall schema offer some insight into the parts of the letter that have been seen as problematic for the letter’s overall coherence.

Chapter 3

1 Corinthians 1–4: Divisive Boasting Over Human Leaders is Set Against the Present Inhabitation of Christ's Cross

1. John Chrysostom as Student of Paul

John Chrysostom has long been regarded as one of the most insightful exegetes among the Patristics.¹ His 44 homilies on 1 Corinthians are the earliest “completely preserved, full-scale commentary on the letter in Greek”.² I therefore begin this investigation of 1 Corinthians 1–4 by seeking to be attentive to Chrysostom’s reading of this portion of the letter. I will then engage with the text of 1 Corinthians itself, before relating my findings to modern scholarship.

To consider Chrysostom at such length may appear to be a digression, but it belongs integrally to my argument. It is important that the interpretation of 1 Corinthians that I am presenting be seen to bear some continuity with early Christian exposition. Chrysostom’s homilies in particular exhibit substantial harmony with the direction of this dissertation. The homilies were delivered in Antioch, where John served as lector, deacon, and presbyter (386-97), before being promoted to bishop of Constantinople.

Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen describe the usual structure of Chrysostom’s exegetical sermons:

[I]n these John tends to pursue a close verse-by-verse exegesis of the pericope or scriptural lection, which he then follows with an ethical discourse on some issue.

¹ His reception by Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin is illustrative. For both of these theologians, Chrysostom is among the three most quoted Patristics, alongside Augustine and Jerome. In Aquinas’ *Catena Aurea*, quotations of Chrysostom (and writings thought to be by Chrysostom) outweigh Augustine and Jerome (2692 for Chrysostom, compared with 1107 for Jerome, and 2078 for Augustine), indicating Chrysostom’s significance when it comes to *exegesis*. Similarly, although Calvin often finds disagreement with Chrysostom in the *Institutes*, he seems to view him as a more reliable guide than Augustine when it comes to exegetical works. R. Ward Holder elucidates: “Calvin possesses a *doctrinal hermeneutic* which is basically traditional and conservative, and dependent on a type of Augustinian grasp of the Christian message. He *interprets Scripture*, however, using a hermeneutical method which is humanistically inspired, contextually considered, and influenced far more by his understanding of the interpretation of Chrysostom”. R. Ward Holder, “Calvin as Commentator on the Pauline Epistles,” in *Calvin and the Bible* (ed. Donald D. McKim; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 224-256; 250; emphasis mine.

² Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000; repr. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), xv.

This second half of the sermon is not always directly related to the subject-matter of the first. Instead it can be occasioned by some concern which happens to be close to John's mind at the time or he may continue a theme which was initially addressed in other sermons preached before the same audience.³

Frances Young elaborates on the ethical applications of Chrysostom's homilies:

It is reckoned that in his ninety homilies on Matthew Chrysostom spoke on almsgiving forty times, poverty thirteen times, avarice more than thirty times and wealth wrongly acquired or used about twenty times.... Often he sounds like the typical hectoring moralist, as these themes keep recurring, creeping in on the barest of pretexts where they seem hardly relevant.⁴

Elsewhere Young explains:

It has often been noted that on the whole these exegetical homilies fall into two parts: the first follows the text providing commentary, then, after a certain time, Chrysostom abandons the text and develops a long exhortation on one of his favourite themes, the latter bearing precious little relation to the text or commentary preceding it.⁵

However, if we limit our exegetical interest to the "expository" portion of each homily we are, as Margaret M. Mitchell rightly points out, "evading what their author thought most important".⁶

³ Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom* (ECF; London: Routledge, 2000), 30.

⁴ Frances Young, "They Speak to Us Across the Centuries 3. John Chrysostom," *ExpT* 109/2 (1997): 38-41; 40.

⁵ Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 249.

⁶ Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, xvii.

In this chapter I seek to attend to the exegetical insights that Chrysostom brings as both an *expositor* and *creative applier* of 1 Corinthians.

Paul as Pastoral Model

Frederic Henry Chase rightly captures the pastor John's interest in the pastor Paul:

[Chrysostom] rejoices to mark how the great missionary pastor varies rebuke with commendation.... [Chrysostom himself] was an Expositor because he was first of all a Pastor.⁷

Indeed, it seems that Chrysostom's immediate interest in approaching Paul's letters in a homiletic setting is the question: "*What is Paul's pastoral approach?*" This question permeates and steers his discussion of 1 Corinthians,⁸ and leads him to reflect on an apostolic author who is *pastorally sensitive* and *rhetorically competent*.

Pastorally Sensitive

Perhaps the most important feature of Chrysostom's impression of Paul is that the apostle is *pastorally sensitive*, carefully and lovingly arranging his discussion for the sake of his hearers' spiritual health:

For this is the character of Paul: even on the basis of little things he composes big praise, but he does not do this with flattery; by no means! For how could he who

⁷ Frederic Henry Chase, *Chrysostom: A Study in the History of Biblical Interpretation* (1887; repr. Charleston, S.C.: Bibliolife, 2009), 179.

⁸ So in Homily 1, for example, he calls his hearers to observe Paul's pastoral aim: "Do you see how with each word he pulls down their puffed up pride, training their thoughts by every means for heaven?" Homily 1 on 1 Corinthians; PG 61.13. In Homily 2, Chrysostom draws attention to Paul's covert method of confrontation: "By means of praises and thanksgivings he touches them harshly". Homily 2 on 1 Corinthians; PG 61.17. All further references to Chrysostom's homilies are to the series on 1 Corinthians. All translations and emphases are my own. I cite and translate from the *Patrologia Graeca* edition, with an awareness of Frederick Field's critical edition.

desired neither money nor glory nor any other such thing act in such a way?

Rather he arranges all things for the sake of their salvation.⁹

Often in the homilies on 1 Corinthians, Paul's pastoral approach is described using the terminology of therapy: Paul is the skilful "physician", who discerns "symptoms" and applies "medicine" to Corinthian "disease", effecting its "cure".¹⁰ This therapeutic concern must be heeded if one is to apprehend why Paul writes with vehemence; why he writes with gentleness; why he utilises digression; why he uses irony or reason or deferral: "he arranges all things for the sake of their salvation".

Rhetorically Competent

Furthermore, Chrysostom views Paul as *rhetorically competent*. Although Chrysostom insists that Paul does not conduct his apostolic mission according to the Corinthian model of "external wisdom" and "human reasoning" but rather according to the operation of divine grace,¹¹ he believes that Paul communicates his divinely-given message using recognisable rhetorical devices. He does *not* seem to think that the letter utilises a conventional rhetorical macro-structure, but highlights Paul's repeated use of rhetorical devices such as thoughtfully organised anticipation;¹² proof and witness;¹³ reason;¹⁴ digression;¹⁵ example;¹⁶ juxtaposition;¹⁷ and *reductio ad absurdum*.¹⁸

⁹ Homily 26; PG 61.213.

¹⁰ See for example Homily 1, PG 61.12, which refers to Corinthian "disease", or Homily 12, PG 61.96, in which Paul acts as a "physician". This therapeutic imagery had, for centuries, been a commonplace in philosophical and moral argumentation. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

¹¹ This is a major theme, for example, in Homily 4.

¹² For example, in Homily 2 Chrysostom indicates that Paul "οἰκονομικῶς" prepares (προοδοποιοῦντες) for his later argument (PG 61.18).

¹³ For example, in Homily 5, Paul calls the Corinthians as "witnesses" (μάρτυρας) against themselves (PG 61.39). In Homily 7 Chrysostom asserts the need to set forth "proofs" (ἀποδείξεις), a requirement that Paul has fulfilled (PG 61.54).

¹⁴ For example, in Homily 18 Paul is said to make use of "both threats and reasons" (καὶ ἀπειλὰς καὶ λογισμοὺς τίθησιν) in persuading the Corinthians (PG 61.145).

¹⁵ For example, in Homily 37 Chrysostom reflects, "Then, just as he always does, he returns to his former topic [προτέραν ὑπόθεσιν], from which he had digressed [ἐξέβη] to discuss these things" (PG 61.317).

¹⁶ For example, in Homily 41 Chrysostom says that Paul "uses both reasons and examples" (καὶ λογισμοὺς καὶ παραδείγματα τίθησι) in making his point (PG 61.355).

Two broad rhetorical features are especially worthy of note, as Chrysostom appears to view them as “customary” for Paul and thus consistently informative.

The first “customary” rhetorical feature is that of careful *alternation* between vehement rebuke and soothing repair:

Having corrected the three weightiest charges – firstly, the division of the church; secondly, the issue of the one who has committed sexual immorality; thirdly, the issue of the greedy person – he now adopts a tamer sort of speech.¹⁹

Next, because he had put fear into them, see how once again he raises them up, alongside an exhortation to moderation.²⁰

For that which I said before I will also say now: that he does not place all of the heavy accusations in a row, but rather, after dealing with them in their proper order, he distributes the gentler topics in the midst of them.²¹

The second broad “customary” rhetorical feature of Paul’s letter might be thought of as *metaschematismos*, or *covert reversal*.

Chrysostom holds that a fundamental element of Paul’s pastoral approach is his right concern to convince his hearers by building his case/s gradually:

¹⁷ For example, in Homily 42, Chrysostom remarks, “Just as Paul always does, he blends topic with topic [ὑπόθεσιν ὑποθέσει]” (PG 61.364).

¹⁸ In Homily 39 Chrysostom commends the use of the *reductio ad absurdum*, “which Paul also often uses” (PG 61.337).

¹⁹ Homily 19; PG 61.152. Of the varied problems that Chrysostom perceives in Corinth, it is not factionalism but resurrection-denial that proves to be the weightiest: “He places the most severe issue of all last – that concerning the resurrection”. Homily 26; PG 61.212.

²⁰ Homily 24; PG 61.198.

²¹ Homily 26; PG 61.212.

Just as I have always been saying – that we must form our rebukes gently and little by little – this Paul also does here.²²

This frequently involves a movement from that which is *mild* to that which is *strong*; or from that which is *distant* to that which is *direct*:

This Paul also does here. For, being about to go into an issue full of many dangers, fit to pull the church from its foundations, he makes use of milder language.²³

But he has something to say that is beyond these things – for he places the greater things last.²⁴

Do you see how little by little he leads to that which is close at hand? He does this customarily, beginning with distant examples, and ending with that which is more directly related to the issue.²⁵

This characteristic movement from that which is *mild* or *distant* to that which is *strong* or *direct* may at times involve an initial use of *covert* self-reference, which eventually gives way to *overt* confrontation:

He always develops the heavy issues in relation to his own person.²⁶

Up to this point, using harsh words, he did not unveil the curtain, but he argued as though he himself were the one hearing these things.... But because now it is time to show mercy, he removes it and takes off the mask.²⁷

²² Homily 3; PG 61.21.

²³ Homily 3; PG 61.21.

²⁴ Homily 33; PG 61.281.

²⁵ Homily 35; PG 61.299.

²⁶ Homily 35; PG 61.297.

²⁷ Homily 12; PG 61.96.

When he was discussing their divisions, he did not immediately heavily rebuke them on the matter, but was more gentle at first, and afterwards he ended in accusation.²⁸

And at this point he says it obscurely, but as he goes on and grows heated, he removes the veil from the head.... But in the beginning he does not do this, for it is better to proceed gently, little by little.²⁹

By this movement from *covert* to *overt*, Paul gently invites an open and willing reception from his hearers, before cunningly (but lovingly) calling them to a reversal of values:

This is especially what Paul repeatedly sets out to accomplish, when he wants to lead people away from something. He shows that the very things the person desires are unwittingly lost. And you too should do this: if you want to lead someone away from pleasure, show that the issue leads to bitterness; if you want to take someone away from vainglory, show that the issue is full of dishonour.³⁰

As the above quotation indicates, Chrysostom takes Paul seriously as a mentor in terms of pastoral approach. Chrysostom views himself as Paul's attentive collaborator in the ecclesial ambo.³¹ He understands himself to be, like Paul, a physician,³² discerning symptoms and prescribing cures. In the final sermon of the series, Chrysostom looks back at Paul's approach and seeks to pass on Paul's model of how to rebuke sinners: one must use loving sensitivity rather than selfish anger:

²⁸ Homily 15; PG 61.122.

²⁹ Homily 38; PG 61.323.

³⁰ Homily 36; PG 61.308-9.

³¹ This point is made powerfully by the common artistic motif in which Paul watches over Chrysostom's shoulder during sermon preparation and whispers exegetical ideas. The motif can be found in Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, where it is helpfully elucidated (35). More broadly, Mitchell convincingly argues that Chrysostom saw Paul as a mentor and collaborator.

³² "If I have declared these things more plainly than I ought, let no one blame me. For I do not want to make a display of dignified words, but rather to make my hearers dignified.... For also a doctor who desires to cut out an ulcer is not concerned about how he might keep his hands clean, but rather how he might bring relief from the ulcer". Homily 37, PG 61.320; see also Homily 11, PG 61.94, in which Chrysostom promises to prescribe a cure.

By these words [“my love be with you all”] he indicates that the things he had written did not come from passion or wrath, but from care, given that after such an accusation he does not turn away from them, but loves them and embraces them from afar, enfolding them through these letters and writings. For this is what the one who corrects must do.³³

2. Chrysostom as Preacher of 1 Corinthians

Pastoral Creativity in Exposition and Application

It should not be surprising, then, if the pastoral and rhetorical tact that Chrysostom has perceived in Paul is also evident in his own homilies. Indeed, it is suddenly obvious that the homilies generally involve a movement from the *distant* (Corinth) to the *direct* (Antioch); from the *mild* (indirect application) to the *strong* (direct confrontation); from the *covert* (speaking about “them”) to the *overt* (addressing “you”). There may be more to the link between “exposition” and “application” in Chrysostom’s exegetical homilies than is first apparent. A brief examination of several homilies will be worthwhile. I will focus on a sequence of homilies for which the relationship between exposition and application appears obscure or tenuous.

In the exposition section of *Homily 11*, Chrysostom identifies the issue in 1 Corinthians 4:3-5 as the Corinthians’ *arrogant judgement of one another*, “just like judges on their seats”.³⁴ This sin (like that of the “fornicator”, as John points out) is shown to arise from *pride*, as the Corinthians usurp the divine position of Judge, making false judgements based on present appearances.

The application section of this homily, however, is about the evils of wealth:

³³ Homily 44; PG 61.377.

³⁴ Homily 11; PG 61.87.

What then should we do? Know the shabbiness of these things, and that wealth is a senseless runaway slave, surrounding those who have it with innumerable evils.³⁵

The link between exposition and application may thus seem to be something of a stretch. But a closer look reveals that from the preacher's perspective, the denial of *God as Judge* lies at the heart of both sections. Those who make self-deceived judgements (whether in Corinth or in Antioch) are exhibiting a serious disease:

Consider how greatly humans are deceived in the judgements that they make!... Whatever sin you like, first let us examine it; and you will see that it arises in this very way.³⁶

The *Corinthian* problem of proud self-deceit is shown to find *Antiochene* expression particularly in the luxurious pursuit of present riches. So Chrysostom sensitively applies the lesson that *God is the true Judge* to his own hearers by urging them to recall that they cannot deceive God, the true Judge, and thus should purge their unfitting passion for *present wealth*. Thus, having come alongside his hearers in the exposition section, he directly confronts them in the application.

That the exposition and application are consciously linked in this way is indicated by Chrysostom's closing words, in which he returns to the theme of his exposition:

And on that day we will have *God's* praise, just as Paul also says: "And then each one's praise will come from God". For that which comes from humans is fleeting.³⁷

³⁵ Homily 11; PG 61.94.

³⁶ Homily 11; PG 61.92.

³⁷ Homily 11; PG 61.96.

Homily 12 follows a similar pattern. The exposition section focuses on 1 Corinthians 4:6-10 (in Chrysostom's version, "Now these things, brothers, I have transferred so as to be about myself and Apollos, for your sake, so that in us you might learn not to consider people above that which is written"). Chrysostom points out that the divisive Corinthian boasting in polished speakers is essentially a matter of puffed up pride in humans.

The application section, however, focuses especially on the believers' acceptance of the customary impropriety associated with weddings and married life in Antioch:

For tell me, is it not evil to commit sexual immorality? So shall we allow this to happen even once?³⁸

Again, this application initially appears to be unrelated to the exposition. But once again, a closer look reveals that from the preacher's perspective, both exposition and application deal with a common problem: that of *pride in another's esteem*:

So it seems that this also comes from being puffed up [τοῦτο φουσιώσεως]: being exalted on behalf of another – even if one is not exalted on behalf of oneself. For just as someone who is proud of another's wealth acts out of arrogance, so it is with the one who is proud of another's glory.³⁹

Chrysostom equates the *Corinthian* believers' arrogant pride in their chosen leader's glory with *Antiochene* arrogant pride in society's glory. Just as in Corinth believers are priding themselves in their association with polished speakers, so in Antioch believers are priding themselves in their acceptance by an immoral society:

³⁸ Homily 12; PG 61.103.

³⁹ Homily 12; PG 61.97.

Tell me! Are these then the ones whose glory you chase? And how could this be anything other than the ultimate folly, to seek the praise of humans who are so corrupt in their opinions and who act so randomly?⁴⁰

In *Homily 13*, the exposition relates to 1 Corinthians 4:10-16:

He shows how they [the apostles] are condemned to death, saying “We are fools and weak and dishonoured; and we hunger and thirst and go naked and beaten and homeless; and we labour, working with our own hands” – which are signs of genuine teachers and apostles. But the others were high-minded on the basis of the opposites of these.⁴¹

But the application again moves to focus on the injunction to share wealth with all:

For wealth is a chain, an awful chain for those who do not know how to use it, an inhumane and savage tyrant.... How then will this happen [our escape from wealth]? When we share our wealth with all.⁴²

This might initially appear to bear little relation to the passage under discussion.

However, it would seem that once again, Chrysostom has attempted to sensitively apply the underlying *pastoral point* of the passage to the particular orientation of his own audience. In this instance, the “pastoral point” is the necessity of forsaking present pride and glory, in the imitation of apostolic humility:

They should zealously seek these ways of the apostles – their dangers and humiliations, rather than their honours and glories. For it is these things that the gospel requires.⁴³

⁴⁰ Homily 12; PG 61.106-7.

⁴¹ Homily 13; PG 61.107.

⁴² Homily 13; PG 61.112.

⁴³ Homily 13; PG 61.107.

This assertion seems to act as a bridge between exposition and application. Chrysostom's audience is to consider Paul, and pursue his godly likeness in body and soul, eschewing *present wealth* in preference for greater riches. Far from being unrelated to the context of 1 Corinthians then, Chrysostom's injunction to share wealth attempts to strike at the heart of the issue that Paul has identified in Corinth: the love of present glory.

Homily 15 also seems to move awkwardly between exposition and application. The exposition focuses on the sexually immoral man of 1 Corinthians 5; but the application focuses on the greedy desire for wealth:

Where now are the wealthy? Those who count up simple and compound interest, those who take from all people and are never satisfied?⁴⁴

But once again it would seem that Chrysostom is attempting to be pastorally attentive to the “disease” beneath the symptoms, and to bring out this underlying issue in his application. Chrysostom suggests that the sexually immoral man of 1 Corinthians 5 may in fact be one of the would-be “wise” of the Corinthian congregation,⁴⁵ and as such, the object of the congregation's boasting. And whereas in Corinth this proud boasting has resulted in the acceptance of sexual immorality, in Antioch the equivalent boasting results in the acceptance of unrestrained greed. This bridge between exposition and application is actually made explicit, albeit briefly:

Now it seems very much to me that the issue concerning the leaven also applies to the priests who allow much old leaven to remain within, not purging from their borders – that is, the church – the greedy, swindlers, and all that would exclude from the kingdom of heaven. For *greed* is indeed “old leaven”.⁴⁶

This issue then becomes the focus of the homily application.

⁴⁴ Homily 15; PG 61.128.

⁴⁵ “σοφοῦ τινος ἵσως ὄντος” Homily 15; PG 61.122.

⁴⁶ Homily 15; PG 61.127.

In each of these homilies, then, the pastor Chrysostom has sought to discern and effectively confront the congregation with the Antiochene manifestation of the underlying Corinthian problem.

Broad Problems in Corinth

It will be obvious by now that there is a cluster of recurring themes in Chrysostom's exegetical homilies on 1 Corinthians. It will be fruitful to pay this some attention, noting three important strands: *boastful pride*; *present wealth*; and *human autonomy*.

The Problem of Boastful Pride

There is no doubt that for Chrysostom, *boastful pride* is chief among the problems in Corinth. This topic frequently appears in the "exposition" sections of the homilies.

Young rightly notes:

He links the factionalism of the Corinthian church with their *arrogance*, drawing his hearers' attention to the way Paul puts down *their swelling pride*, insisting that the church is God's so it ought to be united.⁴⁷

Chrysostom believes that the rise of would-be wise orators in the Corinthian church has created division and has effectively demoted the truly godly leaders.⁴⁸ But the Corinthian catastrophe in chapters 1–4 is not fundamentally that the church is *divided*, but rather that its divisions expose the spiritual disaster of rampant *boastful pride*:

⁴⁷ Young, "They Speak," 38; emphasis mine.

⁴⁸ "For men who were godly and friends of God were mocked and thrown out because of their lack of learning, while those who were full of innumerable evils were approved because of their polished speech". Homily 11; PG 61.87.

So, because these evils all sprang from arrogance [ἐξ ἀπνοοίας], and from supposing themselves to be exceptional, he cleanses out these things first of all.... See how immediately, from the beginning, he casts out their pride [τὸν τῦφον κατέβαλε]!⁴⁹

Do you see how, with every word, he casts out their puffed up pride [κατέβαλεν αὐτῶν τὸ φύσημα]?⁵⁰

Having thus shamed those who were unsound in this way... he again pulls down their pride [τὸν τῦφον], saying “I do not know whether I baptised anyone else”.⁵¹

Having brought down the puffed up pride [τὸ φύσημα] of those who were high-minded because of baptism, he moves to those who were boasting on the basis of external wisdom.⁵²

Having brought down their pride [τὸν τῦφον] and said, “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world”, he also mentions the cause, on account of which these things happened.⁵³

What he had said earlier was sufficient to cast down the pride [καταβαλεῖν τὸν τῦφον] of those who boasted on account of wisdom.⁵⁴

See what he says, repressing their pride [τὸν τῦφον αὐτῶν]!⁵⁵

The other topics of the letter are likewise generally explained as arising from pride.

Paul’s response to the sexually immoral man of 5:1 is described as follows:

⁴⁹ Introduction – Homily 1; PG 61.12.

⁵⁰ Homily 1; PG 61.13.

⁵¹ Homily 3; PG 61.25

⁵² Homily 3; PG 61.26.

⁵³ Homily 4; PG 61.32.

⁵⁴ Homily 6; PG 61.47.

⁵⁵ Homily 8; PG 61.69.

Firstly he denounces the puffed up pride [φύσημα] of the man, seeing as the sin was made up of two parts working together: sexual immorality; and that which is worse than sexual immorality, the refusal to grieve over the sin that has been committed. For it is not so much that the sin has been committed that troubles him, but that the sin has been committed without repentance.⁵⁶

Since, then, this is what the one who committed sexual immorality was like, having made his soul so reckless and inflexible through his sin, it was necessary to rebuke his pride [προκαταβάλλει τὸν τῦφον].⁵⁷

The issue of lawsuits in chapter 6 is said to arise from the same sort of bold spirit:

And here again he makes his accusation on commonly acknowledged grounds. For in the former place he says, “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you”; and here he says, “Do any of you dare?” Right from the beginning he shows his emotion and indicates that the matter arises from being daring and lawless.

Chrysostom’s discussion of *the problem of idol meat in chapter 8* similarly draws attention to the problem of pride: many are “swollen with pride” about their “perfect knowledge”, and so end up injuring themselves and others:

And first he nullifies their pride [τὸν τῦφον αὐτῶν], declaring that the possession of perfect knowledge, which they thought set themselves apart, was common to all.⁵⁸

See how he pulls down their puffed up pride [τὸ φύσημα]!⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Homily 11; PG 61.90.

⁵⁷ Homily 11; PG 61.91.

⁵⁸ Homily 20; PG 61.160.

This pride in “perfect knowledge” is contrasted with an orientation of love:

All of these evils arose from this: not from perfect knowledge but from refusing to greatly love or have mercy on their neighbour.⁶⁰

Chrysostom’s application in this homily begins with the insistence that his hearers should consider human pride [τὸν τυφὸν τὸν ἀνθρώπινον]⁶¹ to be nothing. Commenting on *the conclusion of this matter in chapter 10*, he repeats that the “sources of these evils” are great boasting [ἀλαζονεία μάλιστα] and carelessness.⁶²

In relation to *the problem of headcoverings in chapter 11*, Chrysostom observes that Paul must pull down the “puffed up pride of the opponents” [τὸ φύσημα τῶν ἐναντιουμένων].⁶³ *The divisions at the Lord’s Supper* in the same chapter are said to express “ὕβριν εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον, ὕβριν εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν”.⁶⁴

Chrysostom describes *the problems of spiritual gifts in chapters 12–14* as relating to envy and pride:

Having restrained the envy of those with lesser gifts, and removed their discouragement, which it seems they had due to greater gifts being granted to others, he also humbles the pride of these people [ταπεινοῖ καὶ τούτων τὸν τυφόν] who had received the greater gifts.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Homily 20; PG 61.162.

⁶⁰ Homily 20; PG 61.161.

⁶¹ Homily 20; PG 61.168.

⁶² Homily 23; PG 61.194.

⁶³ Homily 26; PG 61.213.

⁶⁴ Homily 27; PG 61.228.

⁶⁵ Homily 31; PG 61.258 (on chapter 12); On chapter 14 see homily 35; PG 61.310, where Paul is said to have rebuked their love of tongues so as “to pull down their pride [τυφὸν αὐτῶν κατασπάσαι]”.

Chrysostom hears the *discussion of love in chapter 13* as an antidote to such an orientation:

However, the miraculous signs would not have caused this. Rather these [greater gifts] lift the careless up to vain-glory and arrogance [εἰς κενοδοξίαν... καὶ ἀπόνοιαν].⁶⁶

Do you see how he doubly pulls down their puffed up pride [τὸ φύσημα αὐτῶν]? Because they have knowledge “in part”, and even their possession of this is not of themselves!⁶⁷

The *denial of the resurrection of the dead* in chapter 15 is viewed by Chrysostom as the most serious problem in Corinth, “for indeed, everything hangs upon the resurrection”.⁶⁸

And once again, Paul’s response involves “demolishing their arrogance [τὴν ἀπόνοιαν]”,⁶⁹ calling upon the Corinthians to “drive away pride [τὸν τῦφον] with humility [διὰ τῆς ταπεινοφροσύνης]”.⁷⁰

In the final homily of the series, Chrysostom sums up the issues of the letter as expressing, negatively, a neglect of love, and positively, an excess of pride:

“Let everything be done in love”. Because in fact everything that has been mentioned so far has come about because of the neglect of this.⁷¹

Of all the evils, pride [ὁ τῦφος] was the cause.⁷²

⁶⁶ Homily 32; PG 61.271; cf. Homily 35; PG 61.301.

⁶⁷ Homily 34; PG 61.287.

⁶⁸ Homily 39; PG 61.336.

⁶⁹ Homily 39; PG 61.336.

⁷⁰ Homily 40; PG 61.354.

⁷¹ Homily 44; PG 61.375.

⁷² Homily 44; PG 61.377.

Young concludes:

Above all I am inclined to respect Chrysostom's view that the issues are pride, status, attitude, finance and morality, rather than false doctrines, gnostic or otherwise.⁷³

The Problem of Obsession with Present Wealth

While Chrysostom's identification of the problem of *boastful pride* is often found in the "exposition" sections of his homilies, his discussion of the problem of *present wealth*, as has been seen, often occurs in the "application" sections. It might be concluded from the connections examined above that, from Chrysostom's perspective, the problematic *Corinthian* orientation of boastful pride most frequently finds *concrete expression in Antioch* in a luxurious infatuation with the possession of present wealth. The following application from Homily 6 is representative:

I am saying these things both to rulers and to those who are ruled, and before all others, to myself: that we should demonstrate an admirable life, and, rightly ordering ourselves, should look down on all things present. Let us think nothing of riches, and think much of hell. Let us look down on glory, and look rather at salvation. Let us endure toil and labour here, in order that we might not fall into punishment there.⁷⁴

As seen in this quotation, the pride in wealth that Chrysostom consistently opposes is emphatically bound to the *present*, and is frequently contrasted with the *futurity* of true glory. Again, this emphasis is especially a feature of the "application" sections of the homilies:

⁷³ Frances M. Young, "John Chrysostom on First and Second Corinthians," *SP* 18/1 (1986): 349-352; 350.

⁷⁴ Homily 6; PG 61.54.

For the more perfect things remain in the future.⁷⁵

Desiring then to take away their pride [καθελεῖν τὸν τῦφον], and to show that these things are not only no basis for pride [οὐ καλλωπίζεσθαι], but also that they are a cause for shame, he firstly makes fun of them, saying, “Without us you have begun to reign”. “What I mean is that for me”, he says, “the present time is not for honour or glory, which you are enjoying, but for persecution and insult, which we are suffering”.⁷⁶

And why am I speaking of present things? For, doubtless, on that day, these things will not be said [that the greedy are better off than the poor], when both will appear naked.⁷⁷

For those who seek rewards from God for labours in the present, and pursue virtue for the sake of present reward, have diminished their reward.⁷⁸

The Problem of Human Autonomy

For Chrysostom, this present-focused, wealth-absorbed pride effectively places *humans in the position of glory, rather than God*. This theme is especially present in the homilies on 1 Corinthians 1–4:

These latter people made the cross vain, while the former proclaimed God’s power. The latter, besides failing to find the things they needed, also set things

⁷⁵ Homily 12; PG 61.98.

⁷⁶ Homily 13; PG 61.107.

⁷⁷ Homily 15; PG 61.127. Cf. 61.130, in which Chrysostom concludes the homily by urging his hearers to await true wealth from God rather than to expect it all in the present.

⁷⁸ Homily 20; PG 61.170. Chrysostom understands the problem of idol-meat to involve the Corinthians’ assumption that they have arrived at perfection in terms of knowledge. Chrysostom points out, rather, that they have *not* yet reached the destination: Homily 23; PG 61.189.

up to boast about *themselves*; the former, besides receiving the truth, were also made to pride themselves in *God* [ἐπὶ τῷ Θεῷ καλλωπίζεσθαι ἐποίει].⁷⁹

For also the “perfect” are those who know that *human things* are exceedingly weak; and who look past them, because nothing is to be gained by them. This is what the believers were like.⁸⁰

In these homilies on chapters 1–4 Chrysostom repeatedly denounces those who effectively relate their status to “this or that person” (τῷ δεῖνι καὶ τῷ δεῖνι) rather than to God or Christ:

Not the church “of this or that person” [τοῦδε καὶ τοῦδε], but of *God*.⁸¹

Not “this or that person” [τοῦ δεῖνος καὶ τοῦ δεῖνος], but “the name of the *Lord*”.⁸²

And it is not this or that person [ὁ δεῖνα καὶ ὁ δεῖνα], but *Christ* who is the cause of this noble birth, having made us wise and righteous and holy.⁸³

For it is not this or that person [ὁ δεῖνα... καὶ ὁ δεῖνα] who has made us wise, but *Christ*. So let the one who boasts boast in *him*, not in this or that person [τῷ δεῖνι καὶ τῷ δεῖνι].⁸⁴

This Corinthian pride in the wealth and honour associated with humans in the present is effectively an attempt to “save themselves”, rather than to depend upon God:

⁷⁹ Homily 6; PG 61.50.

⁸⁰ Homily 7; PG 61.55.

⁸¹ Homily 1; PG 61.13.

⁸² Homily 1; PG 61.13.

⁸³ Homily 5; PG 61.42.

⁸⁴ Homily 5; PG 61.42.

For God does all things for this reason: that he might repress pride and high-mindedness [τὸν τῦφον καὶ τὸ φρόνημα]; that he might pull down boasting [τὸ καυχᾶσθαι]. . . . He does all things in order that we might consider nothing to be *of ourselves*; in order that all things might be ascribed *to God*. And have you given yourselves over to this or that person [τῷ δεῖνι καὶ τῷ δεῖνι]? And what pardon will you receive for this? For God has shown that we are not able to be saved by ourselves alone, and he has done this from the beginning.⁸⁵

We have, then, a cluster of Corinthian-Antiochene problems identified in the expositions and applications of Chrysostom's homilies, consisting of *boastful pride*, *an obsession with present wealth*, and *the accompanying displacement of God*.

The Solution to Corinthian Problems

For Chrysostom, the solution to these problems begins by recalling that "God overcomes by contraries":

Paul wants to indicate how God overcomes by contraries [διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων], and how the gospel is not human.⁸⁶

So then, poverty with God becomes the cause of wealth; and humility, the cause of exaltation; and the despising of glory, the cause of glory. So also, becoming a fool makes one wiser than all. For all goes by contraries with us [τῶν ἐναντίων τὰ παρ' ἡμῖν].⁸⁷

This is what Christianity is like: in slavery it grants freedom.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Homily 5; PG 61.41. Chrysostom goes on to apply this to his hearers: "Do not say that anything is of yourself, but in everything boast in God. Never account anything to a human". Homily 5; PG 61.42.

⁸⁶ Homily 4; PG 61.33.

⁸⁷ Homily 10; PG 61.82.

⁸⁸ Homily 18; PG 61.157.

The most fundamental of these “contraries” is undoubtedly the pursuit of death and the cross.

He calls one to become dead to the world; and this deadness does not harm, but rather benefits, becoming the cause of life.⁸⁹

The cross, although appearing to be disgraceful, has become the cause of innumerable blessings, and the basis and root of unspeakable glory.⁹⁰

Having said, “Without us you have begun to reign”, and “God has demonstrated us as last, as those condemned to death”, he now shows the ways in which they have been condemned to death, saying “We are fools and weak and dishonoured, and we hunger and thirst and go naked and are beaten and are homeless, and labour, working with our own hands” – which are the signs of genuine teachers and apostles. But the others prided themselves on the contraries of these [ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐναντίοις μέγα ἐφρόνουν], on wisdom, glory, wealth, and honour.⁹¹

Indeed, in his exposition of the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians, the gospel itself may be summed up as the message of death:

For he went about proclaiming death.⁹²

For the cross and death were the proclamation.⁹³

And [true] “wisdom” is what he calls the gospel, and the manner of salvation, being saved through the cross.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Homily 10; PG 61.81-2.

⁹⁰ Homily 10; PG 61.82.

⁹¹ Homily 13; PG 61.107.

⁹² Homily 6; PG 61.48.

⁹³ Homily 6; PG 61.49.

⁹⁴ Homily 7; PG 61.55. Other comments in the same homily emphasise that the gospel, as far as Paul is concerned here, is synonymous with the cross: PG 61.57: Οὐ γὰρ ᾗδεσαν, ὅτι

The Corinthians, and Chrysostom's hearers, are summoned to follow the apostle Paul as he lives in the shadow of the cross of Christ, while looking to the future for a reversal of evident status. Indeed, even at points of the letter that do not emphasise this connection to Christ's cruciform example, Chrysostom can bring it to the foreground, as in his homily about lawsuits:

Do this then, and, looking up to heaven, consider that you have become like the one who is seated there upon the Cherubim. For he was also insulted and endured it; he was accused and did not retaliate; he was beaten and did not avenge; but rather he did the contrary to those who did such things, giving innumerable blessings. And he called us to become imitators of him.⁹⁵

Inhabiting the *cruciform* Christ, then, is the way in which believers express *union with Christ* in this present age:

Let us not simply hold Christ, but let us be cemented to him. For if we are apart from him, we are destroyed.⁹⁶

For those who are captivated by their society's proud pursuit of wealth, this humble identification with the crucified Christ is the sure evidence that they are willing to depend on God rather than on personal status or worldly esteem:

They should not be high-minded even on the basis of their spiritual things, because they have nothing from themselves.⁹⁷

οὕτω λάμψαι ἔχει ὁ σταυρὸς, ὅτι τῆς οἰκουμένης γίνεται σωτηρία καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καταλλαγή.... Σοφίαν δὲ καὶ τὸν Χριστὸν καλεῖ καὶ τὸν σταυρὸν καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα.

⁹⁵ Homily 16; PG 61.137. Chrysostom goes on to make the connection to *Paul's* imitation of Christ explicit.

⁹⁶ Homily 8; PG 61.72.

⁹⁷ Homily 10; PG 61.83.

The pastoral “point” of chapters 1–4 for Chrysostom, then, is that *the church is to humbly acknowledge its dependence on God by clinging to Christ and accepting his cross, rather than feeding the disease of human pride by entertaining wealth-obsessed boastful divisions.*

3. Chrysostom as Pastoral Interpreter

It may be pointed out that this pastoral “point” of 1 Corinthians 1–4 expresses rather well Chrysostom’s conception of the essence of the Christian faith, evident across the breadth of his corpus. Those who come to Christ are called to reject the world’s pursuit of vain glory, and to humbly celebrate God’s mercy, while passing this mercy on to the poor.

Young recalls the circumstances of Chrysostom’s own conversion:

Chrysostom’s story begins with worldly success. He was a pupil of the most famous orator and educator of the time, Libanius, and Libanius clearly saw him as his successor – if only he had not been stolen by the Christians! In other words, young John was brilliant and had tremendous prospects. He could have had the “glory” (*doxa*) that was a key motivation in ancient society. Is it any wonder that so much of his preaching challenges the “empty glory” (*kenodoxia*) pursued by so many? A great reputation, being lionized by society, none of this was worth anything compared with recognizing one’s own unworthiness, learning humility and respect for God and for the lowest and least of God’s creatures.⁹⁸

Having experienced this turnaround, Chrysostom seems to go on to approach the Scriptures as pastor with the expectation that he will hear Paul calling his wealth-attracted congregation to a similar pattern of humiliation. This *Vorverständnis* sets Chrysostom on a hermeneutical spiral that finds repeated exegetical affirmation, whether in explicit command or evocative nuance. He approaches 1 Corinthians expecting to find a rebuke

⁹⁸ Young, “They Speak,” 39.

for the proud pursuit of Antiochene wealth; and, being highly attuned to this, he finds it, magnifies it, and expands upon it. Indeed, from Chrysostom's perspective as preacher, his vocation is not simply to report what Paul *did* say, but to give creative voice to what Paul *is saying* through this part of Scripture, in this new circumstance: "What are you saying, O blessed Paul?"⁹⁹ Paul *is saying* that the Christians of Antioch must forsake their pride and their envious love of wealth, and so give honour to God rather than to humans.

Disease in Corinth

But it might be objected: What relevance does this have for those of us who would like to understand what Paul *did* say, 300 years before Chrysostom read him? In answer to this it should be noticed that, from Chrysostom's perspective, the confrontation with a proud pursuit of wealth that so often comes to the forefront in his homily applications bears continuity with the underlying occasion of 1 Corinthians itself. According to Chrysostom it is the *proud wealth and wisdom of first-century Corinth* that give rise to every topic Paul tackles in the letter. This orientation might be thought of as the fundamental disease in Corinth, underlying the varied symptoms. Chrysostom introduces the series of homilies as follows:

Just as Corinth is now the foremost city of Greece, so in the older period it admired itself for its numerous superior qualities of life [πλεονεκτήμασι βιωτικοῖς], and above all, its excessive wealth [χρημάτων περισσίᾳ].... Now we have said these things not because of showiness, or to demonstrate great learning (for what is there in knowing these things?), but because they are useful to us in the argument of the letter.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Homily 24; PG 61.199. See also Homily 16, PG 61.135; Homily 22, PG 61.184; Homily 28, PG 61.233; Homily 33, PG 61.284; Homily 36, PG 61.310; Homily 39, PG 61.335; Homily 41, PG 61.359; Homily 42, PG 61.366, where Chrysostom directs similar questions to Paul while preaching.

¹⁰⁰ Introduction; PG 61.10-11.

So the problem of proud wealth was not only an issue of *application in Antioch* (even though, as mentioned, the element of wealth *is* mostly found in the “application” sections of the homilies); it is also a matter of the *occasion of the letter*.¹⁰¹ In the concluding homily of the series he repeats this assertion that his concern has been with the issues that genuinely affected first century Roman Corinth:

This pride brought about “external” wisdom, and this was the chief of the evils, *which especially troubled Corinth*.¹⁰²

Significantly, this identification of matters of competitive wealth, status and elitist wisdom in Roman Corinth as an explanation for the various issues of the letter finds strong resonance with recent research.

Witherington draws attention to issues of wealth and elitism in Corinth:

People “got ahead” in life on the basis of patronage and clientage. It was a reciprocity culture.... This presented enormous problems for Paul in Corinth, because deciding to work with his hands, having refused patronage, angered some of the more elite Christians in Corinth and led to trouble.¹⁰³

Andrew D. Clarke considers the significance of competitive social status and secular “wisdom”:

The impact of secular society is betrayed in their elevation of the importance of social status for leadership in the church (1 Cor 1.26), and the pursuit of self-exaltation and boasting in order to enhance that status (1 Cor 1.29).... [In 1

¹⁰¹ Indeed, as Chase points out (*Chrysostom*, 153-60), Chrysostom is interested in many details that might now be thought of as “historical-critical”, such as dating, provenance, occasion, arrangement, and literary context.

¹⁰² Homily 44; PG 61.377.

¹⁰³ Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 18.

Corinthians 1:18-29] [t]he wisdom of the world, dear to the Greeks, was being elevated in contrast to the apparent foolishness of the cross.¹⁰⁴

Bruce W. Winter asserts that many of the problems in 1 Corinthians can be traced to the cultural norms of Roman Corinth, and points to the impact of the elite Corinthian embrace of *Romanitas* on a range of issues in the letter.

One of these issues was the sexual conduct of some of the Christians, which reflected the defence made by the élite on these matters.¹⁰⁵

Chrysostom's contribution to this discussion is the reminder that these problems, arising in a society that emphasised wealth and status, have been *pastorally evaluated* by Paul as together exhibiting the spiritual disease of present-obsessed, God-denying pride:

First of all Paul sets himself against the disease [of bold ambition], pulling up the root of the evils, and its offshoot, the spirit of discord.¹⁰⁶

Chrysostom models for us the truth that *socio-historical* accounts of the Corinthian issues need not be placed in opposition to *spiritual* or *theological* accounts of the Corinthian problems.¹⁰⁷ Rather they may be seen as complementary perspectives, indeed, *essential* complementary perspectives for those who wish to understand Paul the first-century pastor.

¹⁰⁴ Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Leiden: Brill, 1993; repr., Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2006), 110-11.

¹⁰⁵ Winter, *After Paul*, 27.

¹⁰⁶ Introduction; PG 61.12.

¹⁰⁷ See for example Oh-Young Kwon, "A Critical Review of Recent Scholarship on the Pauline Opposition and the Nature of its Wisdom (σοφία) in 1 Corinthians 1-4," *CBR* 8/3 (2010): 386-427; 420: "A wide range of scholarly hypotheses about the identification of Paul's Corinthian opponents and the background of their wisdom traditions has been investigated. Of those hypotheses, rhetorical and social approaches appear to be the most appropriate method for an adequate description of the nature and background of Corinthian wisdom thoughts as addressed in 1 Cor. 1-4".

So when the pastor John Chrysostom pleads with his congregation to abandon their proud, present-obsessed love of wealth, he is, he believes, faithfully continuing the trajectory set by the pastor Paul, whose letter essentially confronts the same disease. Those who wish to interpret “what Paul said” would do well to pay attention to this trajectory in Chrysostom and beyond.

4. Conclusion: John Chrysostom on 1 Corinthians 1–4

Chrysostom’s forty-four homilies on 1 Corinthians must be approached as a homiletic series in which the Antiochene preacher seeks to listen to Paul and direct his passion to a different, but similarly “diseased”, congregation. Rather than being thrown by the sometimes obscure link between “exposition” and “application” in the exegetical homilies, I suggest that it may be fruitful to think of the link as *pastorally creative* and *exegetically meditative*, in the context of the world of the biblical book as a whole.

In this light, in Chrysostom’s homilies on 1 Corinthians 1–4 we encounter a Paul whose pastoral sensitivity moves carefully between Corinth and Antioch, perceiving in the varied problems of both locations a unifying disease of wealth-fuelled autonomous pride. And we hear Paul’s antidote for the Corinthian disease amplified from the Antiochene ambo:

Let us possess the height that comes from *humility*. Let us observe the nature of human things, in order that we might burn with a longing for *things to come*. For there is no other way to become humble except by the love of divine things and the contempt of present things.... For, casting out the love of these [present] things, we will have that divine love, and we will enjoy immortal glory. *May God grant that all of us obtain this, by the grace and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ*, to whom, with the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, power and honour, now and eternally, for ever and ever. Amen.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Homily 1; PG 61.16.

5. 1 Corinthians 1–4 as Exhibiting Paul’s Perception and Critique of *Boastful, Present-Obsessed, Human Autonomy* in Corinth

It may be noted that my interpretation of Chrysostom above is at odds with the reading suggested by Margaret M. Mitchell in her 1991 work, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*. Mitchell, conceding that her attention at that time had been focused on the *opening* parts of Chrysostom’s homilies, later summarises her reading of the homilies:

I was convinced [that 1 Corinthians] drew self-consciously upon Greco-Roman political commonplaces against factionalism, in order to persuade the tiny church community in that urbanized Greek context to end their divisiveness and pursue peace and concord in a unity centered on their existence as the body of Christ.... I sought verification of my thesis in the writings of Greek patristic authors.... [I] soon discovered that the rhetorically trained preacher from Antioch [Chrysostom] understood 1 Corinthians in very much the same way that I did, both commenting upon Paul’s purpose and execution as pervasively rooted in the quest for ecclesial unity, and also even describing what Paul was doing by employing political terminology himself.¹⁰⁹

I have suggested that it may be more comprehensively attentive to hear Chrysostom as interpreting 1 Corinthians 1–4 to be a pastoral objection to the disease of *boastful, present-obsessed human autonomy*. Chrysostom perceives that the *political* dispute concerning leadership in the Corinthian church betrays a *pastoral-theological* crisis of misplaced confidence. The letter is thus not precisely a sustained argument for *ecclesial unity* so much as a sustained critique of *human autonomy*. The distinction is important.

We move now to an examination of 1 Corinthians 1–4 itself. I suggest, in substantial agreement with Chrysostom’s perspective, that this section is attentively heard as a

¹⁰⁹ Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, xv.

confrontation between Corinthian *human autonomy* (as evaluated by Paul) and its alternative, *dependence upon God* (as exemplified by Paul and the “apostles”). The divisions in the church (which, in agreement with Mitchell, I take to be political in nature; and in agreement with Chrysostom and Clarke, I take to arise especially from issues of competitive leadership) are taken by Paul to be paradigmatic of this grave theological error.

This can be demonstrated by an examination of the rhetorical conclusion points throughout Paul’s argumentation in this section, almost every one of which pits that which is ἀνθρώπου against that which is θεοῦ. These rhetorical conclusion points are generally introduced by logical indicators such as γάρ, ἵνα, ὥστε or ἡμεῖς δέ.

Conclusion Points Throughout Paul’s Argumentation: The *Human* and the *Divine*

1:17

This verse, introduced by γάρ, brings 1:13-17 to a climax by asserting that Paul’s apostolic task is proclamation rather than baptism. It is noteworthy that the thing that Paul emphatically finds problematic is the type of sophistic wisdom that relies upon human oratorical skill (οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου). Smit argues that:

in rejecting σοφίᾳ λόγου [Paul] does not attack rhetoric as such, but *human reasoning* which they greatly admire.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Joop Smit, “‘What is Apollos? What is Paul?’ In Search for the Coherence of First Corinthians 1:10-4:21” *NovT* 44/3 (2002): 231-251; 231; emphasis mine. I am in agreement with Winter that such “human” oratory is well represented by the Sophists: Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002). Isocrates demonstrates the well-known concern that the Sophists placed little emphasis on *truth*: “But they [those who teach political discourse in the manner of the Sophists] say that the knowledge of matters can be passed on just as easily as the knowledge of the alphabet, as if one can have both of these without having made a proper examination. They imagine that because of the extravagance of their promises they will command awe, and the instruction of their speeches will seem to be of great worth. They fail to realise that it is not those who dare to *boast* about the arts who make them great, but those who have the power to search out all that may be found in them” (Isocrates, *Against*

Witherington follows Mitchell in viewing 1:10 as the programmatic thesis statement or *propositio* of the letter,¹¹¹ setting the theme for the entire discourse, as elaborated by a short *narratio* in 1:11-17. This passage as a whole is said to set up chapters 1–4 as:

an exposition of true wisdom (as offered in the gospel) meant to cause the Corinthians to decide to change their factious behavior.¹¹²

It does seem that this section envisages divisions that are political in nature, rather than doctrinal. The use of similar formulations in Greco-Roman¹¹³ and Jewish¹¹⁴ depictions of

the Sophists, 13.10). Philo writes: “Now I am speaking of those who are unclean, meaning those who have never tasted education, or those who act treacherously: Having received education in a crooked way, they have transformed the beauty of wisdom [σοφίας] into the ugliness of sophistry [σοφιστείας]” (Philo, *Every Good Man is Free*, 4). Dio Chrysostom describes a trip to Corinth, perhaps actually in the late first century: “And there at this time, around the temple of Poseidon, one could hear many of the wicked Sophists, crying out and reviling one another, and their so-called disciples fighting one another... [and] myriads of lawyers, twisting judgements” (Dio Chrysostom, *Eighth Discourse: On Virtue (Diogenes)*, 8.4b-6).

¹¹¹ As does Collins: “The identification of 1 Cor 1:10... as the formal expression of Paul’s thesis allows the letter to be seen as a plea for the unity of the community”. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 14.

¹¹² Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 98. Cf. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 65-66. As Martin points out, “socio-rhetorical commentaries often rely on a classical rhetorical arrangement”. Martin, “Invention and Arrangement,” in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. Sampley and Lampe), 53; note 20.

¹¹³ Depictions of political “division” by Greco-Roman speakers and writers often include the problems of “zeal” and “strife”, and call for unity of mind and purpose for the sake of political harmony. Diodorus’ account of battle and betrayal is simply notable for using the same terms that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians to depict division and factions: “When the treason became obvious to all throughout the city, and the multitudes were divided into factions – those wishing to fight with the Athenians, and those wishing to help the Lakedemonians, a certain person, acting on his own initiative, proclaimed that those who wished could take up arms with the Athenians and Megarians” (Diodorus Siculus, *Library*, 12.66.2). Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* is illustrative of the fact that influential Greek literature commonly combined the problems of zeal and strife, as Paul goes on to do in 1 Corinthians: “As when he has reached the end of youth, bearing its light follies, what plagues are outside a person’s great suffering? Are there any troubles a person does not experience? Envy, factions, strife, fights, and murders” (Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 1230-1235). Plutarch uses similar terminology to describe political unrest: “For conflicting passions and violent motions prevailed in every place. For those rejoicing did not keep quiet but came face to face with those who were in much fear and suffering in such a great city; and, being arrogant about what was coming, came into strife with them” (Plutarch, *Lives, Caesar*, 32.2-3).

¹¹⁴ Jewish writers similarly appeal for harmony in the face of divisive “strife”. Pseudo-Phocylides illustrates: “They [that is, the sun and the moon] always have harmony; for if there were strife among the blessed ones, heaven would not stand” (Pseudo-Phocylides, *Sentences*, 74-75). Josephus blames problems on political factionalism, and reports the

political faction and competitive allegiance supports the idea that Paul is interpreting the situation in Corinth along similar lines. The Corinthians' divided allegiance to external figureheads follows the pattern of secular competition for status.¹¹⁵

However, following Bjerkelund's analysis, Thiselton is unpersuaded that verse 10 carries the rhetorical function of a *propositio*.¹¹⁶ He rightly notes that the verse may be heard as a non-technical appeal, rather than the *propositio* of a conventional rhetorical argument.

Petr Pokorný and Ulrich Heckel in fact view 1:18 as the *propositio*, setting up a fundamental antithesis between Corinthian superiority and Christ's cross, which pervades and structures the letter:

Der Satz über das Wort vom Kreuz (1,18) hat – ähnlich wie Röm 1,16 – die Funktion einer Kernthese (*propositio*), die den gesamten Brief bestimmt, zunächst in 1,18-2,5 ausgeführt (*probatio*) und mit der Pistisformel in 15,3-5 als Inhalt des Evangeliums wieder aufgenommen wird. Dadurch ergibt sich eine Inclusio (Rahmung) des ganzen Schreibens. Gott unterstützt den Menschen nicht in seiner äußeren Macht, sondern er kommt zu ihm in seiner Schwäche.¹¹⁷

Whether or not the designation *propositio* is appropriate (and Martin has pointed out significant problems associated with such designations¹¹⁸), it does seem that the antithesis

call to like-mindedness: "When did our bondage begin? Was it not from the factions of our forefathers, when the madness of Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, and our quarrels between one another brought Pompey to the city, and God subjected to the Romans those not worthy of freedom?" (Josephus, *Jewish War*, 5.395-6). "But especially I urge you to be like-minded; and in whatever way one of you surpasses another, defer to one another, making the best use of your virtues" (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 12.283).

¹¹⁵ The repeated genitives, often translated "I belong to...", may represent Paul's pejorative way of encapsulating childish squabbling, or the language of benefaction. Mitchell argues that a significant background is the language of parent-child and master-slave relationships: Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 85. Clarke suggests the background of patronage and benefaction: Clarke, *Secular and Christian*, 89-95.

¹¹⁶ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 111-114.

¹¹⁷ Petr Pokorný and Ulrich Heckel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament: seine Literatur und Theologie im Überblick* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 231.

¹¹⁸ Martin cites Mitchell's attempt to demonstrate that 1:10 is the "thesis statement" and notes, "This attempt to find the *causa* in one of the parts of speech possessed a natural simplicity that eclipsed its complexity in actual practice". Martin, "Invention and Arrangement," in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. Sampley and Lampe), 78.

here between that which is *human* and that which is *divine* goes on to underlie much of the rest of the letter, as this examination will demonstrate.

1:25

This verse, introduced by γάρ, brings 1:18-25 to a climax with a theological maxim: “For the foolishness of God is wiser than humans, and the weakness of God is stronger than humans”. The limitation that must be overcome is that which is *human* (τῶν ἀνθρώπων). Origen emphasises this distinction between that which is human and that which is divine,¹¹⁹ and Wilhelm Wuellner sees such a distinction as the main point of the opening of the letter body:

The main theme of the homily [that is, of 1 Corinthians 1–3] is stated in 1 Cor 1.19. It contains the divine judgment on *human wisdom*.¹²⁰

1:31

This verse, introduced by ἵνα, brings 1:26-31 to a climax with a Scripture quotation, “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.” The implied problem is boasting in *human status* (cf. 1:26) rather than in *God* (μὴ καυχῆσθαι πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ). Gail R. O’Day points out¹²¹ that Paul may be drawing on Jeremiah 9:23-24 here, calling the Corinthians to give up every source of security outside God, particularly the triad of human wisdom, might, and wealth. This triad (1:26) is contrasted with a triad that emphatically comes *from God in Christ*: ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ, δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμὸς καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις (1:30).

¹¹⁹ Origen, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 1.6.8-12.

¹²⁰ Wilhelm Wuellner, “Haggadic Homily Genre in 1 Corinthians 1-3,” *JBL* 89/2 (1970): 199-204; 201; emphasis mine.

¹²¹ Gail R. O’Day, “Jeremiah 9:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-31: A Study in Intertextuality,” *JBL* 109/2 (1990): 259-267.

Indeed, Jewish prophetic and wisdom literature (especially that associated with the motif of reversal) makes a sharp distinction between dependently boasting in *humans* and dependently boasting in the *Lord*, as can be seen below. It seems that Paul perceives the Corinthian church to be effectively doing the former rather than the latter.

Jeremiah 9:22-23, Septuagint

Thus says the Lord: “The wise should not boast [καυχάσθω] in their wisdom, and the strong should not boast in their strength, and the wealthy should not boast in their wealth. But let the one who boasts boast in this: that they understand and know that I am the Lord, who makes mercy and justice and righteousness upon the earth, because these things are my will”, says the Lord.

Sirach 1:11

The fear of the Lord is glory and a boast and gladness and a crown of rejoicing.

Sirach 9:16

May righteous men be your dinner companions, and may your boast [καύχημά] be in the fear of the Lord.

Sirach 10:19-22

What seed is honourable? Human seed. What seed is honourable? Those who fear the Lord. What seed is dishonourable? Human seed. What seed is dishonourable? Those who break the commandments. Among brothers and sisters, the one who leads them is honoured; but in the Lord’s eyes, it is those who fear him. Wealthy or esteemed or poor, their boast is the fear of the Lord.

Sirach 11:1

The wisdom of the humble lifts their head, and they will sit in the midst of those who are great.

Pseudo-Phocylides: *Sentences*, 53-54

Do not be arrogant with respect to wisdom or strength or wealth. The one God is wise, powerful, and at the same time full of blessing.

Irenaeus thus hears 1 Corinthians 1:29 as proving the necessity of grace, in the face of a boastful human desire to usurp God's position.¹²² Augustine insists that in these verses, Paul's clear intention is to confront the problem of *pride in human works*,¹²³ because God himself is our righteousness.¹²⁴ According to John of Damascus, Paul presents this *human boasting* as the origin of all sin.¹²⁵ And Clement of Rome draws on this theme of 1 Corinthians in order to establish a fundamental attitude of *humility*, before urging the Corinthians very practically to forsake partisanship in the latter part of his letter:

1 Clement 13:1

Let us be humble then, brothers and sisters, forsaking all boasting [ἀλαζονείαν] and pride [τῦφος] and foolishness and anger; and let us do that which is written. For the Holy Spirit says, "Do not let the one who is wise boast in their wisdom, or the one who is strong boast in their strength, or the one who is wealthy boast in their wealth; but let the one who boasts boast in the Lord, to seek him and to do justice and righteousness".

2:5

This verse, introduced by ἵνα, brings 2:1-5 to a climax with a summarizing purpose clause: "So that your faith might not rest on human wisdom [ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων], but on God's power". The contrast is not between different types of wisdom, but between different authorities, *human* or *divine*. The term "demonstration" [ἀπόδειξις] is used ironically here, as it was known as a technical term of rhetorical "proof".¹²⁶

¹²² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 20.1.

¹²³ Augustine, *Predestination of the Saints* 5.9.

¹²⁴ Augustine, *On Patience* 17.

¹²⁵ John of Damascus, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, PG 95.

¹²⁶ See, for example, Cicero, *Academics* 2.8; Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 5.10.7.

Origen rehearses the thrust of this section in countering a desire for polished rhetoric, insisting that it is only by “divine agency” that words achieve power.¹²⁷ Christian Wolff suggests that this verse, along with many others in these chapters, indicates that the base problem, in Paul’s view, is the Corinthians’ desire for *self-attestation* and the fulfilment of human ideals, rather than an acquiescence to the saving work of God through the crucified one.¹²⁸

2:9-10

These verses bring 2:6-10 to a climax with a Scripture quotation and insistent adversative (ἡμῖν δέ): no eye, ear, or *human* heart (καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου) has comprehended the things of God; but *God* has revealed them to those of his choosing. The contrast is between the ability of *worldly rulers* (οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου) to discern the things of God and *God’s* own revelation to the apostles:

The ἡμῖν is in emphatic contrast to “the rulers of this world” who do not know (v.8). God reveals His glory, through His Spirit, to those for whom it is prepared.¹²⁹

Paul arguably alludes to Isaiah 6 (and Isaiah 64-65) here, picking up Isaiah’s emphatic opposition between *human* presumption and *divine* revelation. Tertullian rightly insists that the mention of the “rulers of this age” is not primarily intended to evoke thought of *supernatural* rulers, but of all-too-*human* rulers, representative of ignorant worldly power, and seen quintessentially in Rome.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Origen, *Against Celsus* Book 6, Chapter 2.

¹²⁸ Christian Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (2nd ed.; TKNT 7; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000), 8.

¹²⁹ Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1911), 43.

¹³⁰ Tertullian, *Against Marcion* Book 5, Chapter 6.

This verse brings 2:10-16 to a climax with a Scripture quotation and insistent adversative (ἡμεῖς δέ): “For who has known the mind of the Lord... But we have the mind of Christ.” The contrast is between the “knowledge” of those who are unable to receive from *God’s Spirit*, and those who do receive from *God’s Spirit*.

It seems that the designation “spiritual” was related to the competition for esteem among the Corinthian believers. In first century Roman society, the term “spirit” had some use in Stoic and other articulations of reality:

Seneca: *Epistles*, 41.1-2¹³¹

God is near you, with you, within you. This is what I am saying, Lucilius: a sacred spirit lies inside us; an observer of our good and bad deeds, and a protector. In accordance with the way we treat it, it treats us.

However, Paul refuses to remove the term from its relation to the Spirit of *God*, who is the means of divine revelation.

John of Damascus hears Paul opposing human self-sufficiency here.¹³² Chrysostom likewise insists, in his homily on 2:6-16, that Paul is confronting the *human* reasoning that is used to reject *God*:

And since you have used wisdom for the rejection of God, and have sought more of it than it has strength to provide, God has shown you its weakness, leading you away from human hope [ἀνθρωπίνης ἐλπίδος].¹³³

¹³¹ This letter is about the importance of the human *soul* as a locus for the activity of the divine.

¹³² John of Damascus, *Commentary*, PG 95, in which he insists that humans are in need of help “from above”.

¹³³ Homily 7; PG 61.60.

But all the things that we know are not of human origin [οὐκ ἀνθρώπινα], so as to be doubtful, but of His mind, and Spiritual.¹³⁴

But we have the mind of Christ. That is, Spiritual, divine, having nothing human [οὐδὲν ἀνθρώπινον ἔχοντα].¹³⁵

3:4

This verse, introduced by γάρ, brings 3:1-4 to a climax by justifying Paul's charge that the Corinthians are not acting as Spiritual¹³⁶ people: "For when one says 'I follow Paul', and another, 'I follow Apollos', are you not human [οὐκ ἄνθρωποι ἐστε]?" It seems that the problem of divisive attachment to external figureheads is that it is evidence of being merely (and proudly) *human*. In continuity with Hebrew prophets and Jewish interpreters, as seen below, Paul seeks to summon those whom he perceives as boastful and puffed up away from aligning themselves with the values and power of *human* rule and benefaction, and rather to trust in *God*, who will bring reversal to the weak and humble.

Esther Addition C: 14:17e

But I have done this [refused to bow down to Haman] in order that I might not place the *glory of a human* above the *glory of God*, and that I might not worship anyone besides you my Lord, and that I might not act in arrogance.

Philo, *On the Decalogue*, 41¹³⁷

For if the One who is uncreated and imperishable and eternal, who needs nothing and is maker of everything, the Benefactor and King of kings and God of gods could not bring himself to overlook the humble... why should I, *as a mortal*,

¹³⁴ Homily 7; PG 61.61-62.

¹³⁵ Homily 7; PG 61.61.62.

¹³⁶ Here and at numerous points elsewhere I capitalise the first letter of "Spiritual" to indicate that, from Paul's perspective, genuine "spirituality" is necessarily derived from the "Spirit".

¹³⁷ Philo's emphasis in context is that God is willing to condescend to offer his laws to each individual.

carry myself in a way that is arrogant and puffed up and loud-mouthed toward those like myself?

3:9

This verse, introduced by γάρ, brings 3:5-9 to a climax by summarising the relation of Paul and Apollos to each other, and to God. Paul and Apollos are God's fellow workers. This corrective functions by only allowing *human* leadership significance if it receives approved *divine* empowerment. It seems that Paul is at pains to distance himself and Apollos from competitive conventions of reciprocity that might otherwise be associated with travelling speakers. Seneca laments the fact that some people would only pursue virtue for the sake of commercial gain. Paul emphasises that it is *God* who repays his workers:

Seneca, *On Benefits*, 4.1.1-2

[We are considering] whether the giving of benefits, and the esteem that is returned for them, are to be sought for their own sake. There are some who act with honour only for the reward, being unsatisfied with free virtue; although it carries no greatness if it is for sale!

Clement of Alexandria hears this section as confirming that human philosophical persuasion is useless unless its hearers begin with faith in *God*. The labour of God's co-workers will not bear fruit through merely *human* means.¹³⁸ As might be expected, Chrysostom also emphasises this distinction:

“And to each as the Lord assigned”. For not even this smallest thing came *from themselves*, but *from God*, who gave it into their hands. For it is in order that they might not say, “What then? Are we not to love those who minister to us?”

¹³⁸ Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies* Book 1, Chapter 1.

“Yes!” he says. “But you need to know how much!” For their ministry is not *from themselves*, but *from God*, who gives it.¹³⁹

3:17

This verse brings 3:10-17 to a climax with a stern warning: God will destroy those who destroy his temple. This warning functions to show that those who build other than with the *divinely given* foundation will receive *divine rejection*. Kent L. Yinger rightly observes that this section represents “a continuation of Paul’s attempt to stop their boasting in human leaders, begun in verse 5.”¹⁴⁰

3:21-3

These verses, introduced by ὥστε, bring at least 3:18-23 (and surely more) to a climax, picking up the language of the problem stated in 1:10-12. The problem in this conclusion is clearly *boasting about humans*. Proud “possession” of humans is ironically turned on its head, as Paul concludes that the Corinthians themselves are ultimately possessed by *God*.

Helmut Merklein calls this section the “erste Konklusion” of chapters 1–4,¹⁴¹ and Fee labels it “a preliminary conclusion, a conclusion which makes certain that the long argument of 1:18–3:4 was not some mere sermonic or rhetorical aside, but rather spoke to the root of the problem of their strife”.¹⁴² Robertson and Plummer sum up this point that clearly harks back to the material of the first chapter:

¹³⁹ Homily 8; PG 61.71.

¹⁴⁰ Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 220.

¹⁴¹ Merklein, *Der erste Brief, Kapitel 1-4*, 277.

¹⁴² Fee, *First Epistle*, 150. Fee goes on: “All of this recalls and applies the argument of 1:18-2:16.” He later sums up the problem envisaged in chapters 1-3 as “the Corinthian pride in man and wisdom” 155.

To “glory in men” is the opposite of ‘glorying in the Lord’ (i.31).¹⁴³

This significant recapitulatory climax, in which the key problem is “*boasting in humans*” is broadened in 4:1-5:¹⁴⁴

4:5

This verse, introduced by ὥστε, brings 4:1-5 to a climax by giving a plain prohibition: “So judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes.... At that time each will receive praise from God”. The problem seems to involve *premature human judgements* (ὕπὸ ἀνθρωπίνης ἡμέρας – verse 3, no doubt ironically hinting at the “judgement day” of God) about leaders, which do not reflect judgement (praise) that comes *in the future from God*.

Barth rightly captures this consistent emphasis within chapters 1–4 on the confrontation of the *human* with the *divine*:

What Christianity is specially concerned about is Christian knowledge... the understanding or the failure to understand the three words ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ (from God). Unless everything deceives, that is the trend of Paul’s utterance (1 Cor. i.–iv).¹⁴⁵

The problems in 1:10–4:5, then, seem to centre on *boasting in humans*. Or perhaps more accurately, *boasting in that which is human* (whether other human leaders, or one’s own spiritual superiority or independence), as opposed to placing appropriate confidence in

¹⁴³ Robertson and Plummer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 72. I am quoting from the authors’ own copy of the book, in which the originally incorrect reference “i.21” has been corrected to “i.31”.

¹⁴⁴ Kate C. Donahoe rightly notes: “Though a chapter division separates 3:18-23 and 4:1-5, these two sections nevertheless belong together as a recapitulation of previous themes”. Kate C. Donahoe, “From Self-Praise to Self-Boasting: Paul’s Unmasking of the Conflicting Rhetorico-Linguistic Phenomena in 1 Corinthians” (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Andrews, 2008), 73.

¹⁴⁵ Barth, *Resurrection of the Dead*, 26.

that which is *divine*. A number of related concrete issues seem to cluster around this core problem as it is framed in this section:

- *Leadership*: Allegiance to particular external figureheads (and possibly their baptism); worldly, premature judgement of local church leaders
- *Wise Speech*: Esteem for secular models of wisdom and speech; esteem for secular examples of power and rule
- *Spiritual Status*: A desire to be thought of as “spiritual” despite ironic “fleshly-ness” and spiritual immaturity; pride related to what one “possesses”

After this point there is a conscious re-framing of the critical issue. In 4:6-7, Paul reveals that he has “transformed” (μετεσχημάτισα) the issue in terms of himself and Apollos, in order that the Corinthians might not become “puffed up” on behalf of one leader over against another. This word means “transform” elsewhere in Paul (Phil. 3:21) and other early literature. David R. Hall has commented extensively on this verse, following Chrysostom and others in suggesting:

The meaning is that Paul has disguised his argument, so that what really applies to other people has been applied to himself and Apollos.¹⁴⁶

Hall’s correct observation that the verb always carries the meaning “to alter the form or appearance of something into something else” may be applied not just to the *personalities represented in the accusation*, but also to the *level of the accusation*. That is, Paul has “disguised” his argument as though he were simply dealing with himself and Apollos as figureheads of a Corinthian dispute, whereas in fact his deeper accusation is that in their proud neglect of certain leaders and preference for polished speakers the Corinthian believers in general are “puffed up”¹⁴⁷ and oblivious of their need for *dependence*. This in

¹⁴⁶ Hall, *Unity*, 5.

¹⁴⁷ Laurence L. Welborn’s suggestion that this image carries obvious political overtones of conceited oratory is making the imagery too specific. Certainly the idea of conceit is clear, but to claim that the examples of aristocratic oratory that Welborn lists are the same specification of “conceit” as that intended by Paul is rather speculative. The same verb is used, for example, in *Testament of Levi* 14:7-8, in which the picture is of pride in priestly *position*. The verb is used in Colossians 2:18 to picture pride in manifest *spirituality*.

fact is how his argument subsequently takes “shape”¹⁴⁸ in the rest of the chapter. From this point, the problem seems no longer to be framed in terms of division itself; rather the underlying issue, which had been “shaped” in terms of divisive attachment to Paul and Apollos, now comes openly to the fore:¹⁴⁹ *theologically inappropriate boasting that denies dependence and exhibits itself in “present-obsessed” or “prematurely triumphalistic”*¹⁵⁰ *status-seeking*.

In disclosing his covert allusion to Corinthian parties then, Paul is both parodying the local “would-be wise” leaders’ allegiance to external figureheads¹⁵¹ and unveiling the church-wide root of this orientation: puffed up anthropocentrism.

4:7

This verse, introduced by γάρ, brings to a climax the short but crucial section of 4:6-7, in which Paul reveals the essence of the issue that had been “shaped” in terms of himself and Apollos:¹⁵² “What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?” The problem is inappropriate *boasting* that wrongly implies human accomplishment.

Chrysostom defines the word in Homily 1 (PG 61.16) as the *opposite of humility*. Laurence L. Welborn, “Discord in Corinth: First Corinthians 1-4 and Ancient Politics,” in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (ed. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 139-144; 142-143.

¹⁴⁸ To continue the metaphor of the verb in question.

¹⁴⁹ Chrysostom rightly notes: “Up to this point, using harsh words, he did not unveil the curtain, but he argued as though he himself were the one hearing these things.... But because now it is time to show mercy, he removes it and takes off the mask”. Garland comments, “it should not be overlooked that 1:18-3:4 lays the foundation for what he says in 3:5 to 4:5”. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 131.

¹⁵⁰ I take this phrase from Thiselton, and will comment further on this concept later in this chapter.

¹⁵¹ It is possible that faction leaders themselves were using covert allusion, implicitly including themselves in their praise of their chosen figureheads. See B. Fiori, “Covert Allusion’ in 1 Corinthians 1-4,” *CBQ* 47 (1985): 85-102; Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 196-201; Clarke, *Secular and Christian*, 122-124.

¹⁵² The meaning and purpose of the phrase “not beyond that which is written” is greatly discussed. It may be that Augustine’s view is worthy of refreshed emphasis. Augustine reads this phrase as an injunction to put *the Word* ahead of its *servants*: Augustine, Letter 95.4 “To Brother Paulinus and Sister Theresia”. Chrysostom perhaps also hears the phrase in this way: His text reads: ἵνα ἐν ἡμῖν μάθητε, τὸ μὴ ὑπὲρ ὃ γέγραπται φρονεῖν.

Chrysostom appears to understand the variety of situational problems in Corinth (such as baptism, eloquence, teaching, pride in spiritual gifts and words of teaching) to be in view in the singular corrective of this section: *Why boast as though you did not receive?*

For these things do not belong to you, but come from the grace of God. And if you should say “faith”, it comes from his calling; or if you should say “forgiveness of sins” or “gifts” or “the word of teaching” or “miracles”, all things come from this grace. Tell me then what you have that you did not receive but which came from yourself! You have nothing to say.¹⁵³

Basil of Caesarea,¹⁵⁴ Ambrose,¹⁵⁵ and Augustine¹⁵⁶ similarly understand this boasting to be a fundamental repudiation of *divine grace*, or an attempt at self-merited justification. Whether or not the terminology of “justification” is appropriate, the force of Paul’s rhetorical questions in 4:7 is not misperceived by Augustine and the other Patristics here. Paul is confronting those in Corinth with the fundamental theological necessity of *reception*, as opposed to bold presumptuous autonomy. Carrez perceives this well:

Ainsi, face à la confiance en la chair, à la confiance en l’homme livré et abandonné à lui-même, face à l’isolement volontaire d’un apôtre ou d’un croyant, il affirme, car c’est nécessaire: “Nous avons tout reçu”.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Homily 12; PG 61.98.

¹⁵⁴ See Basil of Caesarea, *Homily* 20, PG 31, in which Basil hears this verse as responding to the problem of pride in human righteousness.

¹⁵⁵ See Ambrose, *De paenitentia* 2,6,40, in which Ambrose quotes this verse as representing the essence of divine forgiveness and justification.

¹⁵⁶ See Augustine, “Letter to Valentine”, in which Augustine takes the boasting of this verse to represent the attempt at self-justification. See also *On the Trinity*, Book 14, Chapter 15, in which Augustine reads this verse as confronting the Christian soul that is proud of its own accomplishment. Also, “Letter to Paulinus of Nola” 186,3,10, in which Augustine again reads this verse as confronting the idea that humans can merit justification.

¹⁵⁷ M. Carrez, “La Confiance en l’Homme et la Confiance en Soi Selon l’Apôtre Paul,” *RHPR* 44 (1964): 191-199; 199.

It is not surprising then, that Clement of Rome, in urging the Corinthians to abandon partisanship forty years later, establishes not only this church's prior *unity*, but firstly its fundamental orientation of *humility*:

1 Clement 2:1

All of you were humble, never boasting, submitting rather than demanding submission, gladly giving rather than receiving, happy with the things provided by God.

Clement observes that their subsequent loss of unity flowed from a fundamental loss of humility:

1 Clement 3:1-2

All glory and growth were given to you, and that which is written was fulfilled: "The one I loved ate and drank and grew and became fat and kicked". *From this* came zeal and envy, strife and factions, persecution and homelessness, war and captivity.

Paul's "unveiling" of the critical issue is followed by an intensely challenging ironic crescendo in 4:8-13, which serves to heighten and crystallise the proud, autonomous, present-obsessed orientation which has really been in view since 1:10.

4:13

This verse encapsulates the ironic apostolic self-deprecation of 4:8-13: "Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world." The problem of prematurely triumphant self-assertion is reflected in Paul's ironic, emphatically present, abasement.

Wayne Meeks comments:

There is a fairly wide consensus among exegetes that this passage, taken in context with the many statements emphasizing the future and temporal sequence throughout the letter, especially in chapter 15, enable us to discern one major issue behind the varied problems addressed by the letter. As it is commonly put, the issue is between the “realized eschatology” of the group called the *pneumatikoi* or the *teleioi* in Corinth and the “futurist eschatology” or “eschatological reservation” of Paul.¹⁵⁸

A number of scholars hesitate to use the theological term “realised eschatology” of those in Corinth, cautioning that the problems of the Corinthians were not directed by a coherent doctrinal position on eschatology. For example, Henrik Tronier writes:

[T]he term “realized eschatology” would not have made much sense; Paul’s opponents did not change some genuinely Christian “future eschatology” by claiming it for the present. Rather, they did not concern themselves with any idea of eschatology at all; eschatology was simply absent.¹⁵⁹

This sort of critique is not uncommonly associated with the assertion that the problems in Corinth can be understood more fruitfully in *social* terms rather than *theological* terms. Winter, for example, critiques Thiselton’s 1978 article “Realized Eschatology in Corinth”:

¹⁵⁸ Wayne Meeks, “Social Functions of Apocalyptic Language,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East. Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979* (ed. David Hellholm; 2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1989), 687-705; 699.

¹⁵⁹ Henrik Tronier, “The Corinthian Correspondence Between Philosophical Idealism and Apocalypticism,” in *Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 165-196; 189. N.T. Wright similarly argues: “Many scholars have come round to the view argued by Richard Hays that the problem at Corinth was not too much eschatology but not nearly enough. The Corinthians were attempting to produce a mixture of Christianity and paganism; their ‘puffed-up’ posturing came not from believing that a Jewish-style eschatology had already brought them to God’s final future, but from putting together their beliefs about themselves as Christians with ideas from pagan philosophy”. N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 3* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2003), 279.

That view has been subjected to scrutiny and found to be deficient, partly because of its misunderstanding of a text fundamental to its thesis, viz., 1 Corinthians 4:6ff. Paul skilfully used all the irony associated with the rhetorical device he actually cites, i.e. the covert allusion whose covertness he discloses. *There is an alternative explanation* for certain assumptions concerning their belief about resurrection in chapter 15.¹⁶⁰

Similarly, Kwon objects to Thiselton's identification of over-realised eschatology in Corinth, summarising:

The limits of using over-realized eschatology as an explanation for the Corinthian problems are thus exposed. *A social and rhetorical analysis, however, is better able to provide an adequate explanation* for the social consequences of σοφία as addressed in 1 Cor. 1-4.¹⁶¹

It is at this point, however, that John Chrysostom's model of interpretation may be helpful. As noted above, Chrysostom emphasises that the *social problems arising from a competitive culture* are pastorally evaluated by Paul as evidence of *proud, present-obsessed God-denial*. That is, social and theological viewpoints need not be seen as alternatives, but rather as essential complementary perspectives. If the divisive problems in 1 Corinthians 1–4 may be illuminated by secular standards of competition and sophistic oratory, they may concurrently be evaluated and characterised as effectively “present-obsessed”. This is particularly the case for the church from whose location Paul had engaged in the Thessalonian correspondence, in which the importance of eschatological hope is such a fundamental assumption. The fact that Corinthian Christians are engaging in competition for present glory is evidence that they are *effectively* claiming for themselves an honour that, according to Paul's estimation and teaching, is reserved for the future manifestation of Christ.

¹⁶⁰ Winter, *After Paul*, 25-6; emphasis mine.

¹⁶¹ Kwon, “Critical Review,” 391; emphasis mine.

It is probably true that these Christians in Corinth had no *consciously coherent* aberrant theology. Therefore Thiselton's more recent phrase "premature triumphalism" may be more precisely apposite. Paul may be heard as entering into a tradition of *opposition to behaviour that is effectively present-obsessed*, which is exemplified in the ministry of Jesus (but dates back to the biblical prophets). Presumptuous *human* anticipation of divine triumph is strongly challenged by the *divine* timing of reversal:

Mark 8:31-35

And he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer much.... And, taking him aside, Peter began to rebuke him. But, turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Depart from me Satan, for you are not considering the ways of God but rather the ways of humans" "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it; but whoever loses their life because of me and the gospel will save it".

Acts 1:6-8

So when they came together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time that you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the father has set in his authority. But you will receive power with the coming of the Holy Spirit upon you".

Just as in Mark 8 Jesus is depicted as interpreting Peter's disdain of suffering as an effective denial of the "ways of God", so it seems that Paul interprets the Corinthians' thirst for comfortable honour as an effective denial of the divine timing of glory: "Already you are satisfied; already you have become rich; without us you have begun to reign!" Indeed, in reflecting on these verses in 1 Corinthians, Chrysostom takes a Corinthian emphasis on *present sufficiency* to be evidence of proud *human autonomy*:

“Already you have become satisfied; already you have been made rich!” That is, you want nothing else; you have become perfect; you have reached the summit itself; you stand in need of no-one, so you suppose.¹⁶²

Do you see how he cleanses their pride [τὸν τῦφον]?¹⁶³

Human things and outward show are nothing to us; but we look to God alone.¹⁶⁴

4:20-21

These verses, introduced by γάρ, bring 4:14-21 to a climax, in which the expectation of an “apostolic parousia” is presented as a challenge: “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.... Shall I come to you with a whip, or in love and with a gentle spirit?” The contrast is presented as being between arrogant “talk” of would-be leaders and the genuine power of the divinely-sent apostle. It is noteworthy that Paul links the problem to participation in the kingdom of *God*. Indeed, Chrysostom suggests that Paul is making a distinction between divine and human “ways” here:

He says “ways in Christ” to show that they have nothing *human* [οὐδὲν ἔχουσιν ἀνθρώπινον], and that he does things rightly with His help.¹⁶⁵

And that our teaching is *divine* [τοῦ θείου εἶναι], and that we proclaim the kingdom of heaven, we provide the signs as a greater proof, which we produce by the power of the Spirit.¹⁶⁶

It is significant then that this section (4:8-21), which brings chapters 1–4 to a rhetorical climax, has lost explicit mention of the issue of dis/unity, rather attacking openly the root

¹⁶² Homily 12; PG 61.98.

¹⁶³ Homily 12; PG 61.99.

¹⁶⁴ Homily 12; PG 61.100.

¹⁶⁵ Homily 14; PG 61.115.

¹⁶⁶ Homily 14; PG 61.116.

pastoral problem of present-obsessed, cross-denying pride. Mitchell's claim that this section offers the "standard rhetorical practice" of comparing "the person or city under discussion with illustrious examples" may well be attentive to the *form* of Paul's argumentation; but she neglects the crucial fact that the *content* of this climactic comparison concerns exemplary apostolic *condemned-ness*, and not exemplary apostolic *unity*.¹⁶⁷ Although Mitchell claims that Paul is presenting himself as an alternative to "fractious boasting" and "the opposite of a factionalist",¹⁶⁸ the explicit terminology of dis/unity is hardly prominent in 4:8-21. If Paul has been examining "boasting, being puffed up, allegiances to leaders, judgmentalism, claims to be wise and enriched" primarily as "*symptoms and manifestations* of Corinthian factionalism",¹⁶⁹ why in bringing this section to a concluding crescendo does he not make any explicit mention of this primary issue?¹⁷⁰

Indeed, Merklein usefully points out that as the destination of this major rhetorical unit, 4:16 enables a renewed understanding of Paul's intention in 1:10:

die Mahnungen von 1,10 zielt letztlich bereits auf 4,16. Es geht Paulus also nicht bloß um Einmütigkeit unter *seiner* Autorität...!¹⁷¹

Mitchell does indeed note the prevalence of the problem of proud boasting in 1 Corinthians,¹⁷² and sees it as a cause of division, in keeping with certain Greco-Roman literary examples of division. However, her argument that the problem of *disunity* is itself the key issue neglects the way that in 1 Corinthians 1–4 Paul focuses on and drives toward the pastorally evaluated problem of prematurely triumphant *pride/boasting* in human leaders. The rhetorical conclusion points examined above set confidence in that which is *human* against confidence in that which is *divine*; and the climactic opposition of

¹⁶⁷ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 219.

¹⁶⁸ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 222.

¹⁶⁹ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 210; emphasis original.

¹⁷⁰ Mitchell's claim that Paul's references to that which is "human" are practically veiled references to the problem of factionalism is entirely unconvincing: Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 211.

¹⁷¹ Merklein, *Der erste Brief, Kapitel 1–4*, 112; emphasis original.

¹⁷² Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 91ff.

Corinthian and apostolic characteristics in chapter 4 is really the endpoint of this trajectory: a showdown between the apparent vitality of those who are proudly *human* and the contrasting cruciformity of those who are appointed *by God* as apostles.¹⁷³

Summary of Chapters 1–4 and the Problems in Corinth

I have sought to demonstrate that Corinthian boasting is not simply a “component of the party conflicts within the Corinthian church”;¹⁷⁴ Paul’s problem¹⁷⁵ rather appears to be that party conflicts over leadership within the Corinthian church are evidence of *boastful, present-obsessed human autonomy*. In discerning Paul’s rhetoric here it is thus not enough to draw attention to “terms and *topoi* rooted in the issue of political divisiveness”¹⁷⁶ and conclude that the chief issue is division itself; it is essential to be attentive to where Paul drives his discussion. The presenting problem of political partisanship in relation to external figureheads betrays the theological crisis of autonomous, present-obsessed boasting.¹⁷⁷ As Frances Young summarises:

They were at variance with one another because of ambition and *kenodoxia* (empty glory) – a particular moral concern of Chrysostom’s in a society where reputation (*doxa*) was a key motivation.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Fee rightly recognises: “The section is dominated by two themes: their pride (vv. 6-8, 10) and his weaknesses (vv. 9, 11-13). He begins by going right to the root of the matter – their pride – which has caused them to be ‘puffed up’ against Paul (v. 6)”. Fee, *First Epistle*, 165.

¹⁷⁴ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 95.

¹⁷⁵ I use the phrase “Paul’s problem” rather than “Corinthians’ problem” because, as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has rightly pointed out, the text itself gives us Paul’s rhetorically-purposeful encapsulation of the issues in Corinth. Of course, this need not imply that Paul’s conception is incorrect; simply that it is part of a considered rhetorical interchange. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in I Corinthians,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 386-403.

¹⁷⁶ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 111.

¹⁷⁷ Sigurd Grindheim usefully notes: “It should not be overlooked... that Paul understood these factions as symptomatic of a grave theological error in Corinth”. Sigurd Grindheim, “Wisdom for the Perfect: Paul’s Challenge to the Corinthian Church,” *JBL* 121/4 (2002): 689-709; 689.

¹⁷⁸ Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 250. For Chrysostom’s linking of divisiveness to puffed-up self-seeking, see for example Homily 10; PG 61.82: ἐπείγεται πάλιν ἐπὶ τὴν μάχην τῆς σοφίας τῆς ἔξωθεν, καὶ τὰ ἐγκλήματα τῶν ἐντεῦθεν πεφουσιωμένων καὶ διατεμνόντων τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν.

Marion L. Soards correctly captures the fundamentality, from Paul's perspective, of the problem of boasting in Corinth:

Throughout this letter Paul criticizes the particular actions of the Corinthians, but above all he denounces the will to boast. The will to be superior and to brag about it was the fundamental problem that generated the other symptomatic problems in Corinth.¹⁷⁹

My contention here is that this boasting was, in Paul's view, (unwittingly¹⁸⁰) *theological*, because it implied *confidence outside of God, claiming in the present the manifest wisdom and spirituality that can only really be found hidden in Christ, awaiting manifestation at his future revelation*.

It is significant that this understanding of "boasting" in 1 Corinthians – as being not merely factionalistic, but *theological* – resonates strongly with Simon Gathercole's findings regarding "boasting" in Romans 1–5.¹⁸¹ Basil of Caesarea had, long before, linked the boasting of 1 Corinthians to a presumptuous pursuit of self-generated righteousness.¹⁸² It may be that throughout the Pauline Corpus, "boasting" carries highly theological overtones, drawing on prophetic language and representing on the one hand misplaced human confidence before God, and on the other, appropriate dependence on

¹⁷⁹ Marion L. Soards, "1 Corinthians," in *Mercer Commentary on the New Testament* (ed. Watson E. Mills and Richard F. Wilson; Macon Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2003; repr. from *Mercer Commentary on the Bible*; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1995), 1163-1190; 1164.

¹⁸⁰ Munck encapsulates this well: "They did not realize that by the very use of that wisdom terminology they were betraying the message that was their wealth, and that the feeling of being up on the pinnacle and pitying the others was a betrayal of Christ and his apostles". Johannes Munck, "The Church without Factions: Studies in I Corinthians 1-4" in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (eds. E. Adams and D. G. Horrell; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 61-70; 70.

¹⁸¹ Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003). According to Gathercole, the boasting that Paul counters implies a confidence outside of "God's action in Christ" 262.

¹⁸² See Basil of Caesarea, *Homily 20*, PG 31, in which Basil reads 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 as undermining the pride of self-sought righteousness, and insisting upon the righteousness that comes from God through faith.

God. Certainly this terminology seems to be employed in this way in 2 Corinthians 10-13, Galatians 6:13-14, and Philippians 1:26.¹⁸³

My argument, to summarise, is that in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians Paul interprets and critiques the divisive political struggles over status and leadership in the church of Roman Corinth as exemplifying a fundamental pastoral-theological problem of *boastful, present-obsessed, human autonomy*:

1:10-2:5: The cross and human wisdom

2:6-3:4: The Spirit and human capability

3:5-4:5: Divine work and human authority

4:6-21: Divinely ordained death and human boasting

6. Relation to Other Conceptions of the Corinthian

Problems

It will be evident that I am in agreement with Mitchell that the nature of the factions at Corinth was political rather than explicitly doctrinal.¹⁸⁴ I am convinced, along with Winter, that the varied problems in Corinth (including, but not limited to, the political partisanship) arose in association with accommodation to secular patterns of life in Roman Corinth. In particular I am persuaded with Litfin that these secular patterns involved rhetorical competitiveness, and with Clarke, that issues of church leadership were critical:

¹⁸³ In a recent exploration of the theme of boasting in 1 Corinthians, Kate C. Donahoe argues, "Like the Greco-Roman writers who distinguish between acceptable selfpraise and unacceptable 'boasting,' Paul also distinguishes between these two categories. Unlike the Greco-Roman definitions, Paul defines these categories in terms of praising the Lord. For Paul, 'boasting' is a grievous matter that extends well beyond the Greco-Roman notions of social decorum. That which aims to increase one's social status or honor is deemed unacceptable 'boasting,' whereas that which seeks to bring glory to the Lord is acceptable 'boasting.'" Donahoe, "From Self-Praise to Self-Boasting", 71.

¹⁸⁴ Welborn, among others, has rightly criticised the view that the Corinthians themselves were consciously taking part in a theological controversy: "It is no longer necessary to argue against the position that the conflict that evoked 1 Corinthians was essentially theological in character. The attempt to identify the parties with views and practices condemned elsewhere in the epistle, as if the parties represented different positions in a dogmatic controversy, has collapsed under its own weight". Welborn, "Discord in Corinth," in *Christianity at Corinth* (ed. Adams and Horrell), 143.

Paul has given a firm critique of secular influences in the community.... Paul urges the Corinthians that their view of Christian leadership should differ from the expectations of leadership in secular Corinth. Paul opposes their adoption of a party-spirit of loyalty to specific patron figures; their elevation of the importance of status in the Christian church; their boasting in men; their affinity with the wisdom of secular leaders.¹⁸⁵

The examination given in this chapter indicates that these insights are remarkably consonant with John Chrysostom's evaluation of the Corinthian situation: a Corinthian love of wealth and "external wisdom" has resulted in polished orators displacing truly godly leaders in Corinth, causing rifts within the church.

In the tradition of John Chrysostom, furthermore, I have viewed this socio-historical evaluation as just one essential component of an appraisal of the Corinthian problems. Another essential component is the recognition of *boastful, present-obsessed human autonomy* as that which, from the perspective of Paul the pastor, theologically binds the Corinthian problems together. Of course, as I have briefly indicated in the previous chapter, other attempts have been made to discern a pastoral or theological unity to the Corinthian problems, and the suggestion I have offered here bears some continuity with such attempts.

It is worth firstly noting Patristic theologians other than Chrysostom. Basil of Caesarea heavily utilises the Corinthian correspondence in presenting *pride* as the archetypal sin.¹⁸⁶ Augustine's conception of *self-sufficient pride* as humanity's chief problem is steeped in his reading of the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians.¹⁸⁷ John of Damascus begins his discussion concerning the cross and faith by conflating two quotations from chapters 1–4

¹⁸⁵ Clarke, *Secular and Christian*, 118.

¹⁸⁶ See, for example, Hom. 20 "De humiliate" 3: PG 31, 530-531, in which "boasting in God" is interpreted as a refusal to boast in one's own righteousness, and a consequent humble reliance on God's grace and his gift of future resurrection.

¹⁸⁷ See, for example, Letter 232.6 "To the People of Madaura", in which Augustine emphasises the necessity of being brought down from self-sufficiency to humility. The "assaults of pride" are combated by the cross of Christ, in which the humility of God finds its focus.

of 1 Corinthians, using them to introduce a stark choice between reliance on *God* and reliance on *human reasonings*.¹⁸⁸ He goes on, after a few paragraphs, to insist that union with Christ through the cross forces one to reliance on God rather than on human and natural reasonings. Again, he quotes from 1 Corinthians 1–4 to confirm that Christ is the one in whom those “lying in death” find life.

The legacy of John Chrysostom’s understanding of 1 Corinthians is evident in the exposition of numerous later interpreters, perhaps most interestingly Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin.

Certainly, Aquinas’ view of the letter as a guide for the church’s reception of Christ’s sacraments (*sacramenta*) goes beyond Chrysostom’s exploration of the *mysteria* in his homilies; but within this framework Thomas sees a movement from *present* reality (baptism, marriage, Eucharist; chapters 1–14) to a *future* reality that can only presently be possessed in signification (resurrection; chapter 15). In his discussion of chapters 1–4, Thomas echoes Chrysostom’s concern to set that which is *human* against that which is *of God*. Like Chrysostom, Thomas finds this distinction even in the opening verses of the letter, insisting that the name “Paul” implies humility, and that “called” indicates that his dignity comes *from God*. Chrysostom’s (probably indirect) legacy becomes obvious when Thomas emphasises that the gospel gained adherence through *humble fishermen*, thereby ruling out *human boasting* (1-4, paragraph 68; compare with Chrysostom’s Homily 4). Thomas draws the application that salvation should be attributed to *God* rather than *men* (1-4, paragraph 70). Like Chrysostom, he understands the ecclesial disunity to relate to disputes over leadership, and finds that the root of the matter is boastful human judgement (3-1, paragraphs 122, 131). The Corinthians need to understand that all things, whether ministerial ability or salvation, come from God in Christ (3-1, paragraph 134; 3-2, paragraph 148; 3-3, paragraph 184). Thus their *pride* should turn to *humility* (4-2, paragraphs 201-203).

¹⁸⁸ John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, chapter 11.

John Calvin's introduction to 1 Corinthians¹⁸⁹ could almost be viewed as a revision of Chrysostom's introduction to his homily series. John R. Walchenbach notes:

The single book in the New Testament in which Calvin most frequently quotes Chrysostom is 1 Corinthians.¹⁹⁰

Like Chrysostom he begins by pointing out the wealth of Corinth. He depicts the influence of rhetorically polished status-hungry would-be leaders, as well as the Corinthian ideals of luxury, pride, greed and ambition. Like Chrysostom he views the issue of the resurrection as the ultimate object of Satan's subtle attack, an attack which proceeds by directing attention away from the glory of the Lord and rather to superficial human honour. Like Chrysostom, Calvin notes Paul's pastoral strategy of moving carefully from soothing to chiding at the beginning of the letter, as he aims to "cure" the Corinthians of their *pride* and lead them to *humility*. The Corinthians must move from confidence in their *own judgement* to acquiescence to *God*, whose superior wisdom is seen in the abasement of the cross.

Moving to more recent interpretation of 1 Corinthians, Barth's reading is worthy of note.¹⁹¹ Although Barth characterises the historical background as Gnosticism, he summarises the core problem in pastoral terms as *unrestrained human vitality*. A summary cannot do justice to Barth's argumentation, but his understanding of the flow of 1 Corinthians might be expressed as follows:

God is set against unbridled human vitality...

- In religion (that is, pride): Chapters 1–4
- In natural life (that is, desire): Chapters 5–6
- ...And in its opposite (proud asceticism): Chapter 7

¹⁸⁹ The "Argument" of the epistle; *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*.

¹⁹⁰ John R. Walchenbach, *John Calvin as Biblical Commentator: An Investigation into Calvin's Use of John Chrysostom as an Exegetical Tutor* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 49.

¹⁹¹ Barth, *Resurrection of the Dead*.

- In knowledge (and freedom): Chapters 8–10
- In rebellion: Chapter 11a
- In material & spiritual egoism: Chapter 11b
- In the most sparkling spirituality: Chapters 12–14

But the expectation of future resurrection reveals that *all* people need life that comes *from God*. (Chapter 15)

Wolffhart Pannenberg uses the phrase “human self-assertion before God”, and concedes a similarity with the bold self-assertion polemically addressed in the book of Romans:

[H]uman self-assertion before God is inherent in both justification through the works of the law and wisdom. Paul’s attack [in 1 Corinthians] was directed against groups that claimed a specific spiritual experience and wisdom while denying a place of central importance to the cross of Christ.¹⁹²

Thiselton considers that socio-historical factors may be examined alongside a consistent theological problem that is expressed, as has been noted, in the Corinthians’ “premature triumphalism” and spiritual enthusiasm.¹⁹³ This enthusiastic spirituality is hinted at in chapters 1–4, and is reflected more prominently as the letter progresses.

Wolff argues that the Corinthian pursuit of self-attestation is opposed by the cross, which contradicts *human* conceptions of God and salvation. Paul’s own willing cruciformity presents a corrective to those in Corinth who try to enthusiastically leap over the *present* into the eschaton.¹⁹⁴

That Paul is opposing *contentions over leadership* that he perceives as expressing an orientation of *boastful, present-obsessed human autonomy* thus finds strong resonance

¹⁹² Wolffhart Pannenberg, “A Theology of the Cross,” *WW* 8/2 (1988): 162-172; 163.

¹⁹³ Thiselton reflects approvingly on Schrage’s insights: “[H]e speaks of the premature triumphalism of the addressees as the “illusion of the enthusiasts”... for those whose emphasis on the Spirit overlooked the realities of continuing sin and struggle, and the need for discipline and order”. Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 358.

¹⁹⁴ Wolff, *Der erste Brief*, 8-9.

with much ancient and recent interpretation of the letter, although these *historical* and *theological* perspectives are not always brought together. I suggest that this orientation is evident in Paul's encapsulation of *all* of the main issues in 1 Corinthians, including divisions over leadership (chapters 1–4); proud acceptance of sexual immorality, greed, and impurity (chapters 5–7); proud, exploitative intra-ecclesial one-upmanship (chapters 8–14); and effective denial of the need for future bodily resurrection (chapter 15).

Charles H. Talbert, amongst others, has suggested that it is not possible to reduce the problems in Corinth to a single cause:

In 1 Corinthians one finds a number of factors behind the problems: for example, overrealized eschatology (1 Cor 4:7;11;15); the effects of social stratification (1 Cor 8–10; 11); misunderstanding of Paul's earlier letter (1 Cor 5); divisions due to allegiance to different leaders growing in part out of the scattered character of the various church groups or cells in Corinth; a carryover of Jewish norms that were contrary to Christian practice (e.g., 1 Cor 14:34-36). It is impossible to reduce all of the issues dealt with in 1 Corinthians to one cause like Gnosticism or overrealized eschatology.¹⁹⁵

However, as I have suggested above, the issue is not simply the historical “factors behind the problems” in Corinth, but *Paul's pastoral conception of what binds those problems together*. In the next chapter I will demonstrate how this unifying conception continues in 1 Corinthians 5–14; and in the subsequent chapter I will demonstrate how it continues in 1 Corinthians 15.

¹⁹⁵ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (2nd ed.; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2003), 10.

7. An Application of *Kerygmatic Rhetoric*

The Problem of Boasting and the Solution of the Cross

I have suggested above that the chief solution to the Corinthian problems, as interpreted by Chrysostom, is the divine “contrary” of the cross. Although conceptions of the Corinthian problems vary greatly, there is little doubt that the cross provides Paul’s ironic solution to these problems.

Thus in the cross there is revaluation of all things in this reality in a lasting and binding way, because the crucified One makes known once and for all only the God who in the depths, in the deathly misery, in lostness and nothingness intends to be God and Savior.¹⁹⁶

The fact of the cross as God’s means of salvation opposes the core pastoral-theological problem of boastful autonomy by undermining human optimism theologically:

The word of the cross can only have negative value, in the sense that it opens up a radical contestation of all the images of God that man is prone to make.... The theology of the cross functions exclusively as a critical instance on all discourse on God.¹⁹⁷

It is the fact that God must be known through his self-presentation in the shame of the cross that makes human boasting theoretically nonsensical, and thus reins in “unrestrained human vitality” in the theologically fundamental area of knowledge of God.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Jürgen Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* (trans. O.C. Dean, Jr.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 208; trans of *Paulus. Der Apostel der Völker* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989).

¹⁹⁷ Guilhen Antier, “Entre Resurrection et Croix: Nommer L’Événement Selon Paul (1 Corinthiens 15),” *ETRel* 79/4 (2004): 477-492; 489; translated from the original French.

¹⁹⁸ Wolff makes this point well: “Paul discloses: The loveless, zealous, quarrelsome behaviour of the Corinthians (1:11, 3:3f; 4:6; 13:4) shows that for them it is finally all about self attestation for the fulfilment of their own religious expectations and ideals and thus about “human wisdom” (2:5, 13; 1:20), not however about the true wisdom of God.

The cross consequently serves as a model for Christian *lifestyle* in opposition to a worldly model provided by human rulers and esteemed in Corinth:

While the cross is not mentioned explicitly within 1 Cor. 4, its presence can be seen clearly, nonetheless. A number of scholars have noticed that the cross plays a great role in Paul's presentation as a steward of the gospel in 1 Cor. 4. In this chapter Paul declares his own weakness, using the same word for weakness (*astheneia*) that he spoke about earlier in the weakness of God displayed at the cross (1 Cor. 1:25; 4:9-13). He also describes himself as "sentenced to death" and perceives himself to be a "spectacle to the world". These descriptions signify an agreement with the message of the cross that he preached (1 Cor. 1:17f; 2:1-5).¹⁹⁹

Thus the cross is used by Paul in chapters 1–4 both to combat the core *theological problem* he perceives in Corinth, and consequently to model Christian *lifestyle* that contrasts with the religious and social manifestations and causes of that key theological problem. As the section draws to a close, Paul presents himself as an exemplary embodiment of such a cruciform lifestyle.

These chapters comprise a warning against the foolishness and destructiveness of human arrogance and an exposition of how God expects those in Christ to live a cruciform life.²⁰⁰

Of course, Paul does not in 1 Corinthians deny *any* sort of present Christian optimism or triumph; but he subjects what he perceives to be a self-confident, over-manifest theological error, together with its lifestyle manifestations, to the "pessimistic" theological

For this manifests itself in the saving work of God through a crucified one, which directly contradicts and shows up the failure of human representations of God and salvation (1:18-25; 2:6-8)". Wolff, *Der erste Brief*, 8; translated from the original German.

¹⁹⁹ Williams, "Living as Christ Crucified," 123-124.

²⁰⁰ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 39.

corrective of the cross. Thus, much of the correction in chapters 1–4 (indeed in 1–14) gives more attention to the “cross” than the “resurrection” side of the cross-resurrection dialectic often detected in Paul’s theology.²⁰¹

It is too limiting, however, to simply characterise Paul’s solution in chapters 1–4 as the negative critique of the cross. This “pessimistic” theological corrective seems to be an expression of a broader positive theme of the necessity of divine gracious initiative.²⁰²

The verse that introduces the theme of the cross illustrates this well:

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

The cross provides the focal point for human derision of God (perhaps in the very act of straining to know him) at the same time as providing the vehicle for humans to receive God’s saving power. In this sense it acts negatively to demolish human attempts at knowledge of God, but positively to graciously offer that very knowledge, *from God*.

1 Corinthians 1–4 and the Rhetoric of Reversal

I have argued in the opening chapter of this dissertation that the conceptual imagery of *reversal* resources a variety of applications in early Jewish discourse. In particular I noted that for Daniel and Mark (among numerous others) the motif of (dual) reversal is adopted in order to restrain a perceived over-active anticipation of divine triumph.

²⁰¹ Tannehill is sensitive to this dialectic, but neglects the deferral of resurrection in 1 Corinthians in his summary: “Rising with Christ cannot be separated from dying with Christ, for the one is the necessary reverse side of the other. Dying with Christ is meaningful only because it is related to participation in Christ’s resurrection life, and rising with Christ is possible only through dying with Christ to the old world. The two aspects occur together in the passages”. Robert C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1967), 130.

²⁰² Barth identifies this with his repeated emphasis on the phrase “from God”: *Resurrection of the Dead*, 26.

With regard to the book of Daniel, Hengel hints that an emphasis on the deferral of triumph to divine timing may even be a conscious reaction to the overly presumptuous perspective of the Maccabeans:

The fact that, unlike the Maccabees, they did not offer resistance on the sabbath at the beginning of the persecution, indicates that they surrendered unconditionally to the will of God revealed in the Torah.... In Dan.11.34b the seer already laments the fact that “many join themselves to them from flattery” because of the initial success of the Maccabees – the “little help”.²⁰³

Jürgen C.H. Lebram follows Casey in rejecting an allusion to the Maccabeans in Daniel 11:34, but still views Daniel as opposing bold immanentism:

We can say for sure, then, that the principles of the pious man of the Apocalypse consist in the rejection of all violence, particularly of the implementation of the Kingdom of God by force. At this point we see that the apocalyptic movement behind the Book of Daniel is derived from an opposition to an enthusiastic *Naherwartung*.²⁰⁴

In counteracting such premature triumphalism, the book of Daniel defers ultimate triumph to the timing of *God*, which may involve a prolonged period of suffering for the righteous in the interim.

With regard to the gospel of Mark, many commentators find a similar reaction against worldly triumphalism. Visser ‘T Hooft is illustrative:

²⁰³ Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. John Bowden; London, SCM Press, 1974), 178; trans of *Judentum und Hellenismus* (WUNT, 10; 2nd ed; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1973).

²⁰⁴ Jürgen C.H. Lebram, “The Piety of the Jewish Apocalypticists,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979* (ed. David Hellholm; 2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 171-210; 183.

In these chapters [leading up to chapter 9] the chief theme is the persistent attempt which Jesus makes to explain the true nature of his messianic mission and the lack of understanding of the disciples. Three times he explains that Jerusalem, which is the goal of their journey, will be the place of a supreme sacrifice and not of worldly success.... As they think about the messiah and the messianic age their thoughts turn to the power which they as associates of the messiah may acquire. Jesus has to say that if they still think in terms of worldly ambition, they have not understood at all how he interprets his own messianic mission and the mission of the messianic community.²⁰⁵

This ambitious triumphalism is countered by Mark's announcement of the divine calling of the cross:

[I]n Mark's Gospel to "save oneself" by "coming down from the cross" represents blatant self-aggrandisement and not simply self-preservation. This is clear from the fact that Mark has had Jesus define "saving one's self" through a wilful rejection of "cross bearing" as tantamount both to asserting oneself over others at their expense and to the attempt – on the part of both individuals and nations – to gain and use worldly power to conquer and dominate their enemies.²⁰⁶

Those who would be disciples of Jesus and leaders of his people must learn to subject their conceptions of glory and power to the divine economy that begins with the cross.

The issue of *boastful, present-obsessed human autonomy* in 1 Corinthians is thus precisely the sort of issue that is penetratingly addressed by the application of the motif of reversal in early Christianity. Those who hold presumptuous ideas about their own status in the present are confronted with *God's* way of the cross. The Corinthians must decide whether

²⁰⁵ W.A. Visser 'T Hooft, "Triumphalism in the Gospels," *SJT* 38 (1985): 491-504; 497-8.

²⁰⁶ J. Gibson, "Jesus' Refusal to Produce a 'Sign' (Mk 8.11-13)," *JSNT* (1990/12): 37-66; 46.

they will continue to proudly identify themselves with the glory of “this or that person”, or whether they will descend, with Paul, to inhabit the cruciform Christ. This descent represents the faithful embrace of the *kerygma* that ends in resurrection.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

In this chapter I have paid attention to John Chrysostom’s reading of 1 Corinthians, particularly chapters 1–4. I have found it essential to attend to the exegetical insights that Chrysostom brings as both an *expositor* and *applier* of the letter to his Antiochene hearers. Chrysostom detects broad problems in Corinth that can be summarised as boastful pride, present wealth, and human autonomy. Paul’s solution to these problems, according to Chrysostom, is God’s “contrary” way of the cross.

This conception of the issues of 1 Corinthians 1–4 involves both a recognition of their socio-historical setting, in the displacement of godly leaders, and their pastoral interpretation by Paul, as a boastful affront to the glory of God.

I seek to emulate this approach, and to affirm Chrysostom’s sense of these chapters. An analysis of each minor and major conclusion point throughout Paul’s argumentation indicates that the chief problem is not precisely that boasting is causing disunity; but rather that disunity is evidence of a theologically significant orientation of boastful, present-obsessed human autonomy. This chief problem is countered with the corrective of the cross, as the opening move in Paul’s *kerygmatic* rhetoric of reversal.

Chapter 4

1 Corinthians 5–14 and Paul’s Ethics “in the Lord”

1. A Pauline Pattern of Ethical Argumentation

I have suggested already that chapters 5–14 represent an ethical section in which the summons to imitate Paul's way of the cross receives expansion.¹ In this chapter I seek to show that this expansion occurs according to an observable Pauline ethical pattern.

Because this common ethical arrangement implies a certain theological logic (of identification with Christ in his bodily accomplishments), my exploration will interact to some degree with investigations and systematisations of Pauline ethics such as those by Burrige, Countryman, Furnish, Hays, Horrell, Klawans, Lohse, Meeks, Rosner, and Schrage. However, because my overall thesis concerns the arrangement of this Pauline letter rather than Pauline ethics in general, my focus will be on the order and function of the material in 1 Corinthians 5-14.

The Pattern and its Logic

I suggest that the general logic of much Pauline ethics may be encapsulated as follows: those who are brought into *union with Christ in his bodily accomplishments* are called to offer their *bodies* selflessly to God through Christ, and participate lovingly within the *body* of Christ.

We shall need above all to direct our gaze to the picture of the *body of Christ* Himself, who became man, was crucified and rose again. In the *body of Jesus Christ* God is united with humanity, the whole of humanity is accepted by God, and the world is reconciled with God. In the *body of Jesus Christ* God took upon himself the sin of the whole world and bore it.²

¹ In section 2 of chapter 2, under the heading *Pastorally Driven Rhetoric*.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (trans. Neville Horton Smith; London: SCM Press, 1955), 71; trans. of *Ethik* (ed. Eberhard Bethge; Munich: Kaiser, 1949); emphases mine.

It is my contention that this logic is evidenced in a common arrangement of Pauline ethics.³ It seems possible to detect a common movement of concepts within Paul's discussion of sin/sanctification, as follows:⁴

- Theme I: sanctification of the church that involves avoidance of sexual immorality, impurity, and greed/passionate desire – often in relation to *bodies*
- Theme II: sanctification of the church that involves the avoidance of inter-relational sin, and the promotion of love – particularly expressed in self-restraint/submission within the *body* of Christ

This Pattern in the Pauline Literature

1 Thessalonians 4

This chapter forms the major hortatory section of 1 Thessalonians, and begins with issues of sexual immorality (τῆς πορνείας) and the control of personal bodily members (τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος – the word is debated, and may refer to one's body or to a man's wife) in verses 1-8:

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8: *Theme I: sexual immorality, bodies, lustful passions, greed*

Restrain yourselves from sexual immorality [πορνείας] (4:3)

Let each hold their own vessel [ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος] in holiness and honour (4:4)

³ Although systematisations of Pauline ethics rightly seek to be attentive to the ethical norms communicated or assumed throughout the Pauline literature, my own interest here is a survey of those sections of Paul's letters that are especially regarded as "hortatory".

⁴ The terminology of "body" is sometimes, but not always, explicitly used in this common movement of concepts. I consider that the concepts that cluster in "Theme I" concern humans in their communicative physical natures, particularly in terms of *desiring and pursuing basic appetitive taboos*. Thus, when σῶμα is used in this setting, it is more specific than Robinson's idea of the "complete person", but somewhat broader than Gundry's conception of "physicality". I concur with Thiselton, who suggests, "Gundry argues for the importance of 'the physical side of *sōma*,' highlighted by its proximity to 'flesh'... in [1 Cor] 6:14-20. But Käsemann's notion of the self as sharing in the observable, visible, intelligible, communicable, tangible life of the 'world' is broad and more faithful to the arguments of this and parallel Pauline passages. Gundry is not 'wrong,' but simply does not go far enough". Thiselton, *Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, 47.

The Thessalonians are not to engage in the passionate desire (πάθει ἐπιθυμίας) of Gentiles, or to be greedy (πλεονεκτεῖν⁵) in regard to these things:

Not in passionate desire [ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας], like the Gentiles who do not know God; let no one wrong or be greedy [πλεονεκτεῖν] with regard to a brother in this matter (4:5-6)

The discussion moves in verses 9-12 to the need for love of one another (ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους):

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12: *Theme II*:⁶ love

Now concerning brotherly love [φιλαδελφίας] you have no need for us⁷ to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another [ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους] (4:9)

Charles A. Wanamaker describes this paraenetic progression as moving from “sexual norms” to “familial love”.⁸

Galatians 5:19-21, 22ff

This vice list serves to represent the “works” of the flesh, and begins with sexual immorality (πορνεία), impurity (ἀκαθαρσία), debauchery (ἀσέλγεια), and idolatry (εἰδωλολατρία), before moving onto other (especially interactional) vices:

⁵ The precise sense of this word in context is debated. See the discussion of Countryman’s views below.

⁶ In 1 Thessalonians, the usage of hortatory love terminology occurs only from 4:9: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, 5:8, 5:13

⁷ The construction in the Greek here is unexpected (οὐ χρειᾶν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν), but may perhaps reflect the Pauline practice of placing the onus for basic catechetical development squarely on the Christian community (cf. 2 Cor. 12:21; Eph. 4:17-24).

⁸ Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 150-159.

Galatians 5:19-21: *Theme I: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, etc.*

The works of the flesh are plain, for they are sexual immorality [πορνεία], impurity [ἀκαθαρσία], debauchery [ἀσέλγεια], idolatry [εἰδωλολατρία], sorcery, enmities, strife [ἔρις⁹], zeal [ζῆλος], anger, quarrels, dissensions, divisions

Notably, the subsequent “virtue list” begins with love (ἀγάπη), and emphasises inter-personal virtues:

Galatians 5:22-23: *Theme II: love, joy, peace, etc.*

But the fruit of the Spirit is love [ἀγάπη], joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

Furnish comments, “It is hardly accidental that love heads the opening triad and thus stands first in the whole list”.¹⁰

1 Corinthians 5–14

I will explore 1 Corinthians 5–14 in much greater detail later in this chapter. At this point, a general observation will suffice. As the main ethical section of 1 Corinthians, chapters 5–14 move from a discussion that includes sexual immorality (πορνεία), impurity (ἐκκαθάρατε τὴν παλαιὰν ζύμην), greed (ὁμεῖς ἀδικεῖτε καὶ ἀποστερεῖτε), bodily ownership (σῶμα οὐ τῇ πορνείᾳ ἀλλὰ τῷ κυρίῳ) and marriage in chapters 5–7, to a discussion of issues that require self-sacrificial love (ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ) within the one body (ἐν σῶμα οἱ πολλοὶ ἔσμεν) in chapters 8–14.

⁹ Numerous important early manuscripts have the singular here; and this would agree with Paul’s use of the term in catechetical lists elsewhere (e.g. Rom 1:28-31; 2 Cor 12:20).

¹⁰ Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1968), 87.

1 Corinthians 5–7: *Theme I: sexual immorality, greed, impurity, bodies*

Actually it is reported that there is sexual immorality [πορνεία] among you, and such that is not even tolerated among the Gentiles (5:1)

Clean out [ἐκκαθάρατε¹¹] the old leaven, in order that you might be a new batch (5:7)

But now I write to you that you should not mingle with anyone who takes the name “brother” who is a fornicator [πόρνος] or greedy [πλεονέκτης] or an idolator [εἰδωλολάτρης] or a reviler or a drunkard or a swindler. (5:11)

But you act unjustly and defraud [ἀποστερεῖτε], and this to brothers and sisters!... Do not be deceived: neither fornicators [πόρνοι] nor idolators [εἰδωλολάτραι] nor adulterers [μοιχοί] nor the sexually perverted [μαλακοί] nor man-bedders [ἀρσενοκοῖται]¹² nor thieves nor the greedy [πλεονέκται] nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (6:8-11)

The body [σῶμα¹³] is not for sexual immorality [πορνεία] but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. (6:13)

Because of sexual immoralities [τὰς πορνείας], each husband should have his own wife, and each wife her own husband¹⁴.... The wife does not exercise authority over

¹¹ Of course, this verse hints at the practices associated with the feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover. It is noteworthy for the purposes of this survey that Paul chooses to utilise the terminology of purity in the context of a discussion of the community’s allowance of πορνεία. Fitzmyer comments, “He writes *ekkatharate*, ‘clean out’ (plur. impv.), which in this context means not only purification, but also connotes exclusion of that which contaminates.” Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 241.

¹² The previous two terms in this list are notoriously difficult to translate. For the sake of the survey, their precise meanings are less important than the broad fact that they relate to sexual vice.

¹³ It is important to note that at this point the “body” in view is corporeal rather than corporate. Fee notes that this is “one of the more important theological passages in the NT about the human body.” Fee, *First Epistle*, 251.

¹⁴ Along with many commentators, I take “ἐχέτω” to refer to sexual relations.

her own body [τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος], but rather the husband; likewise the husband does not exercise authority over his own body, but rather the wife. (7:1-4)

1 Corinthians 8-14: *Theme II: love, concern for the other, one body*

Now concerning idol meat, we know that “we all have knowledge”. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up [ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ].¹⁵ (8:1)

Therefore if food causes my brother or sister to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that my brother or sister might not stumble. (8:13)

Though being free of all, I have enslaved myself to all, in order that I might gain many. (9:19)

The bread that we break – is it not a participation in the body of Christ [κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ]? Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body [ἓν σῶμα].¹⁶ (10:16-17)

Everything is “lawful”, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is “lawful” but not everything builds up [οἰκοδομεῖ]. Let no one seek their own good, but that of the other. (10:23-4)

For those who eat and drink without discerning the body [διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα] bring judgement upon themselves.¹⁷ (11:29)

¹⁵ Although “love” here is a noun rather than an imperative verb, it is clear that the verse is introducing an extended summons for a renewal of attitude and action in Corinth, characterised especially by “love” and “building up”. This sense matches the pattern as it occurs elsewhere in the material surveyed.

¹⁶ Again, there is no imperative to act as “one body” here, but rather the statement that the Supper assumes (or creates) this identity. As with 8:1, however, the imperatival implication of this statement is clear: the Corinthians are to *act* as those who are collectively one body, participating in Christ himself.

You together¹⁸ are the body of Christ [ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ], and individually parts of it. (12:27)

And if... I do not have love [ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω], I am nothing. (13:2)

Let everything be done for the sake of building up [πρὸς οἰκοδομήν]. (14:26)

2 Corinthians 12:20-21

In this vice list, there appears to be a conscious distinction between the two areas that have been identified, although here they occur in the reverse of the usual order:

2 Corinthians 12:20: Theme II: strife, zeal, evil speech, etc.

For I fear that when I come I might not find you as I wish to find you, and that you might not find me as you wish – that there might be strife [ἔρις], zeal [ζῆλος],¹⁹ anger [θυμοί], squabbles [ἐριθειᾶι], slander [καταλαλιαί], gossiping, pride, and disorder.

2 Corinthians 12:21: Theme I: (former) impurity, sexual immorality, debauchery

I fear that when I come, my God might humble me and that I might have to mourn over many who had sinned previously and not repented of the impurity [τῇ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ] and sexual immorality [πορνείᾳ] and debauchery [ἀσελγείᾳ] which they had practised.

¹⁷ The textual variants at this point do not jeopardise the point that this verse evidences a summons to acknowledge the corporate body. It seems that ἀναξίως and τοῦ κυρίου are later clarifying additions, brought in from 11:27.

¹⁸ This translation attempts to communicate the corporate nature of the plural indicative.

¹⁹ I consider that these two nouns (ἔρις, ζῆλος) are better taken as being singular (as in 1 Corinthians 3:3); and that the plural variants arise from scribal conformation to the other plural nouns in context.

Firstly, Paul expresses fear that he will encounter interpersonal problems such as quarrelling and anger; secondly, he expresses fear that he will encounter a failure to deal with fundamental sins of impurity (ἀκαθαρσία), sexual sin (πορνεία), and debauchery (ἀσελγεία). Thus although the two areas are described in the reverse of the usual order, the latter vices are assumed to be logically prior.

Philippians 3:17–4:9

The ethical teaching of Philippians cannot be limited to one section at the end of the letter. Nevertheless, this passage represents an extended hortatory section, bringing to a conclusion the call to embody Christ-likeness that pervades the letter.²⁰ The section follows Paul's reflection on his own embodiment of this call (3:1-16; so 3:10: "[I want] to know him and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings, becoming like his death, if somehow I might attain the resurrection of the dead".) The next section begins (3:17) "Become imitators of me..."; and 4:9 may be seen to form an inclusio: "And that which you have learnt and received and heard and seen in me – do these things".

This section commences with a negative injunction against the misuse of bodies. There is no explicit mention here of sexual immorality, but, reminiscent of Romans 1, there is an ironic exposing of human commitment to shame rather than glory, earthliness rather than heaven, and the idolatry of the human body (ἡ κοιλία²¹). The Philippians are to live in contrast to this way of life, given their union with Christ:

²⁰ Loveday Alexander rightly argues, "Paul's converts are called to follow the pattern of voluntary humiliation exhibited in the Christ-hymn not only in encountering persecution (1.27-30) but also, and perhaps more immediately, in their relationships with one another (2.1-5; 4.2-3)". Loveday Alexander, "Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians," *JSNT* 37 (1989): 87-101; 99.

²¹ The connotation of this word in context has been greatly debated. In favour of the view that it points to the appetites rather than to Jewish dietary laws, Markus Bockmuehl rightly notes, "The word *koilia*, which literally denotes the abdomen..., refers to visceral appetites in Rom. 16.18, and in 1 Cor. 6.13 it is used to make a point about sexual ethics (Sir. 23.6)." Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: A&C Black, 1997), 231.

Philippians 3:17–4:1: *Theme I: renewal of bodies*

Their end is destruction, their god is the stomach [κοιλία], and their glory is in their shame, having their minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, from which we await our saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humiliation [τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως], conforming it to his glorious body [σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ] (3:19-21)

The passage moves on immediately to an inter-personal struggle in Philippi that requires a commitment to church unity:

Philippians 4:2-9: *Theme II: pursuit of unity*

I urge Euodia and Syntyche to have the same mind in the Lord. (4:2)

This positive injunction (παρακαλῶ) is followed with further positive injunctions to rejoice, pray, and consider praiseworthy things. Thus although neither sexual immorality nor love are explicitly mentioned in this hortatory section, there does appear to be a movement from negative injunctions related to pre-Christian misuse of the body, to positive injunctions that begin with church unity. The rhythm of Pauline ethical arrangement detected so far, then, may also exist here.

Romans I

In Romans 1:24, those who face the ironic judgement of God are said to be handed over, in the desires (ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις) of their hearts, to the impurity (ἀκαθαρσίαν) of dishonouring their bodies (τὰ σώματα):

Romans 1:24: *Theme I: lusts, impurity, bodies*

Therefore God gave them over in the desires [ἐπιθυμίαις] of their hearts to impurity [ἀκαθαρσίαν], to the dishonouring of their bodies [σώματα] with one another.

This dishonouring of bodies is elaborated in sexual terms in 1:25-27. Following this depiction of the ironic divine punishment for human rebellion as a “giving over” to bodily impurity and sexual decadence, Paul extends this “giving over” to “every kind of evil” - which especially appears to involve acts of relational dissension:

Romans 1:28-31: *Theme II: “all” unrighteousness: strife, deceit, etc.*

God gave them over to an unsound mind, to do things that should not be done, filled with every kind of injustice [ἀδικία],²² wickedness [πονηρία], evil greed [πλεονεξία κακία]; full of envy [φθόνου], murder [φόνου], strife [ἔριδος], deceit [δόλου], being people of corrupt character [κακοηθείας], gossips [ψιθυριστάς], slanderers [καταλάλους]

Moo notes this movement from sexual to relational vices:

In vv. 22-24 and 25-27 Paul has shown how the sexual immorality that pervades humanity has its roots in the rejection of the true God in favor of gods of their own making. In the third and final portrayal of this sin-retribution sequence (vv. 28-32), he traces sins of inhumanity, of man’s hatred of his fellow man in all its terrible manifestations, to this same root sin of idolatry.²³

²² In agreement with the committee for the Nestle Aland 27, I find it unlikely that the variant “πορνεία” is original at this point. Such an intrusion makes little sense of the flow of the passage, and may be explained as a scribal mis-reading of the subsequent word, πονηρία.

²³ Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 117.

Romans 12–15

Just as 1:24–28 presented the dishonouring of bodies as the fundamental expression of godless desire, so in chapter 12, the sacrificial presentation of holy bodies (τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν²⁴) to God is the fundamental expression of minds in renewal:²⁵

Romans 12:1–2: Theme I: bodies devoted to God

I urge you then, brothers and sisters, because of the mercies of God, to present your bodies [τὰ σώματα] as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God

In a movement similar to that in chapter 1, the climactic ethical discussion beginning in chapter 12 proceeds from *bodies* (12:1–2) to relationships within the *one body* (ἐν σῶμά), requiring mutual service and other-honouring love (ἀγάπη):

Romans 12:3–15:33: Theme II: love, concern for the other, one gifted body²⁶

For just as in one body we have many parts, and the parts do not all have the same function, so, though many, we are one body in Christ [ἐν σῶμά ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ], and are members of one another, having gifts according to the grace with which he distributed them to us. (12:4–6)

Let love [ἀγάπη] be genuine.... Love your neighbour as yourself. (13:9–10)

²⁴ James Dunn rightly comments on this verse, “The point to be emphasized... is that σώμα denotes not just the person, but the person in his corporeality, in his concrete relationships within this world.” James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC; Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1988), 709. Subsequent to this in Romans 12, as seen below, references to σώμα refer to the *corporate* body.

²⁵ David Peterson points out that the introductory verses of chapter 12 appear to announce a reversal of the spiral of sin of chapter 1: David Peterson, “Worship and Ethics in Romans 12,” *TB* 44/2 (1993): 271–288.

²⁶ In Romans, love terminology is used for exhortation only beginning at 12:9. The noun ἀγάπη and its cognate verb occur as an exhortation in Romans 12:9, 13:9–10, 14:15.

If you grieve your brother or sister on account of food, you are no longer walking in love [ἀγάπην]. (14:15)

Therefore welcome one another, just as Christ welcomed you for the glory of God.
(15:7)

Thus there is a movement from the ethics of the corporeal body to that of the corporate body.

However, there is not an equivalence of emphasis between each issue at each point. When Paul is focusing negatively on sin or idolatry (as in chapter 1), he emphasises the *impurity associated with individual bodies*; when he is focusing positively on sanctification (such as from chapter 12), he emphasises *interpersonal love within the body of Christ*. The “downward spiral” of Romans 1 is introduced with the theme of passionately-pursued bodily impurity, and expanded in terms of sexual decadence before it is briefly extended to issues of relational dissension; whereas it is the relational issues that come to prominence in the positive ethical material beginning in chapter 12, rather than the former issues. Apart from the plural “bodies” (12:1), with its obvious allusion to 1:24-27, 6:12-13, 6:19 and 8:10-13, this major positive ethical section focuses on issues of relationship, selflessness, and love – extending through to chapter 15. To over-simplify, Paul envisages a bodily movement from *personal impurity* to *mutual love*.

*Disputed Paulines*²⁷

Colossians 3–4

Again, the opening vice list is divided into two distinct sections, the first including sexual immorality (πορνείαν), impurity (ἀκαθαρσίαν), passionate desire (πάθος ἐπιθυμίαν κακήν) and greed (πλεονεξίαν), and the second involving anger and other inter-personal vices:

Colossians 3:5–7: Theme I: sexual immorality, impurity, evil lusts, greed, idolatry

Put to death, therefore, those parts that are earthly: sexual immorality [πορνείαν], impurity [ἀκαθαρσίαν], evil passionate desire [πάθος ἐπιθυμίαν κακήν], and greed [πλεονεξίαν], which is idolatry [εἰδωλολατρία] – on account of which the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.²⁸ You used to walk among them, when you pursued these things.

Colossians 3:8: Theme II: wrath, evil speech

But now you must also get rid of all things such as wrath [ὀργήν], anger [θυμόν], evil [κακίαν], slander [βλασφημίαν], shameful speech from your mouth [αἰσχρολογία].

Once more, this is followed by a “virtue” section (including much of chapters 3 and 4) that climactically emphasises mutual love (ἐπὶ πᾶσιν δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην) within the one body (ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι):

Colossians 3:12–4:1: Theme II: love; one body

²⁷ Even if the remaining epistles are not Pauline, they at least represent an early conscious attempt to sit faithfully within Pauline tradition. Thus, as extended letters in the Pauline tradition, they will still be of interest. For this reason, my examination of Pauline ethics includes contested Pauline epistles. As it turns out, the non-contested epistles remain prominent in terms of the pattern I am arguing for. The letters that appear least to fit the pattern that I am suggesting are the Pastorals.

²⁸ I leave this textually uncertain phrase in my translation, but its presence or absence does not bear upon my point.

Clothe yourselves, then... with merciful compassion [σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ], kindness [χρηστότητα], humility [ταπεινοφροσύνην], gentleness [πραΰτητα], patience [μακροθυμίαν], bearing one another [ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων] and forgiving one another [χαριζόμενοι].... Above all, clothe yourselves with love [ἀγάπην].... And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which you were also called in one body [ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι] (3:12-15)

Ephesians 2

This chapter functions, similarly to the beginning of Romans, to establish a theological basis for the ethical injunctions that will be the emphasis of a later part of the letter. Hoehner characterises the progress of this chapter, which explores the achievement of Christ on behalf of his people, as a movement from “new position individually” (2:1-10) to “new position corporately” (2:11-22).²⁹

It does indeed appear that Paul relates the salvific union between Christ and his people firstly to the passions and desires of the flesh³⁰ (ἐπιθυμίας τῆς σαρκὸς: 2:1-10):

Ephesians 2:1-10: Theme I: lusts of flesh, confronted with death & resurrection in Christ

We all once behaved in the desires of the flesh [ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῆς σαρκὸς] (2:3)

And secondly Paul relates the salvific union between Christ and his people to the ethnic diversity of Jews and Gentiles (ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι: 2:11-22):

²⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 305; 351.

³⁰ Although the mention of “desires” here matches the pattern under investigation, there is no certainty that “of the flesh” refers solely to bodily appetites. Andrew T. Lincoln tentatively suggests that the distinctive wording may “confine ‘flesh’ to the sensual”. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC; Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1990), 98.

Ephesians 2:11-22: *Theme II: division, confronted with death & resurrection in Christ; one body*

But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.... [Christ has] reconciled both in one body [ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι] to God, through the cross. (2:13, 16)

Thus through union with Christ in his bodily accomplishments, former desires are reversed (2:1-10), and distant Jews and Gentiles find bodily reconciliation (2:11-22).

Ephesians 4–6

Chapters 4–6 form the major hortatory section of the letter, and again, one can detect a movement between (I) sanctification of the church that emphasises avoidance of sexual immorality, impurity and greed (in relation to bodies); and (II) sanctification of the church that emphasises the promotion of mutual gifted love (within the body). In this instance, however, these two themes alternate:

Ephesians 4:1-16: *Theme II: bear with one another in love. There is one body...*³¹

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love [ἐν ἀγάπῃ] (4:2)

One body [ἐν σώμα] and one Spirit (4:4)

Ephesians 4:17-24: *Theme I: Gentiles have given themselves over to debauchery, impurity, greed*

They have given themselves over to debauchery [ἀσελγεία] in works of all impurity [ἀκαθαρσίας], with greed [πλεονεξία]. (4:19)

³¹ In Ephesians, love terminology is used for exhortation only from 3:17, and in the passages described here as exhibiting “Theme II”: Ephesians 3:17, 4:2, 4:15-16, 5:1, 5:25-33.

Ephesians 4:25–5:2: *Theme II: build each other up in love, being members of one another*

We are members of one another [ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη] (4:25)

Ephesians 5:3-14: *Theme I: among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, impurity, greed*

Sexual immorality [πορνεία] and all impurity [ἀκαθαρσία] or greed [πλεονεξία] must not even be named among you (5:3)

Ephesians 5:15–6:9: *Theme II: live wisely, filled with the Spirit, submitting to one another*

Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another... submitting to one another in the fear of Christ (5:18-21)

Christ cares for the church, because we are members of his body [σώματος αὐτοῦ]³² (5:29-30)

Thus there is a movement between largely negative injunctions related to sexual immorality (πορνεία), impurity (ἀκαθαρσία) and greed (πλεονεξία); and largely positive injunctions related to self-restraining mutual love (ἐν ἀγάπῃ) within the one body (ἐν σῶμα). Ephesians thus flexibly evidences the pattern under investigation.

Pastorals

Interestingly, the list of requirements for overseers in Titus begins with their marital integrity, before moving on to other issues:

Titus 1:6-8: *beginning with marriage*

³² The context here is the way in which wives and husbands relate; but the point of interest for this survey is that their way of relating is framed within the wider concerns of the “Theme II” subsection, using the imagery of the corporate body of Christ.

Blameless, the husband of one wife, having children of faith...

It would seem that the central conception of salvation and its effects is expressed in Titus in a way that is reminiscent of Romans, involving a movement from “worldly passions” (κοσμικὰς ἐπιθυμίας) to the purified (καθαρίσει) pursuit of good deeds (2:11-14).

The list of requirements for overseers in 1 Timothy likewise begins with the necessity of marital integrity, before moving onto interpersonal issues:

1 Timothy 3:2-3: *beginning with marriage*

It is necessary for an overseer to be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate...

George W. Knight III comments:

The items focus on two areas: (1) personal self-discipline and maturity, and (2) ability to relate well to others and to teach and care for them. These two are intertwined, although there seems to be a tendency to move from the personal to the interpersonal.³³

Along with this movement from personal to interpersonal, it is noteworthy that in virtue lists of the Pastorals, faith-driven love remains primary:

The *pistis-agapē* combination forms the core of nine virtue lists, serving to ground acceptable behaviour in faith in Christ.³⁴

³³ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), 156.

³⁴ Philip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 167.

It may be then that there is a discernible likeness here to the general pattern of Pauline ethics explored so far, although the pattern is less apparent here than in the earlier letters.

A Pauline Pattern

*It has repeatedly been seen that the grasping desire for basic appetitive taboos is generally dealt with **first** in ethical sections, especially involving the themes of sexual immorality, impurity, and greedy desire (πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια, ἐπιθυμία, πλεονεξία).*

“Sexual immorality” (πορνεία, πόρνος) is used in the Pauline literature almost exclusively in the sections examined above (with the one addition being 1 Timothy 1:10), and almost always appears as the primary vice.³⁵

Porneia, well translated by the encompassing notion of immorality, seems to be a focal term with which Paul associates vices and improper conduct (1 Thess. 4:3).³⁶

“Impurity” (ἀκαθαρσία) is likewise used in Paul only in the catechetical lists and “sin/sanctification” sections that have been cited above, except for one instance, in which the context suggests the NRSV’s translation “impure motives” (1 Thessalonians 2:3).³⁷

Contextually it is hard to determine a clear difference in meaning between ἀκαθαρσία and πορνεία in these sections.

³⁵ The word occurs in some textual variants in Romans 1:29 (followed in the Textus Receptus), notably in connection with “greed”, and occurs in 1 Corinthians 5:1, 5:9, 5:10, 5:11, 6:9, 6:13, 6:18, 7:2; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3, 5:5; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3. In the latter five passages of this list, the term occurs first in a string of related injunctions or vices. The word is also used in 1 Timothy 1:10, in a vice list that appears to follow the ordering of the Decalogue.

³⁶ J. Paul Sampley, *Walking Between the Times: Paul’s Moral Reasoning* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1991), 57.

³⁷ This word occurs in Romans 1:24, 6:19; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:19, 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:7.

As L. William Countryman points out, *purity* is a significant concern of the Torah, a concern which includes, but is by no means limited to, sexual regulation:

The reader of the Torah can scarcely miss its intense concern with purity, and this concern was one of the principal forces keeping Israel distinct from the Nations.³⁸

However, Klawans suggests an understanding of *moral defilement* as a metaphorical expansion of the concept of impurity, and it would seem that this meaning is closest to Paul's use of the term in the contexts above:

The notion of “moral” defilement, as we and others have described it elsewhere, concerns the idea that certain grave sins are so heinous that they defile. These acts—often referred to as “abominations”... – include idolatry (e.g., Lev 19:3 1, 20:1-3), sexual sins (e.g., Lev 18:24-30), and bloodshed (e.g., Num 35:33-34). They *morally*, but not *ritually*, defile the sinner (Lev 18:24), the land of Israel (Lev 18:25; Ezek 36:17), and the sanctuary of God (Lev 20:3; Ezek 5:11).³⁹

Another conceptually similar term, “debauchery” (ἀσέλγεια), is, again, only used in the “sin/sanctification” sections and catechetical lists mentioned above, along with one other vice list (which perhaps follows a similar pattern, moving from bodily self-indulgence to interpersonal strife) in Romans 13:13.⁴⁰

“Greed”/“the greedy” (πλεονεξία, πλεονέκτης) occurs in many of the same sections examined above (and infrequently elsewhere), often next to ἀκαθαρσία or πορνεία.⁴¹ The conceptually

³⁸ L. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today* (rev. ed.; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2007), 19.

³⁹ Jonathan Klawans, “Pure Violence: Sacrifice and Defilement in Ancient Israel,” *HTR* 94/2 (2001): 133-155; 152-153; emphasis original.

⁴⁰ The word occurs in Romans 13:13; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:19.

⁴¹ These words occurs in Romans 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:10, 5:11, 6:10; 2 Corinthians 9:5 (in a very different context); Ephesians 4:19, 5:3, 5:5; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:5 (again, in a contrasting context).

related word ἐπιθυμία, when used negatively, occurs almost entirely in the same contexts, excepting its use in the Pastorals.⁴²

Rosner draws on the work of Reinmuth to confirm the importance of both sexual immorality and greed in Paul and his theological heritage:

[H]is major achievement in relation to the present study is the carefully documented assertion that sexual immorality and greed are two key vices in the Scriptures (A), Jewish moral teaching (B), and Paul's ethics (C). Although not labelled as such by Reinmuth, these data constitute a fine example of the mediation of Scripture via Jewish moral teaching to Paul's ethics. That Paul's ethics are pervaded by an opposition to these two vices is thus explicable in terms of indirect dependence upon the Scriptures.⁴³

Countryman suggests that the association of greed/covetousness with sexual immorality may be understood in relation to the concept of sexual property:

Christians held firmly to the notion of private sexual property and made this the foundation for constructing their sexual ethic.... Greed, in this sense, is not simply desire, but a kind of grasping behaviour that enhances one's own property at the expense of another or delights in possessing more than another.⁴⁴

This property ethic gave rise to certain prohibitions deemed necessary to protect it. Adultery was wrong because it was theft of a neighbor's property. Incest was wrong because, being defined primarily as a revolt of the young against the old, it upset the

⁴² This word occurs in Romans 1:24, 6:12, 7:7-8 (used as exemplary of fundamental sin), 13:13-14; Galatians 5:15-17, 5:24; Ephesians 2:3, 4:22; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:5; 1 Timothy 6:9; 2 Timothy 2:22, 3:6, 4:3; Titus 2:11-12, 3:3.

⁴³ Brian S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 37.

⁴⁴ Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex*, 144-145.

internal hierarchy of the family. Prostitution, though a less serious concern, was wrong insofar as it represented the triumph of individual gratification over against the principle of subordination to the household.... [T]he Torah's definition of sexual property and the ethic relative to it was the one that Jesus and Paul found current in their own time.⁴⁵

This may indeed help explain certain Pauline passages, such as 1 Thessalonians 4:4-6.⁴⁶

However, it is not clear that the concept of property consistently *replaces* the concept of purity in New Testament sexual ethics, as Countryman argues. Paul's use of purity terminology noted above hints that as members of Christ, believers are to embody the calling to (personal and corporate) bodily purity that was foreshadowed *terminologically* in Israel's commitment to ritual purity, and *by metaphorical extension* in Israel's insistent repudiation of moral "defilement"; an insistence which, by the first century, especially focused on the rejection of *porneia*.

Indeed, at a number of points, the lustful or greedy attitude that Paul mentions alongside the pursuit of sexual immorality seems to have nothing to do with sexual property concerns, but to be either a reference to a similarly fundamentally-godless desire for *material wealth* or a general assertion of *committed selfishness*, the opposite of the attitude of surrender implicit in "offering" the body to God. Indeed, Rosner comments:

It is my contention that when the evidence is carefully examined it weighs against taking πλεονεξία/πλεονέκτης to signify sexual greed in Colossians 3:5 and Ephesians 5:5.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex*, 162-163.

⁴⁶ Rosner concludes that this use of the verb πλεονεκτεῖν may well have been an idiom referring to adultery, "wronging the husband or father of the woman involved in the sexual liaison". Brian S. Rosner, *Greed as Idolatry: The Origin and Meaning of a Pauline Metaphor* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 107.

⁴⁷ Rosner, *Greed as Idolatry*, 105.

It would seem that in the Pauline literature, fundamental ethical godlessness or wickedness may be encapsulated with the *attitude* of grasping self-assertion (often in terms of passionate desire)⁴⁸ and with the personal *bodily practices* characterised as idolatrous greed and impurity/sexual immorality.

*Correspondingly, it has repeatedly been seen that Paul's exhortations regarding corporate bodily life are generally dealt with **second** in ethical sections, and involve mutual love as the primary virtue, usually occurring either first or as a climactic encompassing finale. This occurs both in virtue lists and in extended hortatory sections.*

The centrality of love (especially ἀγάπη) in Paul's writings has been well established, and is documented in virtually every major work on Pauline theology and ethics. To summarize briefly, ἀγάπη, for Paul, is the greatest of the Christian "virtues", the most important ethical trait of the Christian life.... Paul's whole understanding of ethical righteousness now seems to be dominated by the concept of love.⁴⁹

This theme appears generally to be expressed as a self-denying commitment to make peace with, edify, or submit to others within the community, in a spirit of unity. A large proportion of instances of "love" terminology in the letters attributed to Paul occur in the passages that have been examined above; that is, occurring distinct (and often *subsequent*) to sections dealing with the restraint of bodily immorality and greed.⁵⁰ In Romans, for example, love terminology is used for exhortation only beginning at 12:9. In 1 Corinthians, such usage occurs only in chapters 8–16. In Ephesians, it occurs only from 3:17, in the passages

⁴⁸ G.D. Collier argues that a greedy desire to go beyond the boundaries is the root of all covetous sins and the content of the Decalogue: G.D. Collier, "That We Might Not Crave Evil": The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians 10.1-13," *JSNT* 17/55 (1995): 55-75.

⁴⁹ Roger Mohrland, *Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 101.

⁵⁰ The noun ἀγάπη and its cognate verb occur as an exhortation in Romans 12:9; 13:9-10; 14:15; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 13; 14:1; 16:14; 2 Corinthians 2:8; 8:8, 24; 13:11; Galatians 5:6, 13-14, 22; Ephesians 3:17; 4:2, 15-16; 5:1, 25-33; Philippians 1:9; 2:2; Colossians 2:2; 3:12-14, 19; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10; 5:8, 13; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2:15; 4:12; 6:11; 2 Timothy 1:7; 2:22; Titus 2:2; Philemon 9.

described above as exhibiting “Theme II”. In 1 Thessalonians, this usage of hortatory love terminology occurs only from 4:9.

It would seem that for Paul, personal bodily impurity (whether viewed as actual or as a more abstract realm of identity) quintessentially represents defiant decadent autonomy, while mutual love quintessentially represents the fruit of the Spirit of Christ in those who are united to Christ. *Those who, by faith, share in Christ’s bodily achievements must identify with Christ bodily, by turning from (theologically former) idolatrous and greedy desire in relation to their bodies, and worshiping God, giving themselves up for one another in self-denying love as members together of Christ’s body.*

2. This Pattern in 1 Corinthians 5–14

Perhaps then, chapters 5–14 of 1 Corinthians represent an observable Pauline pattern for a major hortatory section, sandwiched between, and providing application for, two more “theological” sections (1–4 and 15) within the main body of the letter:

| | |
|------|--|
| 1-4 | The Cross |
| 5-7 | <i>The Cross Applied Ethically (I): Sexual immorality, greed, bodies belonging to the Lord</i> |
| 8-14 | <i>The Cross Applied Ethically (II): Self-restraint, love, participation in the one body</i> |
| 15 | The Resurrection |

Chapters 5–7: Glorify God in Your Body

Themes of Chapters 5–7

The *themes* of chapters 5–7 seem to fit the pattern that I have been arguing exists in Paul’s ethics: the church at Corinth is here called to surrender their bold claims to bodily self-ownership implied in issues of sexual immorality, impurity, and greed.

Thus in each section, Paul depicts the Corinthians in a way that is continuous with the critique of the Corinthian church that was developed in chapters 1–4. They are depicted as boldly parading their assumed self-ownership. In each section Paul challenges the various expressions of this puffed up self-assertion, alluding to the cross as that which demands humble submission to *divine ownership*:⁵¹

In 5:1-13, the community is warned to turn their pride in a man of immorality⁵² into a willingness to be rid of impurity (here pictured as leaven), in view of Christ’s sacrifice:

5:1-2: Actually it is said that among you there is sexual immorality [πορνεία]...And you are puffed up [πεφουσιωμένοι]!

5:6-7: Your boasting [καύχημα ὑμῶν] is not good.... Clean out [purify: ἐκκαθάρατε] the old yeast, in order that you might be new dough... For our Passover lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed [ἐτύθη].

In 6:1-11, the church is called to turn their acceptance of unrestrained greed into a commitment to judge greed and to forgo personal gain: every item in the closing vice list may

⁵¹ This does not sum up the full complexity of Paul’s argumentation in each of these subsections; it rather notes a general pattern that appears to be common to each.

⁵² It seems reasonable that, if the man at fault here is a rich benefactor, the resistance of the church to condemning his open sin represents conventional goodwill in response to continued patronage. See chapter 6 in Clarke, *Secular and Christian*. See also John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); especially 139. My suggestion is that Paul interprets this goodwill as evidence of (to use Chrysostom’s terminology) the “disease” of puffed-up pride that effectively downplays dependence on God in Christ.

be related to either the perception of corporeal revelry involved in Roman cultic celebrations and parties,⁵³ or the greedy pursuit of gain at the expense of another. The section as a whole has been rightly characterised by Hall as an elaboration on the theme of judging greed:

The trigger for the digression [6:1-11] may have been the word πλεονέκτης in the list of vices in 5.11. The Corinthians' pride in their tolerance of sexual immorality seems to Paul to be symptomatic of their proud tolerance of immorality in general, and the case of πλεονεξία that forms the subject of 6.1-11 is a case in point. It is significant that near the end of 6.1-11 (in vv. 9-10) there appears a very similar vice list to that of 5.11.⁵⁴

Those who have benefited from Christ's sanctifying work, however, should act differently:

6:1: If any of you has a matter against another, dare you take it to be judged before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?

6:8-11: But instead you treat unjustly [ἀδικεῖτε] and rob [ἀποστερεῖτε], and you do this to brothers and sisters! Do you not know that the unjust [ἄδικοι] will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral [πόρνοι] nor idolaters [εἰδωλολάτραι] nor adulterers [μοιχοί] nor the sexually perverse [μαλακοί] nor man-bedders [ἄρσενοκοῖται] nor thieves [κλέπται] nor the greedy [πλεονέκται] nor drunkards [μέθυσοι] nor revilers [λοιδόροι] nor swindlers [ἄρπαγες] will inherit

⁵³ Seneca, for example, portrays the revelry of a Roman banquet in his description of the way that slaves are treated: "Another slave, the wine server, must wrestle back his age to model feminine attire. He is not able to escape boyhood, but is called back to it. And though he has the body of a soldier, his face is kept smooth, and body hair plucked out from the roots. And he is kept on watch all night, divided between his lord's drunkenness and lust. And in the bedroom he is a man, but at the banquet, he is a boy". Seneca, *Epistles*, 47.7. Philo similarly depicts Roman celebrations, in contrast to those of the *Therapeutae*: "Now I would like also to mention their [that is, the *Therapeutae*'s] common assemblies and the joyfulness of their symposia. For there are others who, when they have filled themselves with drink, behave as though it is not wine they have been drinking, but rather something herbal that causes frenzy and madness, and anything else that can be imagined that is more poisonous to reason. They cry out and rave in the manner of wild dogs, and they attack and devour one another.... And equally, some would approve the style of symposia now rife everywhere, through the pursuit of Italian expense and luxury, which is sought by both Greeks and Barbarians who desire show rather than celebration in making their preparations". Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 40; 48.

⁵⁴ Hall, *Unity*, 36 note 21.

the kingdom of God. And some of you were these things. But you were washed; but you were sanctified; but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

In 6:12-20, the church is summoned to exchange assumed sexual freedom for surrendered bodily restraint. Those who have been “bought”⁵⁵ by God should evidence this non-self-possession in the exercise of their bodies:

6:12: ‘Everything is lawful for me’

6:13, 19-20: But the body is not for sexual immorality [πορνεία], but for the Lord – and the Lord for the body.

Do you not know that your body [σῶμα] is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought [ἡγοράσθητε] at cost. Therefore glorify God in your body.

In chapter 7, Christians in various situations are urged to give up self-possessing⁵⁶ approaches to sex, abstinence and marriage, and renew their attitudes toward these practices “ἐν κυρίῳ” (7:22, 39). Once again, the Corinthians are reminded that they have been “bought” by God. The distinction between belonging to humans and belonging to God (7:23-4) is clearly reminiscent of the same distinction that had been so strongly emphasised in chapters 1–4 (e.g. 3:21-23).

7:1, 4-5: “It is good for a man not to touch [μὴ ἄπτεσθαι] his wife”.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ That the body of a slave was thought of as the possession of the Greco-Roman owner is illustrated in Aristophanes’ *Plutus*, lines 1-7 (spoken by the slave Cario):
“How painful a thing it is, O Zeus and the gods,
to be the slave of a foolish master.

For he may give the best of advice,
but if the master does not do what has been advised,
it is necessary for the slave to share the burden of his evils.
For the gods have not permitted the exerciser of the body to control his body,
but rather the one who has bought it”.

⁵⁶ There is perhaps a play on words when Paul concludes the section by saying that he thinks he “has” the Spirit of God (7:40: ἔχειν).

⁵⁷ That the wording refers to sexual pleasure or exploitation is confirmed by Roy E. Ciampa, “Revisiting the Euphemism in 1 Corinthians 7.1,” *JSNT* 31/3 (2009): 325-338.

The wife does not exercise authority over her own body [τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος οὐκ ἐξουσιάζει] but her husband does. And likewise, the husband does not exercise authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not rob [μὴ ἀποστερεῖτε] one another...

7:23-24: You were bought [ῥηγοράσθητε] at cost; do not become slaves of humans [ἀνθρώπων]. Let each remain, before God [παρὰ θεῶ], in the situation in which they were called.

The themes of chapters 5–7, then, cohere with the pattern of ethical arrangement exhibited elsewhere in the letters of the Pauline Corpus, applying the corrective of the cross of Christ (introduced in chapters 1–4) to the Corinthian expressions of “puffed up” bodily sexual immorality, greed, and impurity.

Regardless of the exact way in which the section on lawsuits relates to the sections on either side about sexual immorality (and the sections are at least related in terms of requiring a commitment to communal judgement), each of the issues represented in this part of the letter recalls the usual themes that open Pauline ethical discussion. Ciampa and Rosner see the presence of the section on lawsuits as the biggest exception to their own outline of the letter, which views 4:18–7:40 as being about the problem of sexual immorality and 8:1–14:40 as being about the problem of idolatry.⁵⁸ They concede that greed is indeed viewed as another fundamental vice in Paul and early Judaism/Christianity, but it sits uneasily within a section that is otherwise, in their estimation, only about sexual immorality. It would seem less strained to view the section as a whole (chapters 5–7) as relating generally to the church’s bold acceptance of the fundamental bodily vices of sexual immorality, impurity, and greed, associated with an idolatrous orientation.

⁵⁸ Ciampa and Rosner, “Structure and Argument,” 212. My own perspective is that chapters 8–14 are far more consistently about the need to avoid *interpersonal exploitation* than the need to avoid *idolatry*.

Terminology of Chapters 5–7

The *terminology* of chapters 5–7 seems to affirm this pattern. Of the 12 occurrences of the word σώμα in this section (after no occurrences in chapters 1–4), all refer to personal bodies.⁵⁹ The words πορνεία/πόρνος occur 8 times in this section (including each chapter), and nowhere else in 1 Corinthians.⁶⁰ The word πλεονέκτης occurs 3 times in chapters 5–6, and nowhere else in 1 Corinthians.⁶¹ The words related to purity/cleansing occur twice in these chapters (once in chapter 5, once in chapter 7), and nowhere else in 1 Corinthians.⁶²

Chapters 8-14: Discern the Body

Themes of Chapters 8–14

The *themes* of chapters 8–14 also seem to fit the pattern, bearing a strong similarity to the themes dealt with in Romans 12:9 to 15, Colossians 3 to 4, 1 Thessalonians 4 (from verse 9), the relevant sections of Ephesians 4-6, the latter (relational) themes of many vice lists, and the themes of many virtue lists. In 1 Corinthians 8–14, Paul consistently summons those in Corinth to put away the proud and exploitative exercise of possessions, rights and abilities, which have been resulting in community instability (8:10-11), division (11:18), and jealousy/resignation (12:14-26). These divisive practices are to be replaced with a commitment to unity and love within the one body.

On the unity of this section, Thiselton comments:

⁵⁹ 5:3, 6:13 (twice), 6:15, 6:16, 6:18 (twice), 6:19, 6:20, 7:4 (twice), 7:34.

⁶⁰ 5:1, 5:9, 5:10, 5:11, 6:9, 6:13, 6:18, 7:2. The cognate verb πορνεύω occurs in two verses of 1 Corinthians: in 6:18, in relation to bodily sin; and in 10:8, in which the sins of Israel are rehearsed, moving notably from *idolatry* to *sexual immorality* to *testing Christ* to *grumbling*.

⁶¹ 5:10, 5:11, 6:10.

⁶² 5:7: ἐκκαθάρατε; 7:14: ἀκάθαρτά.

It is very surprising how readily virtually all commentators appear to ignore the fundamental continuity between the arguments and themes of 8:1–11:1 and the application of these very same themes to issues concerning public or corporate worship in 11:2–14:40.⁶³

Indeed, in each section, *some* believers are called to restrain themselves for the sake of others, as Thiselton points out elsewhere:

Chapters 8–14 place individualism, individual freedoms, and “autonomy” under a relativizing question-mark. In these chapters even “being right” is not enough if this brings damage to another.⁶⁴

Accordingly, Senft sums up chapters 8–14 as dealing with issues of community and worship.⁶⁵ Gorman asserts that chapters 8–14 form a unified application of Paul’s theme of cruciformity generally to “liturgical” issues.⁶⁶ Ackerman argues that chapters 8–14 apply Paul’s paraenesis to “problems concerning love”.⁶⁷ Ciampa and Rosner see that chapters 8–14 are undergirded by “the double command of love”.⁶⁸

The consistent exhortation to self-restraint for the sake of the other can be seen in each of the main subsections within chapters 8–14:

In 8:1-13, the opening verse makes clear that a spiritual “possession” (knowledge) is to be tempered by love. Indeed this important transition verse alludes back to chapters 1–4, where the problem of “puffed up” spirituality was emphatically countered with the message of the

⁶³ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 799.

⁶⁴ Anthony C. Thiselton, “The Significance of Recent Research on 1 Corinthians for Hermeneutical Appropriation of This Epistle Today,” *Neot* 40/2 (2006): 320-352; 331.

⁶⁵ Christophe Senft, *La Première Épître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens* (Paris: Delachaux & Niestle: 1979).

⁶⁶ Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 238.

⁶⁷ Ackerman, *Lo, I Tell You a Mystery*, 116.

⁶⁸ Ciampa and Rosner, *First Letter*, 370.

cross; and forward to chapters 12–14, where the theme of edifying ecclesial love reaches its peak. Here, as that theme is first introduced, the bold practice of reclining in an idol temple (ostensibly arising from firm Corinthian possession of “knowledge”) is to be restrained for the sake of the weaker brother or sister, who may otherwise be emboldened (ironically, οἰκοδομηθήσεται) to eat idol meat.

8:1: Now concerning meat sacrificed to idols, we know that “we all have [ἔχομεν] knowledge”. Knowledge [γνῶσις] puffs up [φουσιῶ], but love [ἀγάπη] builds up [οἰκοδομεῖ].

8:13: Therefore, if food causes my brother or sister [τὸν ἀδελφόν μου] to stumble, I will not eat meat ever again, in order that my brother or sister might not stumble.

In 9:1-27, Paul’s own freedom and rights as an apostle are shown to be put under self-restraint, for the sake of others’ salvation (so 19-22), and to avoid his own disqualification on account of lazy over-confidence (so 23-27).⁶⁹

9:1, 4: Am I not free [ἐλεύθερος]? Am I not an apostle?...

Do we not have the right [ἐξουσίαν] to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to bring along a believing wife...?

9:19: For, although I am free [ἐλεύθερος] of all, I have enslaved myself to all, in order that I might win many.

9:26-7: This is how I run: not aimlessly; and this is how I fight: not beating the air.

But I beat my body and enslave it, in order that I might not proclaim to others, and yet become disqualified myself.

⁶⁹ A variety of Jewish and Greco-Roman backgrounds has been suggested for this section. For a discussion of various possible backgrounds to this section, see Mitchell, “Pauline Accommodation,” in Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, 197-214. See also chapter four of David J. Rudolph, “A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Cor 9:19-23” (Ph.D. diss., Selwyn College, University of Cambridge, 2006); revised version forthcoming (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming). Whether Paul’s accommodation is best understood as an adaptability with regard to Torah (conventional view) or Pharisaic halakha (Rudolph) or rhetoric (Mark Nanos, “When in Rome, Would the Paul of ‘All Things to All People’ (1 Cor 9:19-23) Do as the Romans Do?” [paper presented at the Paul and Pauline Literature Group, International Meeting of the SBL, Rome, 2nd July 2009]), my point is that this theme of accommodation functions within chapters 8–10 to illustrate the call to self-restraint for the sake of others (even if it concurrently serves as self-defence).

In 10:1-11:1, the example of Israel's over-confident lack of restraint is given. Israel is shown to have had spiritual "possessions" equivalent to those of the self-assured in Corinth. But spiritual privilege is shown to bring with it a corresponding need for humility (10:12) and dependence upon Christ, as mutually participating members of his body (10:16). In-principle freedom is to be subservient then to the expression of dependence on the Lord (10:22) and consequently to pursuing the good of others within his body (10:23-11:1, where the "someone" who points out that the meat is consecrated is probably to be taken as a fellow believer).

10:12: So let the one who thinks they stand watch that they do not fall.

10:22: Or shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than him, are we?

10:23-24: "Everything is lawful" – but not everything benefits. "Everything is lawful" – but not everything builds up [οἰκοδομεῖ]. No one should be self-seeking, but rather should be other-seeking.

10:28: But if someone says to you, "This is consecrated meat", do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you.

10:31-33: Do not become a reason for the stumbling of Jews or Gentiles or the church of God – just as, in all things, I aim to please all people; not seeking to benefit myself, but to benefit many, in order that I might save them.

Chapter 10 thus arguably functions to apply the Pauline example of chapter 9 as follows:⁷⁰

Chapter 9a: Paul's intention to *serve others* by restraining his own freedoms and rights

Chapter 9b: Paul's intention to avoid disqualification by restraining *self-confidence*

Chapter 10a: The warning of Israel's misplaced *self-confidence*: eating with humble self-restraint before God

⁷⁰ Ciampa and Rosner draw on Senft and Chrysostom in arriving at a similar conclusion: *First Letter*, 433-4.

Chapter 10b: The situations of marketplace food and invitations: eating with a view to serving others

Merklein,⁷¹ Oropeza,⁷² Hall,⁷³ and others view chapters 8–10 in a similar way to this, seeing the two related but distinct problems of *participation in cult meals* and *consuming idol-meat* as underlying a carefully constructed argument against the “strong”, who are both *endangering others* and *endangering themselves*. It is noteworthy in terms of the present argument that it is the *interpersonal* application that both begins (chapter 8) and ends (chapter 10b) this section.⁷⁴

In 11:2-16, it appears that again, Paul believes that some sort of freedom or autonomy is being claimed and abused.⁷⁵ Both men and women are warned not to shame their “head” – which is, in parallel to 3:21-23, presented in a way that defies the Corinthian desire for possession: *no one may be said to be or to possess their own head; and the ultimate head is God*. Paul’s response thus again involves the corrective that freedom does not mean autonomy – in relation to others, or fundamentally, to God. Autonomy is to give way to mutuality “in the Lord” (ἐν κυρίῳ).

11:3-5: I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and man is the head of woman, and God is the head of Christ. Every man who prays or prophesies with a covering coming down from his head shames his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered shames her head.

⁷¹ Merklein, “Die Einheitlichkeit,” 169.

⁷² Oropeza, *Paul and Apostasy*, 60-61.

⁷³ Hall, *Unity*, 50.

⁷⁴ A fact that perhaps argues against Garland’s suggestion that the “weak” of chapter 8 are hypothetical: Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 347.

⁷⁵ I take it that with regard to men, Paul is referring (perhaps hypothetically) to the desire for a position of religious esteem associated with the *capite velato*. Plutarch mentions this practice in his question, “Why, when they are praying to the gods, do they [i.e. Roman men] cover the head, and yet when they meet people worthy of honour while they have the *himation* on their head, they uncover it?” Plutarch, *Roman Questions*, 10. With regard to women’s headcoverings, perhaps Paul is concerned that suspicious visitors (τοὺς ἀγγέλους?) might interpret the worship of the Corinthian Christian women with images of autonomous Roman wives or ecstatic female Bacchus-devotees or mystery priestesses in mind. Regardless, my emphasis here is that Paul responds to the situation by insisting on God-dependent mutuality.

11:11-12: Nevertheless neither woman is apart from man nor man apart from woman in the Lord [ἐν κυρίῳ]. For just as woman came from man, so also man comes through woman. But all come from God [ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ].

In 11:17-34, it seems that personal “rights” are being exercised at the expense of others’ dignity. Paul calls some to restrain their exercise of these rights, for the sake of those others who are being put to shame. The proclamation of the Lord’s death ought to be expressed in the context of concern for other believers.

11:26-7, 29: For as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. So whoever eats the bread or drinks from the cup of the Lord unfittingly will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord... For the one who eats and drinks without discerning the body [τὸ σῶμα] eats and drinks judgement on themselves.

11:33: So, my brothers and sisters, wait for one another when you come together to eat.

In 12:1-30, the claim to “spirituality” is being used to hurt or exclude others. Paul urges that the self be seen as part of a wider inter-dependent body, activated by the Spirit, in which arrogant exploitation is entirely out of place.⁷⁶

12:27: Now you are the body of Christ [σῶμα Χριστοῦ], and each is a member [μέλη] of it.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ My reading fits well with Bruce Winter’s suggestion that the concept of cursing one another in the name of a god (as illustrated in the curse tablets associated with the cult of Demeter and Persephone at the base of Acrocorinth) may underlie Paul’s statement here. The introductory verses would thus be an attack on interpersonal vilification rather than blasphemy: “I want you to know that no one who speaks by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus, curse!’”. See the discussion in Winter, *After Paul*, chapter 8.

⁷⁷ Here Paul adapts a conventional image used in the discussion of interdependent societies. Aristotle, for example, had declared, “Rather, all belong to the city. For each is a part of the city. And the supervision of each part is achieved with regard for the supervision of the whole”. Aristotle, *Politics*, 8.1. Often the metaphor is used in order to preserve the role of the “greater parts” of the political body (cf. Livy, *The History of Rome*, 2:32, 7-11). Paul rather goes on to use the image to insist on the honour of the “less noble” parts.

In 13:1-13, Paul demonstrates “the most excellent way”. Personal spirituality is to be expressed in love for others, rather than in a self-seeking pride in spiritual possessions. Love is ironically spoken about as a “possession” here, and depicted in a way that contrasts sharply with the claimed possessions of the self-assured in Corinth:

13:2: And if I have [ἔχω] prophecy and I see all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but I do not have love [ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω], I am nothing.

In 14:1-40, Paul urges that the better gifts are those that (verbally) serve others, for their edification. Self-restraint should be pursued in certain situations, for the sake of this common edification.

14:3: The one who prophesies speaks to people for their edification [οἰκοδομὴν] and encouragement and consolation.

14:26, 28, 30, 34: Let everything happen for edification [πάντα πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν γινέσθω]....

But if there is no interpreter, let them be silent [σιγάτω ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ] in church....

But if a revelation comes to another, who is seated, let the first be silent [σιγάτω]....

Let the women in the churches be silent [ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν].⁷⁸

It would seem that as a whole, chapters 8–14 serve to call the Corinthians to replace bold self-assertion with sensitive self-restraint for the sake of other believers. This pattern of willing self-restraint matches Paul’s emphatic depiction of his own experience in the climactic irony of 4:8-13, which precedes the solemn imperative: “Become imitators of me!” In fact, Paul’s exhortation in chapters 8–14 turns out to be a summons to a strangely similar way of life.

Having depicted himself as emphatically weak, he calls upon the strong in Corinth to restrain themselves for the sake of those who are weak in knowledge. Having depicted himself as

⁷⁸ In his 2009 revision of his 1986 article “Interpolations in 1 Corinthians”, Murphy-O’Connor lists Senft, Lang, Fee, Klauck, Hays and Walker alongside himself in viewing the verses about women as an interpolation. I do not enter into the issue here, as it would not affect my argument.

hungering and thirsting, he calls upon those who are rushing ahead at the Lord's Supper to refrain from publicly gorging themselves. Having depicted himself as responding to verbal abuse with verbal blessing, he calls upon those who are speaking in church to consciously limit themselves to building up others.

In calling the Corinthians to replace bold self-assertion with sensitive self-restraint, Paul is continuing to summon them to imitate his own embodiment of cruciform, self-sacrificial love, in the context of the relationships within the church body. Again, the pattern of arrangement of Pauline ethics suggested above would appear to be exhibited here.

Terminology of Chapters 8–14

The *terminology* of chapters 8–14 seems to affirm this pattern. Of the 25 times that the word σῶμα occurs in this section, 2 refer to Paul's own body,⁷⁹ 3 refer to the personal or Eucharistic body of Christ,⁸⁰ and 20 refer to the church as the body of Christ.⁸¹ The word ἀγάπη, after not occurring at all in chapters 5–7, occurs 11 times in this section, mainly in chapter 13, which, as Conzelmann hints,⁸² fits perfectly into chapters 12–14 in drawing this theme that underlies chapters 8–14 to a climax.⁸³

3. The Sources and Backgrounds of this Ethical Pattern

It is arguable that this pattern of ethical arrangement is Paul's christocentric development of the ethical model that he had inherited from his "former life in Judaism" (Galatians 1:13) as a

⁷⁹ 9:27, 13:3

⁸⁰ 10:16, 11:24, 11:27

⁸¹ 10:17, 11:29, 12:12 (3 times), 12:13, 12:14, 12:15 (twice), 12:16 (twice), 12:17, 12:18, 12:19, 12:20, 12:22, 12:23, 12:24, 12:25, 12:27

⁸² Reading 8:1, Conzelmann comments, "The commentary on ἀγάπη is supplied by chap. 13, that on οἰκοδομεῖ, 'builds up,' by chaps. 12 and 14... where the antithesis emerges between freedom slogans (as understood by the Corinthians) and 'upbuilding.' οἰκοδομεῖν in Paul does not refer primarily to the 'edification' of the individual (secondarily used in this sense in 14:4), but to the building up of the community". Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 141.

⁸³ This word occurs in 8:1, 13:1, 13:2, 13:3, 13:4 (3 times), 13:8, 13:13 (twice), 14:1. The cognate verb also occurs once in this section (and not at all in chapters 5-7), in 8:3; however the reference is to love for God rather than mutual love within the church.

Pharisee. In particular, three related features of ethical arrangement in many Jewish/Christian works of the Hellenistic-Roman period are worthy of note, and will be explored below. At the outset, however, it is important to recognise that this exploration does not arise from a “history-of-religion” interest in uncovering an evolving development of religious ethical reflection. Rather, as in the rest of the dissertation, I am seeking to demonstrate the feasibility of the view that Paul’s *kerygma* of the Messiah who died, rose, and awaits cosmic exaltation creatively shapes his utilisation and adaptation of other rhetorical resources. So far I have suggested that this occurs with regard to the macro-structure of 1 Corinthians as various oratorical and literary techniques (such as the motif of the “boastful ruler” or the technique of “digression”) are brought into the service of an overall *kerygmatic* arrangement of dual reversal. Here I wish to show that Paul’s ethical discussion similarly brings existing resources into the service of a creatively *kerygmatic* formulation.

The three related features of ethical arrangement worthy of note are the following:

- An emphasis on the fundamentality of the problems of sexual immorality, greed and impurity, often related to idolatry
- The latter placement of discussion of sins of interpersonal social interaction
- A logic in which the behaviour of the individual goes on to affect the community

These are by no means to be thought of as universal rhetorical rules, but rather recurring features found within a range of relevant literature. Indeed the choice of literature below is designed to illustrate the breadth of this range, more than a singular path of literary evolution.

An Emphasis on the Fundamentality of Sexual Immorality, Greed, and Impurity, and their Relation to Idolatry

It is worth noting firstly that, in terms of Greek ethical reflection, *Plato* had influentially presented the “appetites” or “passions” for sex and food as being the basest expressions of human desire, which need to be controlled by “reason”. The following is part of an argument

that develops a view of the soul as tripartite, consisting of rational, spirited, and appetitive parts:

Plato, *Republic* 4.439d

We shall think that these things are twofold and different to one another: the one that reasons in the soul we call rationality, and the other that loves and hungers and thirsts, and concerning the other desires feels disturbance, we call the irrational and appetitive, companion of various fulfilments and pleasures.

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle disapproved of unrestrained desire for the pleasures of sex and food, seeing such slavery to appetite as unfitting for the virtuous; and these emphases were influential on rival Hellenistic claimants to their legacy.⁸⁴ *Demosthenes*' assumptions about virtue and pleasure are illustrative of broader convention:

Demosthenes, 60.2 "*Funeral Speech*"

With good men, the needs of acquisitions and the enjoyments of the pleasures of life are looked down upon, but rather their whole desire is for virtue and praises.

⁸⁴ Of course, Hellenistic ethics were not uniform. In general, however, philosophers and moralists alike viewed the unrestrained or luxurious feeding of bodily appetites as a fundamental cause of disturbance and corruption. Even Epicurus, whose positive evaluation of bodily functions seems to challenge Plato's schema above, distrusted erotic love, luxury, and greed, holding that false beliefs about such things must be corrected by philosophy. Nussbaum paraphrases Epicurus' thought in this regard: "Cravings for unlimited quantities of food and drink, for meat, for gastronomic novelties, for exquisite preparations – cravings all not natural but based on false beliefs about our needs – obscure the desire's built-in limit.... Again, the longings associated with erotic love are held to result from a belief-based corruption of sexual desire, which itself is easily satisfied". Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 112-113. Kathy L. Gaca argues that Paul's charge to "flee fornication" is a call for avoidance of Gentile-idol-fertility sexuality, by aiming to keep sex within Christian marriage. It is thus a "sharp divide" with Greco-Roman sexual ethics because it restricts appropriate sexual activity to certain relationships within the boundary of only one religion. However, I am not persuaded that this is a fair representation of the evidence. Roman moralists of the first century, in particular, appear just as ready to denounce "fornication" as Paul; and Paul's denunciation does not appear to be so clearly related to alleged idolatrous practices as Gaca implies. See Kathy L. Gaca, *Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Ewing, N.J.: University of California Press, 2003), 293.

Boring, Berger and Colpe note that similar vices are still grouped together in Greco-Roman ethics by the time of Plutarch, who often combines “getting sexually involved with one’s mother, eating forbidden foods, restraining oneself from no vice”. They postulate:

The repeated naming of this series by Plutarch (in the second passage with an allusion to Plato) shows that the series of topics treated by Paul [beginning in 1 Corinthians 5] may possibly have a pagan tradition as its model. In each author the leading theme is “complete lack of restraint and thoroughgoing lawlessness”.⁸⁵

This may be the case, although it is by no means certain that Paul is drawing *directly* on “pagan” models. Jewish encapsulations of the Torah in the Hellenistic period often appear to exhibit a similar conception of the fundamentality of the bodily passions of sexual desire and greed.

A comparison of the *Decalogue* in Exodus 20 of the Hebrew and Greek texts reveals that the ordering of the second table has been rearranged in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, moving the prohibition of adultery to a place of priority:

| | Masoretic Text | Septuagint |
|-----------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | No other gods | No other gods |
| 2. | No idols | No idols |
| 3. | Using the name of the LORD | Using the name of the LORD |
| 4. | Keeping Sabbath | Keeping Sabbath |
| 5. | Honouring father & mother | Honouring father & mother |
| 6. | No murder | No adultery |
| 7. | No adultery | No stealing |
| 8. | No stealing | No murder |

⁸⁵ M. Eugene Boring, et al., eds., *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1995), 397.

| | | |
|-----|------------------|------------------|
| 9. | No false witness | No false witness |
| 10. | No coveting | No coveting |

Philo later makes much of this fact that the second table of the Decalogue (as seen in the Septuagint above) begins with the prohibition of sexual sin, a vice of “pleasure” that he takes to be universally fundamental.⁸⁶

Here Philo summarises the two “sets” of commandments:

Philo, *On the Decalogue* 121-123

And having wisely given these words concerning the honour of parents, he brings to an end the other “divine” set of five. In writing the other set, concerning prohibitions related to humans, he begins with adultery, taking this to be the greatest of crimes. For firstly it springs from the love of pleasure, which both enfeebles the bodies of those it holds, and loosens the tendons of the soul and destroys the very existence, consuming all that it touches as an unquenchable fire, leaving nothing safe in human life.

Later Philo moves from discussing the first set of five commandments to discussing the second set. Again he emphasises that adultery is the “heading” of this set:

⁸⁶ It is often noted that Philo’s ethics involves a merging of the *Mosaic* with the *Hellenistic* (specifically, Stoic): according to Roberto Radice the material of the work *On Virtue* “simply superimposes Mosaic morality on Greek aretology, relating the former to the idea of grace and the imitation of God”. Roberto Radice, “Philo and Stoic Ethics. Reflections on the Idea of Freedom,” in *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (ed. Francesca Alesse; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 141-168; 142. It is worth noting, however, that Philo’s engagement with “pagan” thought (to the extent that it is conscious) is not considered by him to represent *concession* or *syncretism*, but rather *illumination*, as the best of contemporary values are shown to have a grounding in God’s revelation through Moses. Josephus similarly views the best of the Greek philosophers as standing in the tradition of Moses: “For first of these [Gentile imitators of Judaism] were the Greek philosophers, for whom it seemed that they observed their forefathers; but who in deeds and in philosophy followed that one [i.e. Moses], similarly thinking about God, and teaching simplicity of life and fellowship with one another” (*Against Apion*, 2.281). This perspective may be helpful in considering other examples of Jewish ethics presented in this section.

Philo, *On the Decalogue* 168-169

And the first set, each having the form of a summary, contains these five; while the special laws are not few in number. In the other set [i.e. the second table of commandments] the first heading is against adultery, under which come many directions: against corrupters, against pederasty, against lustful living, participating both in unlawful intercourse and licentious defilement.

Elsewhere Philo relates different sets of commands to each other, characteristically expanding “adultery” to incorporate the pursuit of “pleasure” more generally:⁸⁷

Philo, *The Special Laws* 3, 8

In the second tablet, the first commandment is this: “Do not commit adultery”, because, I think, everywhere in the inhabited world, pleasure is a great force, and no part has escaped its domination.

In relation to the Enochic *Book of the Watchers*, William R.G. Loader finds that 1 Enoch 6-11 applies the commitment to proper “ordering” of chapters 1-5 to the issue of sexuality, as the angelic Watchers pursue sexual disorder in the model of the god Pan. This sexual disorder brings “impurity” (cf. 10:20-22) and draws on luxurious adornment (cf. 8:1ff); but the consequences of this “great sin” for humankind and for the Watchers’ offspring (cf. 10:9-10: the “sons of πορνεία”) are not necessarily sexual in nature. 15:11 summarises the sin of the offspring in terms of violence and affliction, perhaps illustrating the devastating social end of

⁸⁷ This expansion is common to many of the examples seen here. Robert Travers Herford views Rabbinic ethics as a continuation of such an approach: “The Old Testament gave a strong and unfaltering lead in the direction of sexual purity, continence, modesty, chastity, and the Rabbis followed that lead – or, rather, they built on that foundation a structure of their own, more elaborate in its details and more severe in its lines than that sketched in the older Scriptures. The commandment in the Decalogue [concerning adultery] was extended to include every kind of sexual offence, or even irregularity; and the breach of this commandment, so extended, was made one of the three deadly sins which the Jew must die rather than commit. The other two were idolatry and bloodshed.” R. Travers Herford, *Talmud and Apocrypha: A Comparative Study of the Jewish Ethical Teaching in the Rabbinical and Non-Rabbinical Sources in the Early Centuries* (New York: Ktav, 1971), 163.

the pursuit of taboo intermarriage. In chapters 17-19 the relation to idolatry becomes explicit.

Loader summarises:

At its heart is an action of sexual wrongdoing. Much of its impact, however, is not described in terms of further actions of sexual wrongdoing, either by the offspring or by their evil spirits.⁸⁸

A prayer in *Sirach* illustrates the way in which appetites for food and sex became thought of as fundamental vices to be avoided in much Jewish literature. This is presented as a prayer to the one who has the power to discipline the mind and discern sin:

Sirach 23:4-6

O Lord, Father and God of my life, do not give me conceited eyes, and turn lust away from me. Do not let the desires of the belly and intercourse overpower me, and do not give me over to a shameless soul.

Pseudo-Eupolemus presents Abraham's piety as resulting in him being above greed and beyond the reach of sexual sin:

Pseudo-Eupolemus, *Fragment 1*, 3-7⁸⁹

Having pursued piety, Abraham was pleasing to God....

When the elders came to him, suggesting that he might receive wealth in order to release the prisoners, he did not choose to take advantage of the unfortunate. But, having taken food for his young men, he returned the spoils....

⁸⁸ William R.G. Loader, *Enoch, Levi, and Jubilees on Sexuality: Attitudes Towards Sexuality in the Early Enoch Literature, the Aramaic Levi Document, and the Book of Jubilees* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 59. Loader (cf. especially 63) finds a similar pattern in the *Animal Apocalypse*: the sexual transgression of the Watchers precedes sins of violence and oppression among their heirs.

⁸⁹ Not much of the original context of this fragment survives. It seems that the author is pointing out the virtues that would have been applauded as pious. This version clearly differs from the Biblical account.

Further, he reported that the king was not able to have intercourse with Abraham's wife, and that his people and household were perishing.

The book of *Jubilees* closely links both (Gentile-like) idolatry and (Gentile-like) sexual immorality with impurity: idols themselves are impure, and thus need to be avoided (11:4, 15-16; 20:7; 21:5); and sexual immorality (even when committed by an individual) could bring defilement to Israel as a whole (4:22; 7:27; 16:5-6; 20:3-6; 25:1; 25:7; 30:13-15; 33:7; 33:10-11; 33:20; 35:14; 41:17; 41:25-26). This emphasis on the necessity of purity is a feature of much Jewish literature subsequent to the events associated with the Maccabean revolt against the Hellenisation of Antiochus Epiphanes.⁹⁰

In chapter 16 the sin of Sodom is summarised:

Jubilees 16:5 (Latin version)

All of their works are wicked and they are great sinners, making themselves unclean and enacting immoralities in their flesh, and accomplishing abominations throughout the land.

Later in the book Abraham teaches Ishmael, Keturah, Isaac, and their children. The verse below is representative of his whole teaching in this context:

Jubilees 20:7 (Latin version)

And therefore I charge you, my sons: love the God of heaven, and adhere to all of his commands. And refuse to go after all their idols and all their impurities.

⁹⁰ There is, of course, variation. Loader notes a contrast between *Jubilees* and the Temple Scroll: whereas the Temple Scroll has an interest in the relatively narrow (ritual) "purity" issue of seminal emission, the book of *Jubilees* more broadly "expands the tendency evident in the incest prohibitions [of the Holiness Code] to see sexual immorality as something which defiles". William R.G. Loader, *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Sexuality: Attitudes Towards Sexuality in Sectarian and Related Literature at Qumran* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 52.

James C. VanderKam notes:

The heroes of the book exhort their children to avoid impurity along with fornication and injustice (Noah, 7.20; Abraham, 20.3-6, where sexual impurity is stressed; 21.5; 22.14, 19, 23).⁹¹

The *Wisdom of Solomon* frequently depicts sexual immorality as a fundamental vice, and views sexual immorality and other sins as arising from idolatry.⁹² The verse below is part of a section that condemns the absurdity of idol worship:

Wisdom of Solomon 14:12

For the idea of idols was the beginning of sexual immorality, and their invention was the corruption of life.

This sexual immorality connected to false religion may also be characterised as impurity, as in Jubilees. The problems below are presented as the result of a commitment to idols. Note the loss of purity:

Wisdom of Solomon 14:22-27

It was not enough for them to stray concerning the knowledge of God, but also, living in great conflict due to ignorance, they call such evils peace! For, killing their

⁹¹ James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 131.

⁹² Although Greco-Roman philosophers and moralists themselves often denounced erotic infatuation, Jewish works of this era often appear to stereotype the “Gentiles” as obsessed with sex. Herford’s comments about the perception of the Rabbis are also applicable to this earlier period: “They were confronted by the fact that the Gentile world, in the midst of which they lived, was under little or no restraint in regard to sexual relations, either from public opinion or force of law. The Jew, wherever he turned, was liable to come in contact with what he felt to be abomination. Unless he retired from the world altogether, like the Essenes, he must guard himself somehow from moral contamination, from a danger that was not merely a matter of ritual purity, but a source of grave social corruption”. Herford, *Talmud and Apocrypha*, 164-165. W.D. Davies opines, “The *yetzer ha-ra* was regarded as expressing itself chiefly in two directions; it led to idolatry and to unchastity”. W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1955), 30.

children in sacrifice, or celebrating mysteries, or leading frenzies of strange rituals, they are pure neither in life nor marriage. Yet they lie in wait for one another in ambush or cause one another distress by committing adultery.

Book 3 of the Sibylline Oracles appears to conceive of the chief vices of the nations as arrogant greed and sexual immorality – at times connected with false worship.⁹³ The following occurs as an admonition that interrupts oracles of judgement, and is characteristic of the ethical emphases of this third Sibylline book. Such emphases may anticipate the later “Noachide Commandments”:

Sibylline Oracles 3.762-766

But enliven your thinking in your breast,

Flee unlawful worship, worship the living one.

Guard against adultery and homosexual intercourse.

Nourish and do not murder the children you have borne.

For the immortal one will become angry at the one who sins in these things.⁹⁴

⁹³ Rieuwerd Buitenwerf suggests that the chief vices in Book III (which he dates to the first century BCE) are greed (avarice) and fornication; and that such vices occur in a context of idolatry: Rieuwerd Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and its Social Setting With an Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), chapter 3. John J. Collins suggests that the chief vices in Book 3 are idolatry, greed, and fornication: John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Eerdmans, 1998), 123.

⁹⁴ Marcus Bockmuehl comments on the predecessors to the Noachide Commandments: “As soon as we move beyond the bounds of the canon, there are numerous texts of considerable relevance to the subject of universal ethics... the most important links in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings include the Book of Wisdom (notable for its connection of Gentile idolatry with sexual immorality and other corruptions, 14.12-31), various texts from the *Sibylline Oracles* 3-5, and especially *Jubilees* 7 and Pseudo-Phocylides”. Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 156. Roland Deines argues for a “creation ethic” that was prior to the formulation of the Noachide Commandments, and that was influential for the Jerusalem Decree of Acts 15. This creation ethic forbade idolatry, the consumption of blood, and sexual immorality. On the latter, Deines writes: “Ebenso widerspricht jede Form von „unnatürlicher“ Sexualität dem Schöpfungswillen Gottes, der den Menschen im Zueinander von Mann und Frau und im Hinblick auf die Möglichkeit der Fortpflanzung geschaffen hat”. Roland Deines, “Das Aposteldekret – Halacha für Heidenchristen oder christliche Rücksichtnahme auf jüdische Tabus?” in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz and Stephanie Gripentrog; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 323-395; 393-394.

The book of **4 Maccabees**, clearly reminiscent of a Platonic evaluation of the passions, presents an argument for the control of the desires for (firstly) sex and food, by reason. This opening section sets up the theme of this philosophical treatise:

4 Maccabees 1:1, 3-4

Godly reason is master of the passions....

If therefore it is plain that reason can master those passions that hinder self-control, gluttony and lust, then it will also become evident that it is able to rule those passions that hold back justice, such as malice; and those passions that hold back courage, such as suffering and fear and pain.

The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* present sexual immorality and greed as the chief expressions of sin against God. These foundational vices are occasionally explicitly linked to idolatry and impurity. It is largely agreed that the Testaments as we currently have them evidence a degree of Christian influence. It is also largely agreed that they express continuity with Jewish ethical argumentation,⁹⁵ and so it is interesting to see a continuation of a number of the ethical traditions examined so far, including an emphasis on the fundamental depravity of sexual immorality, idolatry and greed.

⁹⁵ Johannes Thomas boldly states, “Also, it has the special feature of being, at least basically, a Jewish book, and so one of the relatively few works of Hellenistic Judaism that everybody will agree is (also) paraenetic. Discussion of this work as a specimen of paraenesis will therefore add appreciably to our understanding of a genre for which our evidence is otherwise mainly Greco-Roman and Christian”. Johannes Thomas, “The Paraenesis of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*: Between Torah and Jewish Wisdom,” in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* (ed. James Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 157-190; 157. More conservatively, Harm W. Hollander asserts that “there is much to be said for the assumption of a Jewish Hellenistic background and origin of the ethics of the Testaments. But this conclusion by no means implies that the paraenesis either is Christian or cannot be Christian. For we should be aware of the fact that Christianity adopted (nearly) all the standard topics of Jewish paraenesis”. Harm W. Hollander, *Joseph as an Ethical Model in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 12-13. Martinus de Jonge, who strongly asserts that the Testaments are a Christian product, affirms that they evidence continuity with Jewish ethical argumentation, which is exactly the point I am hoping to demonstrate: “Many parallels simply illustrate the continuity in content and diction between Hellenistic-Jewish and early Christian paraenesis”. M. De Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as Part of Christian Literature: The Case of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 177.

The *Testament of Reuben* is first of the twelve, and introduces many of the themes of the collection. This Testament is summarised as concerning “thoughts”, and the section below deals especially with sexual immorality:

Testament of Reuben 4:6

For sexual immorality is the destruction of the soul, separating it from God and bringing it near to idols.

The *Testament of Judah* is summarised as being about “courage and the love of money and sexual immorality”:

Testament of Judah 18

Also I have read, in the books of Enoch the righteous, of the sorts of evil that you will do in the last days. Guard yourselves then, my children, from sexual immorality and from the love of money; listen to Judah your father, because these things remove you from the law of God.... For one who is enslaved to these two passions before the commands of God cannot obey God, because the passions have blinded that person's soul, making them go about during the day as though it is night.

The *Testament of Dan* is summarised as concerning “anger and lying”. The figures of Levi (representing priesthood) and Judah (representing royalty) are prominent throughout the *Testaments*. Here these two key figures are linked to sexual immorality and greed:

Testament of Dan 5:6-8

For I have read in the book of Enoch the righteous that your ruler is Satan, and that all of the spirits of sexual immorality and of arrogance will be subject to Levi, to trap the sons of Levi, making them sin before the Lord. And my sons will come near to Levi and sin with them in everything. And the sons of Judah will be caught up in greed, swindling the others as lions. On account of this, you will be led away together with

them, into captivity, and there you will be inflicted with all of the plagues of Egypt and all of the wickedness of the Gentiles.

The Latter Placement of Discussion of Sins of Interpersonal Social Interaction

The fundamental vices identified above are not infrequently presented *prior* to vices of social interaction.

As mentioned above, *Book 3 of the Sibylline Oracles* pictures the chief vices of the nations as arrogant greed and sexual immorality. Sometimes these vices are portrayed as giving way to interpersonal havoc. Book 3.175-193 provides a useful example. The arrogance of the nations results immediately in a craving for impiety among them, involving homosexual sex. The ensuing affliction may be said to arise from shameful greed and ill-gotten wealth, and has the effect of stirring up interpersonal strife, in the form of hatred and deceit:

Sibylline Oracles 3.182-191⁹⁶

And they will oppress mortals. But for those people there will be a great fall, when they begin their unrighteous arrogance. And among them will develop a compulsion for impiety, and men will have intercourse with men, and they will put children in shameful brothels. And a great distress will come to those people, and bring everything into confusion, and cut everything up and fill everything with evils, in shameful greed and ill-gotten wealth – in many areas, but mostly in Macedonia. And hatred will arise, and every sort of deceit will be among them.

Verses 3-8 of the *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* may be viewed as an attempt to summarise the Decalogue.⁹⁷ This summary prioritises sexual sin, placing such vice prior even to respect

⁹⁶ This is presented as an oracle of judgement against the “kingdom” from the “western sea”, arising after the rule of the Greeks and Macedonians – presumably, Rome.

⁹⁷ See P.W. Van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides with Introduction and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 112. More broadly, many of these examples of Jewish

for parents and God. Sexual sin, impurity, and the unjust accumulation of wealth are prominent in close proximity to one another. Stealing, lying, and honouring others are placed subsequently:

Pseudo-Phocylides, *Sentences* 3-8⁹⁸

Do not commit adultery, nor stir homosexual passion.

Do not sew together deceit, nor defile your hands with blood.

Do not become wealthy unjustly, but live from honourable means.

Be content with your possessions and abstain from those of another.

Do not tell lies, but always speak truth.

First honour God, and thereafter your parents.

In the *Gospel of Mark* Jesus is presented as illustrating the way in which a person is made impure by listing the sorts of sins that proceed from within. Once again there appears to be a general movement from vices including sex and greed to vices of social interaction:

Mark 7:20-23

He said, "It is that which comes out of a person that defiles the person. For from the heart of the person proceed evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, arrogance, foolishness. All these evils come from within and make a person unclean".

When the Synoptic Gospels present Jesus as being asked to list the commands of God, he lists the commands of the second table of the Decalogue, appending the command to honour father and mother. *Luke* alters the ordering of Matthew and Mark (where murder begins the list) to

ethics might be seen as attempts to rehearse or summarise the themes of the Torah in a new linguistic or cultural context. Thomas notes of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, "[W]e have the legacy of the law expressed in non-legal forms". Thomas, "The Paraenesis," in *Early Christian Paraenesis* (ed. Starr and Engberg-Pedersen), 187.

⁹⁸ These verses follow immediately from the introductory prologue.

prioritise the prohibition of adultery, perhaps in order to keep to the priorities of the Septuagint:

Luke 18:20

You know the commands: do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honour your father and mother.

This ordering is reminiscent of the *Sentences* of Pseudo-Phocylides, 3-8 above.

Josephus' discussion of the law in *Against Apion* loosely follows the ordering of the Decalogue in the Septuagint, placing the discussion of sexual laws immediately after the laws related to God and Temple, and prior to discussion of laws relating to the interactional issues of honouring parents, lying, and stealing. As in Philo, Pseudo-Phocylides and Paul, sexual and family issues are combined. In summary:

Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.190-208

1. (2.190ff): God – creator; no images may be made; responded to with the worship of virtue
2. (2.193ff): Temple – priesthood; sacrifices; laws; prayers; fellowship; purifications
3. (2.199ff): Marriage/Sex – man and wife; homosexual sex; getting married; submission; assault/adultery; abortion; purifications; Children – sobriety in upbringing, education, moral grounding; The Dead – funerals
4. (2.206): Honouring Parents – second to honouring God; respect to elders
5. (2.207): Lying – no secrets; confidence; no bribes
6. (2.208): Stealing – taking goods, laying hands on neighbour's property; taking interest

“These and many similar regulations are the ties that bind us together”.

Josephus' discussion of the penalties prescribed by the law in the same work follows a similar order:

Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.215-217

1. Sexual crime
2. Fraud/stealing
3. Dishonouring parents
4. Impiety toward God

Josephus viewed the Greek philosophers as having drawn on Moses to commend the dual themes of (individual) *simplicity of life* and (corporate) *fellowship with one another*:

Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.281

In deeds and in philosophy [the Greek philosophers] followed that one [i.e. Moses], similarly thinking about God, and teaching simplicity of life and fellowship with one another.

At a number of points in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, it is clear that the fundamental vices of greed and sexual immorality precede vices of social interaction. In the example below seven "spirits of error" seem to be presented as a reversal of God's good order of creation: sexuality is depicted as the *last* element of divine ordering, but the *first* spirit of error, and so on:

Testament of Reuben 3:3-7

First [of the spirits of error], the spirit of sexual immorality dwells in the nature and in the senses. Second, the spirit of greed, in the stomach. Third, the spirit of fighting, in the liver and the gall. Fourth, the spirit of flattery and trickery, in order that through meddling a person might appear seasonable. Fifth, the spirit of arrogance, in order that a person might be boastful and high-minded. Sixth, the spirit of falsehood, with

destruction and jealousy, to fake words and conceal words from family and friends. Seventh, the spirit of injustice, with which come stealing and profiteering, in order that a person might achieve the pleasures of their heart. For the spirit of injustice works together with the other spirits, through bribery. On top of all of these is the spirit of sleep, the eighth spirit, which comes together with deception and fantasy.

The *Testament of Benjamin* concludes and sums up the concerns of the *Twelve Patriarchs* under the heading of a “pure mind”. Once again there seems to be a movement from passion and greed through to sins of interaction:

Testament of Benjamin 6:1-6

The mind of the good person is not in the hand of the spirit of deception, Beliar. For the angel of peace guides their soul. They do not look passionately at perishable things, or gather wealth for the love of pleasure. They do not delight in pleasure, or grieve their neighbour, or fill themselves with food. They do not stray into the superficialities of what is seen, for the Lord is their portion. The good mind does not wait on the praise or dishonour of humans, and does not know any deceit or falsehood or fighting or reviling, for the Lord dwells in it and enlightens its soul; and it rejoices with all people at all times.

Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr suggests that the topics of the ethical lists of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, in their common ordering, may be represented in the first column of the table below.⁹⁹ Interestingly Niebuhr demonstrates a general movement, beginning with prohibitions of sexual immorality, adultery, greed, selfishness (in failing to show merciful provision for the bodily needs of others) and covetous desire, and moving subsequently to interpersonal issues of daily interaction such as stealing, arrogant behaviour, lying, evil speech, zeal, envy, deceit, and fighting. The other columns compare this ethical arrangement with a number of ethical sections of the Pauline Corpus:

⁹⁹ Column 1 reproduced from Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Gesetz und Paränese*, 161.

| <i>Twelve Patriarchs</i> | Galatians 5:16-21 | Ephesians 4:17-32 | Colossians 3:5-8 | 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| πορνεία μοιχεία πλεονεξία ἔλεος ἀπληστία | πορνεία ἀκαθαρσία ἀσέλγεια εἰδωλολατρία φαρμακεία | ἀσέλγεια ἀκαθαρσία πλεονεξία ἐπιθυμία | πορνεία ἀκαθαρσία πάθος ἐπιθυμία πλεονεξία | πορνεία ἐπιθυμία πλεονεκτέω ἀκαθαρσία |
| κλοπή ὕπερηφανία ψεῦδος καταλαλία ζήλος φθόνος δόλος μάχη | ἔχθρα ἔρις ζήλος θυμός ἐριθεία διχοστασία αἵρεσις φθόνος μέθη κῶμος | ψεῦδος λαλεῖτε ἀλήθειαν ὀργίζομαι κλέπτω λόγος σαπρός πικρία θυμός ὀργή κραυγή βλασφημία | ὀργή θυμός κακία βλασφημία αἰσχρολογία ψεύδομαι | φιλαδελφία ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους |

The similarity in ethical arrangement is clearly striking. Niebuhr elsewhere affirms that Jewish Hellenistic ethics are formed by an association of *behaviour directions of the Torah* with *popular-philosophical principles of the Hellenistic ethical tradition*.¹⁰⁰

A Logic in which the Behaviour of the Individual Goes on to Affect the Community

In a number of works that reflect on the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes in the 160s BCE, there is a logic in which the actions of a special few affect the wellbeing of the entire community.

The following examples from *1 Maccabees*, *2 Maccabees* and the later *4 Maccabees* show that the special few who act in zeal, purity and righteousness may bring about the purity of the whole nation.

¹⁰⁰ “Jüdisch-hellenistisches Ethos bildet sich somit aus in der Verbindung von Verhaltensanweisungen der Tora mit popularphilosophischen Grundsätzen der hellenistischen ethischen Tradition. Es dient der Wahrung jüdischer Identität angesichts konkreter Herausforderungen im Alltag der hellenistischen Diaspora und entfaltet sich im Rückbezug auf die eigene religiöse Überlieferung unter Heranziehung kultureller und philosophischer Traditionen der hellenistisch-römischen Welt”. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Hellenistisch-jüdisches Ethos im Spannungsfeld von Weisheit und Tora,” in *Ethos und Identität: Einheit und Vielfalt des Judentums in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* (ed. Matthias Konradt and Ulrike Steinert; Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002), 27-50; 42.

1 Maccabees 3:8

And [Judas Maccabeus] went through the cities of Judah and destroyed the ungodly out of Judah, and turned wrath from Israel.

2 Maccabees 5:27

But Judas Maccabeus, and a handful who had come with him, withdrew into the desert, and he survived in the manner of the wild animals in the mountains, together with those who were with him; and they continued to live on the nourishment of vegetation, so that they would not share in the defilement.

4 Maccabees 1:11

For it was not only the people in general who were amazed at their courage and endurance, but also those who were doing the torturing, as they were the cause that brought down the tyranny against the nation, having conquered the tyrant by their endurance, so that through them the homeland was purified.

This motif of the impact of the *special few* on the *nation* was further democratised by those who inherited the Judaism bequeathed by the Maccabean successes. The action of *every* individual in responding to the Torah became effective in a way that was comparable to Maccabean zeal.

From the perspective of the Pharisees, the adherence of individuals to the Torah and the traditions, and their avoidance of Gentile idolatry, affected the purity of the nation as a whole.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ On the nature of the Pharisees as an influential group pushing for national reform, see Roland Deines, "The Pharisees Between 'Judaisms' and 'Common Judaism'" in *Justification and Variegated Nomism* Vol.1 (ed. D.A. Carson et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 443-504; 461. See also Deines, "Pharisäer," in *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament: neubearbeitete Ausgabe, Band II* (ed. Lothar Coenen and Klaus Haacker; Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 2000), 1455-1468; 1461.

The *Psalms of Solomon* arguably express this Pharisaic perspective.¹⁰² In a number of these Psalms, it seems that the judgement of God that has come upon Jerusalem is interpreted as being due to the Gentile-like immorality of individuals, as in the example below:

Psalms of Solomon 2:11-16

They [i.e. the Gentiles] held up the sons of Jerusalem to ridicule,
because of the prostitutes among her.
Every passer-by entered in to them in broad daylight.
They [the Gentiles] mocked their lawless ways compared to their own doings.
In broad daylight they displayed their evil deeds.
And the daughters of Jerusalem are polluted according to your judgement.
For they defiled themselves in promiscuous disorder.
My stomach and my innards are sick because of this.
I will justify you, O God, with an upright heart,
because in your judgements there is justice, O God,
because you have repaid sinners according to their works,
according to their exceedingly wicked sins.

But the general logic of a relationship between individual behaviour and communal health is not only to be found in association with the Pharisees. In *Philo's On the Virtues* 34-50, he pictures "the Hebrews" as those who are marked by monotheism and consequent mutual love. Their enemies realise that if the Hebrews can be enticed to sexual immorality and idolatry, their mutual love will have lost its foundation, and will fall apart. The enemies act on this insight and find some success, before those Hebrews of greater virtue (the vast majority) retaliate and find ultimate victory. It is clear for Philo that the pursuit of personal (particularly

¹⁰² For the association of the Psalms of Solomon with the Pharisees, see, for example, Mikael Winninge, *Sinners and the Righteous: A Comparative Study of the Psalms of Solomon and Paul's Letters* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995).

sexual) virtue and the avoidance of idolatry directly affect corporate mutuality and peace. He concludes:

Philo, *On the Virtues* 47

Therefore, Moses says in the Exhortations, “If you should pursue righteousness and godliness and the other virtues, you will live a life free of war and in uniform peace”.

It may be, then, that these broad contours of ethical discussion in the period around the time of Paul are reflected in Paul’s own ordering of ethical sections.

A “Christologisation”¹⁰³ of Inherited Ethics

I view the source materials discussed above as illustrative of a broad conceptual pattern of ethical argumentation that began in Judaism of the Hellenistic era, in which the themes of the Torah were summarised or expressed in a culturally relevant (and culturally influenced) way, often involving a flow from fundamental vices of sexual immorality, greed, and impurity, to secondary vices of violent or exploitative social interaction, or involving a movement from the personal to the corporate. But this by no means exhaustively explains the ethics of Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ. It could never be said that a modification of the Torah is at the centre of Paul’s ethics.¹⁰⁴ Rather, Christ himself is at the centre of Paul’s ethics:

Philippians 1:21

For to me, living is Christ.

¹⁰³ I use the term “christologisation” rather than “Christianisation” simply to emphasise the fact that Paul’s adaptation is not a direct transfer of ethical assumptions from a “Jewish” to a “Christian” sphere; but a transference mediated by fulfilment in the person of Jesus the Messiah.

¹⁰⁴ Furnish rightly notes, “Paul never seeks to assemble, codify, or interpret in a legalistic way the statutes or wisdom of the Old Testament. It is not a ‘source’ for his ethical teaching in this sense”. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 34.

For Saul the Pharisee, coming to Jesus as the Christ forced a major re-evaluation of what he had formerly assumed and held dear. Roland Deines' comment illustrates the nature of this re-evaluation:

The pharisaic yearning for the commandments concerning the areas of holiness and purity (which cannot be separated) inevitably led to conflict with Jesus of Nazareth, who announced, in Messianic freedom and authority, a new Torah – or at least a totally changed Torah-understanding: purity and holiness are no longer ritually conveyable or representable, but rather are Jesus' gift to those who believe in his coming.¹⁰⁵

My contention, then, is that Paul's ethics might be seen fruitfully as a "christologisation" of Paul's Pharisaic tradition of Jewish ethics – a "christologisation" that is especially seen in the concept of *embodiment*: Christ died and rose in his "body of flesh", bringing to fulfilment the ritual and ethical demands of the Torah; and believers are those who are "in Christ", benefiting from and identifying with Christ's bodily death and resurrection. Believers are called, then, to an ethical identification with Christ that is both *corporeal* (putting away sexual immorality, greed, and impurity of bodies, and rather offering one's body to God) and *corporate* (putting off social vices/autonomy, and rather pursuing edifying love within the body of Christ).

It is in fact striking how often the Pauline literature refers both to the achievement of Christ and the identity of the believer in "bodily" terms. An example from each of the first seven letters of the canonical Pauline Corpus will suffice to demonstrate:

Romans 7:4: So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ.

¹⁰⁵ Deines, "Pharisäer," 1464; translated from the original German.

1 Corinthians 10:16: The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

2 Corinthians 4:10: Always bearing the death of Jesus in the body, in order that the life of Jesus might also become manifest in the body.

Galatians 6:17: For I bear the marks of Jesus in my body

Ephesians 2:16: And to reconcile both of them, in one body, to God, through the cross, putting the enmity to death in it.

Philippians 1:20: [It is] my eager expectation and hope that I might not be put to shame in any way, but that, in all boldness, now and always, Christ might be exalted in my body.

Colossians 1:22: But now he has reconciled you in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblemished and blameless before him.

It seems reasonable that Paul's christocentric *kerygma*, stemming especially from his Damascus Road experience, gave a new centre and logic to the ethics that he had already inherited as a Pharisee: Christian believers are to identify ethically with Christ, whose bodily crucifixion and resurrection they share. Thus they are to turn from godless bodily habitation (sexual immorality, greed, impurity), and inhabit the body of Christ (relating to their fellow believers in partnership and love). This need not be thought of as the only concrete way in which Paul could elaborate on his conviction that "living is Christ"; nevertheless it appears to be a common pattern.

Thus the movement that can be described *judicially* by Paul as being from boastful works to divine justification; and which can be described *relationally* by Paul as being from heart-hardened enmity to reconciliation, can also be described *religio-ethically* by Paul as being from idolatrous immorality, impurity, and greed to surrendered loving incorporation, in the worship of God.

4. The Function of this Ethical Pattern within 1 Corinthians

It should be recognised that such a conception of christocentric ethics is, to use the terminology of this dissertation, *kerygmatic*: it implies dependence on God's Messiah who died and rose bodily. The governor of Christian conduct is Christ, whose own embodied crucifixion, resurrection, and future glory are read as part of the story of God's purposes for humankind that began at Eden and then focused on Israel. The church accepts the salvific embrace of Christ, and evidences this union with Christ in personal and communal bodily habitation, exuding Christ's cruciformity, Christ's risen-ness, and a longing for Christ's future appearance in glory. In other words, the Christian church is called to follow Christ and dependently express identification with him, bodily.¹⁰⁶

This ethical logic – of dependence on God in Christ – is perfectly fitting in terms of the themes and flow of 1 Corinthians. The opening verses of the letter anticipate the main themes of the letter by insisting that everything the Corinthians possess comes as a gift from God *in Christ*:

I thank my God always concerning you, because of the *grace of God* that *he has given you in Christ Jesus* – that in every way you have been made rich *in him*, in all speech and all knowledge, just as *the testimony of Christ has been confirmed* among you, so that you are not lacking in any gift as you eagerly await *the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who* will also confirm you until the end, blameless on the day of our

¹⁰⁶ “In the *bodily* obedience of the Christian, carried out as the service of God in the world of everyday, the lordship of Christ finds visible expression and only when this visible expression takes personal shape in us does the whole thing become credible as Gospel message”. Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (trans. W.J. Montague; London: SCM, 1969. London: SCM Press, 1969), 135; emphasis mine.

Lord Jesus. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with his son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

As Chrysostom perceives, the emphasis of these verses is that the Corinthians have received the grace of God in Christ, and look forward to the future fulfilment of God's work in Christ. They are to view themselves (and their possessions) as *utterly dependent on God in Christ – a position that ought to cure the disease of proud autonomy*:

Do you see the repetition of the name of Christ? By this it is clear even to those who are exceedingly dim that he [Paul] does not do this vainly or simple-mindedly, but so that through concentrated application of this good appellation he might oppose their inflammation, and clean out the decay of their disease [τὴν σηπεδόνα τοῦ νοσήματος].¹⁰⁷

I have argued in chapter 3 of this dissertation that the first main section of the letter body, 1:10-4:21, exhibits precisely this emphasis. In these chapters Paul pits Corinthian autonomous, boastful, triumphalistic reliance on that which is *human* against the grace of *God* epitomised in the cross of Christ:

It is from God that you *are*, in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom for us from God, that is, righteousness and sanctification and redemption – in order that, just as it is written, “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord”. (1 Corinthians 1:29-31)

Given the investigation of Pauline ethics and 1 Corinthians above, it would appear that in chapters 5–14 of 1 Corinthians, Paul goes on to apply the “cruciform corrective” of chapters 1–4, via his own example, to the progression of issues that he would customarily pursue in an ethical section. That is, the confrontation of the cross with triumphalistic human autonomy is applied to the church firstly in relation to issues connected with sexual immorality, greed, and

¹⁰⁷ Homily 2 on 1 Corinthians; PG 61.19.

impurity; and secondly in relation to issues of (potentially exploitative) relationships within the church body. In particular, chapters 5–7 see Paul countering the bold assumption of bodily self-ownership with a challenge to acknowledge that the cross demands surrender to the claims of divine ownership in Christ. Chapters 8–14 see Paul countering self-assertion in the realm of church relationships with a challenge to pursue (cruciform) self-restraint for the sake of others in Christ’s body.

5. Relation to Other Conceptions of Pauline Ethics

Paul and Solidarity

An emphasis on union with Christ as the bedrock of Pauline ethics is nothing new. For Calvin, a transformed life arises from this fundamental solidarity of believers with their Lord:

Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us. For this reason, he is called “our Head” [Eph. 4:15], and “the first-born among many brethren” [Rom. 8:29]. We also, in turn, are said to be “engrafted into him” [Rom. 11.17], and to “put on Christ” [Gal. 3:27]; for, as I have said, *all that he possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with him*. It is true that we obtain this by faith.¹⁰⁸

Now, both repentance and forgiveness of sins – that is, newness of life and free reconciliation – are conferred on us by Christ, and both are attained by us through faith.¹⁰⁹

Pope Benedict XVI draws on Pauline terminology to indicate that Christian ethics flows from solidarity with Christ, particularly in terms of death and resurrection:

¹⁰⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. John T. McNeill; trans. and index Ford Lewis Battles; Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster, 1960), III.i.1; emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1960. III.iii.1.

The disciple is bound to the mystery of Christ. His life is immersed in communion with Christ: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). The Beatitudes are the transposition of Cross and Resurrection into discipleship. But they apply to the disciple because they were first paradigmatically lived by Christ himself.¹¹⁰

In agreement with many historic and recent¹¹¹ studies of Pauline ethics then, the conception I have outlined in this chapter emphasises identification with Christ as an essential foundation. However, I have sought to freshly highlight the way in which the image and terminology of the “body” is especially important for Paul in making this connection.¹¹²

This conception of Pauline ethics differs just slightly from recent conceptions of Pauline ethics that heavily emphasise the ecclesial dimension (notably by Richard B. Hays¹¹³ and David G.

¹¹⁰ Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (London: Doubleday, 2007), 74.

¹¹¹ For example, Furnish writes “the decisive factor behind this [ethical] teaching is the apostle’s understanding of what it means to be ‘in Christ’ and to ‘belong’ to him”. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 211. Schrage writes, “The starting point and basis for Paul’s ethics is the saving eschatological event of Jesus’ death and resurrection”. Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 172. Burridge asserts that “there is a basic commitment to the story of Jesus underlying both Paul’s ethical teaching and his wider theology”. Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 143.

¹¹² Joseph Sittler, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (as evidenced in the citation at the beginning of this chapter), and Eduard Lohse are similarly distinctive in emphasising the *body* as the primary context and image for Christian ethics. Sittler writes, “The Church is the fellowship of the faithful which is created and bound together, *not* by men’s mutual perception of a common faith in themselves, or religion, or even in God, but by the faithfulness of God become concrete in a body. This body was the actual historical appearing of a Man; and the Church, the body of Christ, is the organic household of the ‘members’ of the body”. Joseph Sittler, *The Structure of Christian Ethics* (LTE; Louisiana, Ky.: Louisiana State University Press, 1958; repr. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 11. Lohse writes, “Christians are aware that their body belongs to the resurrected Lord, so that life is now lived by looking to him”. Eduard Lohse, *Theological Ethics of the New Testament* (trans. Eugene Boring; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1991), 116; trans. of *Theologische Ethik des Neuen Testaments* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1988).

¹¹³ Richard B. Hays, “Ecclesiology and Ethics in 1 Corinthians,” *ExAu* 10 (1994): 31-43; Cited 16th October 2007. Online: <http://www.northpark.edu/sem/exauditu/papers/hays.html>

Horrell¹¹⁴), in that I would subordinate the *ecclesial* “body of Christ” dimension to a more general ethics of union with Christ. Horrell writes:

[T]he first and most fundamental moral norm in Pauline ethics is that of corporate solidarity.¹¹⁵

As extremely important as corporate solidarity is to Paul, I would suggest that a necessarily more fundamental norm is *Christ* himself, with whom identification may be flexibly expressed. The ethical *norma normans* for Paul is *Jesus Christ, who took on flesh, died, rose, and awaits future revelation*. Paul may apply his ethics of “living is Christ” creatively in a variety of ways, including desire for Christ, witness to Christ, and individual and corporate bodily imitation/habitation of Christ. My claim in this chapter is that in consciously “ethical” sections of his letters, this christocentric ethic appears quite frequently to be expressed in a summons from godless, independent bodily habitation to Godward, dependent bodily habitation, involving surrender of the corporeal body to God’s ownership through Christ and submission to God’s placement in the corporate body of Christ.

The main ethical section of 1 Corinthians (5–14) follows this pattern, and in this case particularly emphasises the commitment to present humility, restraint, hardship and hiddenness called for by the *pre-parousia shadow of the cross*. The cross is alluded to in 5:6-7; 6:9-12, 20; 7:23-24; 8:11; 10:16; 11:1 (by extension); and 11:23-26. The deferred future destination of Christ and his people is alluded to in 5:5; 6:2, 14; 7:26 (by extension); 9:24-27 (by extension); 11:32; and 13:8-12. In this letter then, Paul’s flexible approach to ethically applying the norm of identification with Christ allows him to relatively downplay the motivation of present “riseness” (which is far more prominent in other ethical portions within the Pauline Corpus such as Romans 6, Galatians 5 and Colossians 2-4), and to accentuate this particular perspective of solidarity with Christ.

¹¹⁴ David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2005).

¹¹⁵ Horrell, *Solidarity*, 129.

Paul and Passion

David Charles Aune has attempted to summarise the movement in scholarly thought concerning “Paul’s negative assessment of sexual passions and desires”:

As we have seen, Paul repeatedly connects specific terms for “passion”... and “desire”... with immoral behaviors. Paul’s negative characterization of these passions fits within a larger complex of issues, including idolatry, impurity, and various sexual practices. Recent studies have focused on the precise relationship between fleshly desire, immoral behaviour, and Paul’s conception of sin and sexuality.¹¹⁶

My own examination above agrees with this recent scholarly tendency to be attentive to the “complex of issues” apparent in Paul’s “negative” ethical characterisations. My own contribution is not to examine the relationships within this “complex” (although I would add “greed” to Aune’s list), but to see how the complex functions within the flow of Paul’s ethical sections. Generally, it appears to represent Paul’s conception of bodily habitation outside of Christ. It is a (theologically) “previous” way of life, to which believers should not return; and the rejection of this embodied lifestyle goes hand-in-hand with the assumption of a new embodied lifestyle “in the Lord”.

¹¹⁶ David Charles Aune, “Passions in the Pauline Epistles: The Current State of Research,” in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought* (ed. John T. Fitzgerald; London: Routledge, 2008), 221-237; 228.

Paul and Love

Richard A. Burridge hints at a Christocentric bodily conception of Pauline ethics, but seeks to understand “other-regarding love” as the primary application, to which other applications should be subordinated.¹¹⁷

However, I have sought to argue that it is possible to understand “other-regarding love” as Paul’s *quintessential* positive ethical imperative, without seeing it as the sieve through which *all* other ethical outworkings of Christic identification must pass. Paul has a certain freedom in giving ethical expression to identification with Christ, allowing a range of applications, including apostolic commitment, personal mortification of sexual sin, corporate solidarity, non-retaliation toward evildoers, and, supremely, other-regarding love. It is Christ himself who remains central, and if any concept is a sieve for further application, it is perhaps most often the concept of “body” – though even this would be claiming too much.¹¹⁸ It is more accurate to say that Paul’s *frequent* practice in giving sustained moral application to churches is to use the concept of the “body” to indicate the ways in which identification with Christ should have ethical expression; and this ethical expression is often conceived in terms of surrender of the body to God’s ownership through Christ and submission to God’s placement in the ecclesial body of Christ (quintessentially pursuing self-sacrificial love).

Paul and Ethical Innovation

Martin Dibelius proposed in 1928 that:

¹¹⁷ “Horrell argues that Paul’s concerns for holiness and purity are part of what it means to be in Christ. *Paul appeals for holiness because we are the body of Christ* – and a member of that body cannot be one flesh with a prostitute (1 Cor. 6.15-16). Yet *that same idea of the body of Christ* produces Paul’s concern for unity, seen in ‘look to the good of your neighbour’ (1 Cor. 10.24) and a regard for others, especially the ‘inferior’ or less honoured among the many different members of the body of Christ in 1 Cor. 12.12-26. This means that there can be no judging of others”. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 152; emphasis mine.

¹¹⁸ For example, it is never explicit in Paul that non-retaliation toward the evil of outsiders is subsumed under an overarching concept of “body”. Equivalently, it is not clear in Paul that avoidance of *porneia* is consistently subsumed under an overarching concept of “love”.

“Pauline paraenesis” consists of materials appropriated from the Hellenistic world and then “Christianized” by the apostle.¹¹⁹

Since then, the relative influences of Hellenistic¹²⁰ and Jewish/Old Testament¹²¹ ethics on the ethics of Paul have been debated. Horrell usefully summarises the essential insight and question that arises from these debates:

[A]t a number of points, the content of Paul’s moral exhortation exhibits similarity with, and probably the influence of, contemporary Graeco-Roman as well as Jewish moral traditions. Nor is it to be denied, in contrast, that Paul gives to his ethical instruction a distinctively Christian, theological basis and motivation. What remains open to debate is the *extent* to which this theological basis shapes and forms the character and content of Pauline ethics, or, put the other way round, the extent to

¹¹⁹ Cited in Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 260.

¹²⁰ For example, seeing substantial dependence: Lauri Thurén: “New Testament scholars have failed to demonstrate much original material in the early Christian exhortations themselves, although their combination and function may deviate from those of the neighboring cultures. Yet surely the first Christians did not invent an essentially new set of rules or guidelines for a proper life. Instead, an opposite trend can be discerned.... It seems, however, that there was something special, indeed exceptional, about early Christian paraenesis: the motivation, that is, the way in which willingness to comply with these instructions is created. Somehow the recipients’ status as Christians was seen as providing a new impetus for leading a proper life”. Lauri Thurén, “Motivation as the Core of Paraenesis – Remarks on Peter and Paul as Persuaders,” in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* (ed. James Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 354. And seeing substantial dissimilarity, Leander Keck: “The vocabulary of ethics used in the major philosophical traditions is generally absent from the New Testament.... Moreover, even when some terms common in contemporary ethics discourse do appear, they are used in quite different ways.... Like the rest of the New Testament writers, [Paul] stands in a different stream of tradition and is at home in a different kind of community”. Leander E. Keck, “Re-thinking ‘New Testament Ethics’,” *JBL* 115/1 (1996): 3-16; 8-9.

¹²¹ For example, Brian S. Rosner, who argues that the Old Testament and its reception were of decisive importance: “When scholars investigate the Jewish background to New Testament ethics, the impact of Scripture in three directions ought to be taken into account: the influence of Scripture *directly* upon early Jewish moral teaching, its influence *directly* upon the New Testament, and the *indirect* influence of Scripture upon the New Testament via the mediation of early Jewish moral teaching”. Brian S. Rosner, “A Possible Quotation of Test. Reuben 5:5 in 1 Corinthians 6:18a,” *JTS* 43/1 (1992): 123-127; 127; emphases original.

which they reproduce what was morally commonplace or presume a model essentially derived from other ancient traditions.¹²²

It may be observed that my own suggestions in this chapter concur with those views that emphasise the decisive influence of the Christ event on Paul's theology and ethics.¹²³ For Paul, ethics is bound up with identification with Christ. I am also in agreement with Rosner that the Torah and Jewish tradition were of crucial importance to Paul; but I would emphasise that the Jewish interpretative tradition was itself impacted by Hellenistic moral discourse, and that Paul was often directing his material to those who lived in Roman cities and colonies. So in terms of formulation (e.g. the denigration of evil "passions") and literary features (e.g. the use of catechetical lists and conventional imagery), Paul exhibits resonance with Greco-Roman moral discourse.

Wayne Meeks rightly notes the resulting mixture of apparent backgrounds:

Even more striking than in 1 Thessalonians is the way in which [in 1 Corinthians] Paul can mix together commonplaces of Greek and Roman moral rhetoric, arguments from Jewish scripture, and beliefs and rules peculiar to the Christian sect.¹²⁴

I concur then that the primary originality of Paul's ethics lies in what Dibelius called the "Christianization", and what I have called the "chistologisation", of his inherited ethics. I view this as a thoughtful *kerygmatic* adaptation rather than a simple transference. Because Christ is the embodied fulfilment of the Torah, those who are enlivened by Christ's Spirit manifest the Christic ideals to which the Torah (and its ongoing interpretation) bore witness.

¹²² Horrell, *Solidarity*, 24.

¹²³ For example, Furnish: "Undoubtedly, Paul's own personal background in Judaism and his experiences as a Jew, the general moral climate of his age, and the specific moral problems he encountered in his congregations – all helped to determine the direction of and give shape to his concrete ethical teaching. But the decisive factor behind this teaching is the apostle's understanding of what it means to be 'in Christ' and to 'belong' to him". Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 211.

¹²⁴ Meeks, *Moral World*, 131.

6. *Kerygmatic Rhetoric* and Pauline Ethics

Chapters 5–14 may be seen as the main hortatory section of 1 Corinthians, and may be summarised as follows:

Chapters 5–7: The Cross Applied I: “Your Body Belongs to the Lord”

Sexual Immorality, Impurity and Greed

A: 5:1-13: Sexual Immorality (the refusal to judge)

B: 6:1-11: Greedy exploitation (an apparent inability to judge)

A': 6:12–7:40: Sexual Immorality, the body, marriage

Chapters 8-14: The Cross Applied II: “Discern the Body”

Knowledge and Rights

A: 8:1-13: Meat offered to idols (using knowledge and rights to endanger weaker brothers and sisters)

B: 9:1-27: Paul’s example/defence (foregoing rights for others and self)

A': 10:1–11:1: Meat offered to idols (foregoing rights for self and others)

Tradition and Division

A: 11:2-16: “I praise you for keeping the traditions I passed on” (public worship)

B: 11:17-22: “I do *not* praise you” (in both v17 and v22)

A': 11:23-34: “I passed on to you what I also received” (tradition of Lord’s Supper)

Gifts and Love

A: 12:1-31: Gifts within the body (mutual interdependence)

B: 12:31–13:13: Love

A': 14:1-40: Gifts (for ordered edification of the whole)

The broad movement of this structure evidences similarity with ethical sections in other letters of the Pauline Corpus, and seems to reflect a *kerygmatic* renegotiation of the ethics that Paul inherited as a Pharisee of the Roman period. Within 1 Corinthians this functions to apply the cruciform corrective of chapters 1–4 to a conventional Pauline sequence of ethical issues. Those who imitate the apostolic way of the cross of Christ are called to express their identification with Christ by restraining the proud pursuit or allowance of particular bodily appetites, and pursuing self-sacrificial love within Christ’s body.

Conclusion to Chapter 4

In this chapter I have argued that Pauline hortatory sections often evidence a commonality of flow, moving from an emphasis on sanctification of the church that involves avoidance of

sexual immorality, impurity, and greed/passionate desire in relation to *bodies*, to an emphasis on sanctification of the church that involves the avoidance of inter-relational sin, and the promotion of love within the *body* of Christ. I have examined numerous hortatory sections of the Pauline Corpus, and found this pattern to be well represented, although less so in the Pastorals than in the earlier letters.

This progression seems to be present in 1 Corinthians 5–14, in which both the themes and the terminology of chapters 5–7 and chapters 8–14 strikingly match the respective elements of the identified pattern.

It seems that such a progression of ethical issues may draw on a number of emphases in early Jewish ethical formulation – which was itself influenced by Greco-Roman moral reflection. In particular, one finds in a range of relevant literature an emphasis on the fundamentality of the problems of sexual immorality, greed, and impurity; the latter placement of sins of interpersonal social interaction; and a logic in which the behaviour of the individual goes on to affect the community. My contention, however, is that Paul's reception of such a heritage is once again renegotiated with his *kerygma* of the Messiah who died and rose bodily.

This conception of Paul's ethics agrees, then, with the common emphasis in scholarship on union with Christ as the bedrock of Pauline exhortation. However, it especially draws attention to the way in which this union is often expressed in bodily terms.

In 1 Corinthians, then, the *kerygma* that creatively shapes Paul's utilisation and adaptation of existing oratorical or literary resources in the opening and closing of the letter body is also evident in chapters 5–14. Together, these sections call for dependent identification with God's Messiah who died, rose, and awaits cosmic manifestation.

Chapter 5

1 Corinthians 15: Disregard for the Dead is Set Against the Future Inhabitation of Christ's Resurrection

1. The Placement of the Discussion of Resurrection

John Chrysostom states:

[In 1 Corinthians, Paul] places the most severe issue of all last – that concerning the resurrection.¹

John Calvin ponders:

[W]hy it is that he has left off or deferred to the close of the Epistle, what should properly have had the precedence of everything else?²

That is, if, in denying the resurrection of the dead, some in Corinth indicate that they have “no knowledge of God” – as Paul reveals in 1 Corinthians 15 – why spend fourteen chapters dealing with less pressing issues before disclosing this catastrophic error?

I have argued in chapter 1 of this dissertation that 1 Corinthians exhibits a Christian renegotiation of the Jewish motif of *dual reversal*. The letter can therefore be characterised as employing *kerygmatic rhetoric*, moving from a corrective summons to follow the way of the *cross* in chapters 1–4 through to a corrective summons to await manifest *resurrection* in chapter 15. I noted that the concepts and terminology of the motif of dual reversal are found substantially in 1 Corinthians, and are especially present in chapters 1–4 and chapter 15. In this chapter I suggest that attention to the motif of reversal allows a smooth and convincing reading of the resurrection chapter.

I begin by considering scholarly interpretation of the chapter.

¹ Homily 26; PG 61.212.

² Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles*, Vol.2; 7.

2. Scholarly Interpretation of Chapter 15 and its Situation

The main problem addressed in chapter 15 (or at least the presenting problem) is clear (in 15:12), but interpretatively problematic:

Why do some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

The interpretative problem is that it is hard to envisage how first-generation Christians, whose conversions had been centrally related to a message about one who had been resurrected from the dead, could see no problem in saying “There is no resurrection of the dead”.³ Certainly, Paul’s argument relies on the fact that they do not consciously aim to deny *Christ’s* resurrection from the dead. Nevertheless an intentional denial of resurrection in general seems astonishingly bold. A number of explanations have been put forward. Anthony C. Thiselton groups these overlapping categorisations of the problem as follows:⁴

1. Certain people in Corinth found themselves unable to believe in any kind of postmortal existence
2. Certain people in Corinth believed that the resurrection had already occurred
3. Certain people in Corinth had difficulties with belief in the resurrection *of the body*

The examination of Paul’s argumentation in this chapter usually recognises discrete sections along similar lines to the following:⁵

1-11: The resurrection of Christ

12-19: The denial of the resurrection

20-28: The consequences of Christ’s resurrection

³ See Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 562; Helmut Merklein, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther, Kapitel 11,2 - 16,24* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2005), 304.

⁴ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 1172-1175.

⁵ This particular wording comes from Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians* (TNTC; Nottingham, IVP Academic, 2008); repr. of *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (2nd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985).

29-34: Arguments from Christian experience

35-49: The resurrection body

50-58: Victory over death

These divisions are largely agreed upon, although they may be said to express *topical* organisation (Holleman,⁶ Garland,⁷ Johnson⁸), *conventional rhetorical* organisation (Watson,⁹ Thiselton,¹⁰ Wegener¹¹), or *chiastic* organisation (Welch,¹² Hull¹³).

A difficulty in attempting to posit a conceivable coherent problem behind the issues in this chapter is the fact that each of the groupings identified by Thiselton above finds apparent confirmation in different parts of the chapter, although none of the three explanations is comprehensively satisfying.

First Grouping: Certain People in Corinth Found Themselves Unable to Believe in Any Kind of Postmortal Existence

This perspective finds some support in those parts of the chapter that counter a mis-estimation of “vanity”, a distaste for labour, a lack of perseverance and general moral laxity:

15:17: But if Christ has not been raised, your faith is useless, you are still in your sins.

⁶ Joost Holleman, *Resurrection & Parousia: A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).

⁷ Garland, *1 Corinthians*.

⁸ Andrew Johnson, “Firstfruits and Death's Defeat: Metaphor in Paul's Rhetorical Strategy in 1 Cor 15:20-28,” *WW* 16/4 (1996): 456-464; “Turning the World Upside Down in 1 Corinthians 15: Apocalyptic Epistemology, the Resurrected Body and the New Creation,” *EQ* 75/4 (2003): 291-309.

⁹ Duane F. Watson, “Paul's Rhetorical Strategy in 1 Corinthians 15,” in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (ed. Stanley E Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 231-49.

¹⁰ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 1177-8.

¹¹ Mark I. Wegener, “The Rhetorical Strategy of 1 Corinthians 15,” *CTM* 31/6 (2004): 438-455.

¹² John W. Welch, “Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29): Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology,” *JBL* 114/4 (1995): 661-82.

¹³ Michael F. Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead (1 Cor 15:29): An Act of Faith in the Resurrection* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

15:19: If for this life alone we have hoped in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all people.

15:32b: If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”

15:58: So, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

A Corinthian focus on the need to enjoy the present may hint that there is no hope beyond the grave. Strabo recounts a grave inscription in which an apparent lack of hope for an afterlife calls for enjoyment of pleasures in the present:

Strabo, *Geography* 14.5.9

“Sardanapallus, child of Anakundaraxis, built Anchiale and Tarsus in one day. Eat, drink, play! – as all this is not worth it”, meaning a snapping of the fingers. Choirilos also reminds of these things, and indeed these verses are well-travelled: “I have these things: as much as I have eaten and sown my wild oats and have felt the delights of love; but these many blessings I have left behind”.

The resurrection-deniers of Corinth would thus be somewhat similar to the “self-lovers” identified by Philo, who view the termination of death as a reason to enjoy the body while one has it:

Philo, *The Worse Attacks the Better* 33

[Self-lovers reason to themselves:] But did nature create pleasures and enjoyments and all of the delights along the way of life, for the dead or for those never born, and not for those who are living? And wealth and glory and honour and rule and other

such things – what will persuade us not to seek these things, which supply not only a safe life, but a happy life?

The “ungodly” identified in the Wisdom of Solomon are similarly parodied for supposing that impending death justifies licence in life:

Wisdom of Solomon 1:12,15-2:1,6,21-22

Do not seek death by the deception of your life.... For righteousness is immortal.

But the ungodly, with their actions and their words, have called death upon themselves: having considered it to be a friend, they have become dissolute and made an allegiance with it, because they are worthy to share in it. For they reasoned within themselves wrongly: “Our life is short and tedious, and there is no cure for the end of a person’s life, and no one has been known to be released from Hades.... Come then and let us enjoy the good things that are here, and let us use creation to the full, as in youth”.... These things they reasoned, and were deceived. For they were blinded by their own wickedness, and did not know the mysteries of God or hope for the reward of holiness or discern the prize for blameless souls.

Likewise, the “sinners” identified in the Epistle of Enoch are depicted as embracing sin because of their wrong assumptions about death and the afterlife:

1 Enoch 102:6-9 (Greek version)

When you [that is, the godly] died, then the sinners declared, “The godly died according to fate – and what did they gain from their works? They die just like us! See how they die with grief and darkness – what is the benefit to them? From this time, will they be raised, and will they be saved, and see into the age? We [or “They”] eat and drink for this very reason, swindling and sinning and stealing and seizing property and seeing good days”.

Indeed, Insawn Saw follows Mitchell¹⁴ in pointing out that the final and climactic verse of 1 Corinthians 15 contextualises the whole chapter as a persuasion to spend the present in *labour* (rather than despair or licentiousness):

Paul's ultimate goal is not merely to give a correct teaching regarding the resurrection of the dead, but to persuade the audience, the Corinthians, to continue in their work of the Lord.¹⁵

Gordon Fee¹⁶ notes further that *both* major sections of the chapter (1-34; 35-58) end with an ethical appeal. The position of Walter Schmithals¹⁷ and others, then, certainly fits neatly with this emphasis. Those who say "there is no resurrection of the dead" are rejecting hope for the future of those who die, and therefore embracing licentious living in the present.

However, it is not clear that a morally lax emphasis on the present can only be explained by a lack of belief in postmortality. As Winter points out,¹⁸ such an attitude may be an expression of belief in non-*bodily* postmortality (as is probably the case in the quotation from Philo above). Alternatively, it may even be an expression of presumed inaugurated *immortality*, in which the present is viewed no longer as a time for death, deprivation and labour, but for freedom, feasting and unfettered fulfilment.

Furthermore, it is not clear how such an explanation of the situation in Corinth fits with Paul's apparent assumption in 6:14 that he may appeal to a common belief that God will raise "us".

If a significant number of the Corinthians are committed to the idea that any sort of resurrection is unthinkable, how could Paul have made such an appeal in chapter 6 without any qualification?

¹⁴ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 38; 290-91.

¹⁵ Insawn Saw, *Paul's Rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 15: An Analysis Utilizing the Theories of Classical Rhetoric* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1995), 5.

¹⁶ Fee, *First Epistle*, 716-7.

¹⁷ Schmithals, *Gnosticism*, 156.

¹⁸ Winter, *After Paul*, 98.

It is not obvious, then, that the resurrection-deniers in Corinth were committed to the idea of personal dissolution at death.

Second Grouping: Certain People in Corinth Believed That the Resurrection had Already Occurred

This conception of the Corinthian situation finds support in a number of themes of the chapter. *Firstly, there are those parts of the passage that evidence Corinthian doubts about, or taunting of, mortality.* It appears that some in Corinth needed to be convinced that there remained a need to wait upon divine grace for the overcoming of mortality:

15:26: The last enemy to be destroyed is death

15:36: Fool! Do you not know that that which you sow will not come to life unless it dies?

15:53-4: For it is necessary for this perishability to be clothed with imperishability, and this mortality to be clothed with immortality. And when this perishability is clothed with imperishability and this mortality is clothed with immortality, then that which is written will occur.

Saw notes that the theme of death is of great importance in this chapter, and has been touched upon previously in the letter, perhaps suggesting that there was a problem related to present mortality in Corinth.¹⁹ H.W. Hollander and J. Holleman propose:

¹⁹ “However, we find that death is mentioned in 7:39 and 11:30 (see also 15:6, 18, 29). In this regard we may infer that the issue mentioned in 1 Cor 15:12 reflects dissension in response to death among Corinthians”. Saw, *Paul’s Rhetoric*, 182-3. That *dissension* itself is the issue, however, is not at all apparent in the text, as I have noted in chapter 2.

Paul stresses the power of death in the present age, because his Corinthian addressees seemed to neglect it in their enthusiastic [sic] experiences of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They felt wise, free, superior, and powerful, and they taunted death as something irrelevant. Such behaviour was common in Stoic and Cynic circles, and their slogans and ideas were obviously attractive to the Corinthians.²⁰

Whether or not the Corinthian Christians were influenced by Stoic and Cynic circles in this way, it does appear that Paul is at pains to present the necessity of death in this chapter. Indeed, the climax toward which the chapter builds is a victory over death that is accomplished not by “flesh and blood” but by *God* (15:50-57). Christopher Tuckett wonders whether this problematising of mortality is Paul’s intention from the beginning of the chapter:

The meaning of ἐκτρόμα is of course notoriously uncertain, but it would make good sense here if the reference is primarily to an aborted foetus, to something/-one who is in a state of death and is given life solely by divine grace and as a result of a divine miracle. If this is the main emphasis in vv.6 + 8-10, and since in turn these verses dominate the section as a whole, then the section may be primarily *not so much about the certainty of resurrection; rather it is that resurrection, and resurrection witness, all take place within a context of death.*²¹

The view that the Corinthians believed that the resurrection had (in some sense) already occurred also finds support in *the parts of the chapter in which the assumption of present, static participation in the risen Christ’s victory is opposed by Paul to necessarily future participation in apocalyptic victory.* At a number of points, it seems that Paul aims to correct a mistaken sense of the logic and timing of full Christian spirituality:

²⁰ H.W. Hollander and J. Holleman, “The Relationship of Death, Sin and Law in 1 Cor 15:56,” *NovT* 35/3 (1993): 270-291; 276.

²¹ C.M. Tuckett, “The Corinthians Who Say ‘There is no resurrection of the dead’ (1 Cor 15,12),” in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 247-275; 263; emphasis mine.

15:22-23: For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. *But* each in their own turn: Christ the firstfruits, then those who belong to Christ, at his coming.

15:42-49: What is sown in perishability is raised in imperishability. What is sown in dishonour is raised in glory. What is sown in weakness is raised in power. What is sown a natural body is raised a Spiritual body.... *But* the Spiritual does not come first, but the natural, and then the Spiritual.... And just as we have borne the image of the one of dust, so also we will bear the image of the one of heaven.

Martinus de Boer rightly notes the importance of attending to Paul's apocalyptic language:

The language of Ps 110,1b, which Paul has modified for his own purposes, enables him to portray the risen Christ's session at God's right hand as a dynamic, apocalyptic process (over against the static, spatial conception of the Corinthians), whereby the inimical principalities and powers are being destroyed..., culminating in the destruction of Death, the last enemy.²²

The Corinthians, it would seem, under-estimate the ongoing power of sin and death in the present, and are summoned to look to the *future* consummation of Christ's resurrected victory for the time of their own victory over mortality. Rather than an autonomous, triumphalistic understanding of Christian "spirituality", Paul presents a Christ-dependent conception of Christian self-understanding that looks ahead to Christ's own appearing. Kwiran reads Barth correctly on this point:

²² Martinus C. de Boer, "Paul's Use of a Resurrection Tradition in 1 Cor 15,20-28," in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 639-651; 648.

For Barth the resurrection is futuristic for us in that we can only hope in the grace of God who already has shown his grace to our Lord Jesus Christ.²³

It is worth noting further that this view appears to receive support from the section in which Paul draws attention to the incongruous activity of those who give tacit (or unwitting) approval to “baptism on account of the dead” and yet deny the resurrection of the dead. Whether one interprets this controversial section as referring to a vicarious ritual, or the expression of a longing for future reunion with relatives,²⁴ or normal baptism conducted in relation to (metaphorically) “dead” bodies²⁵ or “dead” apostles,²⁶ Paul’s response seems to indicate that the practice effectively demands *future* resurrected vindication.

Tuckett,²⁷ Stephen Wellum,²⁸ and others thus insist that the chief problem behind this chapter is a lack of comprehension of the *futurity* of Christian resurrection. That this theme is present to some degree would seem undeniable. Graham Tomlin is misleading when he claims that:

there is nothing explicit in 1 Corinthians 15 to suggest that any of the Corinthians actually thought of themselves as already raised to resurrection life, or that the resurrection was past, or that they would not die.²⁹

²³ Manfred Kwiran, “The Resurrection of the Dead: 1 Corinthians 15 and its Interpretation,” *Spring* 39/1 (1975): 44-56; 52.

²⁴ Maria Raeder, “Vikariatstaufe in 1 Cor 15:29?” *ZNW* 46:3-4 (1955): 16-18; John D. Reaume, “Another Look at 1 Corinthians 15:29, ‘Baptized for the Dead’,” *BSac* 152 (1995): 457-475; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 1248.

²⁵ Winter, *After Paul*, 104. See Chrysostom’s similar understanding in Homily 23; PG 61.191.

²⁶ Joel R. White, “‘Baptised on Account of the Dead’: The Meaning of 1 Corinthians 15:29 in its Context,” *JBL* 116/3 (1997): 487-499; James E. Patrick, “Living Rewards for Dead Apostles: ‘Baptised for the Dead’ in 1 Corinthians 15:29,” *NTS* 52 (2006): 71-85. I comment further on this interpretation later in this chapter.

²⁷ “It seems hard to deny that the main force of Paul’s argument here is the assertion of a radical discontinuity between present existence and resurrection life”. Tuckett, “Corinthians Who Say,” 261.

²⁸ “This is what the Corinthians have failed to grasp. They had adopted false views of spirituality that have led them to believe that they had assumed the ‘heavenly’ existence now, hence their denial of the future resurrection of the dead. But Paul says no; that final reality still awaits the second coming of the Lord of Glory. The fact that it will happen is certain, but it is still future”. Stephen J. Wellum, “Christ’s Resurrection and Ours (1 Corinthians 15),” *SBJT* 6/3 (2002): 76-93; 87.

²⁹ Graham Tomlin, “Christians and Epicureans in 1 Corinthians,” *JSNT* 68 (1997): 51-72; 56.

In the passages above it does seem that Paul is attempting to persuade the Corinthians that immortality has not yet begun, and *cannot* begin until Christ himself has defeated death and proceeded to clothe his people with (his) immortality.³⁰

However, there is also a significant difficulty with this grouping of views. Paul does *not* sum up the problem in Corinth in terms similar to 2 Timothy 2:18, in which it is clearly stated that the opponents claim “that the resurrection has already taken place”. Rather, Paul alleges, “some of you are saying that there is *no* resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:12). Thus although the Corinthians appear to need to be convinced of the futurity of immortality, they do not seem to hold to a present or past *resurrection*.

Third Grouping: Certain People in Corinth had Difficulties with Belief in the Resurrection of the *Body*

Again, this grouping of views finds some significant support in the text, particularly in verses 35-49, where the theme of the body is undeniably important.

15:35: But someone will say, “How will the dead be raised? With what sort of body will they come?”

³⁰ Tomlin argues, “[A]t several points in the letter, Paul indicates that the Corinthians have indeed arrived at a kind of fullness. 1 Cor. 1.5 suggests that they are rich, 3.22 claims that both the present and the future are in fact already theirs, and 2.7-10 indicates that God has already revealed his wisdom to them. It is surely unlikely that Paul would risk such language if the main problem in Corinth was faulty eschatology”. “Christians and Epicureans,” 58. However, Tomlin fails to recognise that these very indications of fullness represent Paul’s ironic subversion of Corinthian expectations: the fullness that the Corinthians do possess, according to Paul, is found *in Christ from God*, and is thus presently obscured from worldly esteem by the shame of the cross. This “hidden” fullness will not be made manifest until Christ himself appears. The Corinthians, in contrast, desire and effectively claim that future “glorious” manifestation as a present right. This is not to say that it is a consciously held eschatological doctrine; nevertheless it may be usefully described as “premature triumphalism” or “over-manifest spirituality” from Paul’s perspective.

15:44: It is sown a natural body, it is raised a Spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a Spiritual body.

It seems that Paul anticipates incredulity in Corinth at the idea of the revivification of dead bodies, and perhaps their entry into some sort of celestial habitation.

Fee,³¹ Winter,³² and Garland,³³ among others, argue that this aversion to (or confusion about) “bodiliness” is the key problem behind the chapter, making sense of the array of issues that Paul addresses here. Garland summarises this position, approvingly citing Soards:

The Corinthians do not deny the futurity of the resurrection by assuming that it has already occurred and is past (cf. 2 Tim. 2:18) but have come to believe that there is “life after death without a resurrection of the dead”³⁴

De Boer understands Paul’s assertion of the necessity of future divine victory over bodily mortality to be in direct opposition to a Corinthian assumption of bodily inconsequence:

Death exerts and manifests its murderous rule most visibly and terribly in physical or bodily demise. Because Paul understands bodily demise to be the mark of subjection to an enslaving, suprahuman power, bodily dying is not a “neutral” or “natural” process for him, one intrinsic to the world of matter, nor is it, as it was for the deniers of the resurrection of the dead in Corinth, the moment of the liberation of a primal, immortal spirit.³⁵

³¹ Fee, *First Epistle*, 715.

³² Winter, *After Paul*, 96.

³³ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 678.

³⁴ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 678.

³⁵ Martinus C. de Boer, *The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 183.

A number of scholars further understand a Corinthian problem with the idea of bodies entering celestial habitation to be behind Paul's argumentation right through to 15:50-57.³⁶ Bodies, it is said, were held by "some" in Corinth to be incapable of being adapted for heavenly occupancy. They needed to understand that it was both possible and essential for God to adapt human bodies for their future home.

Witherington states about verse 50:

Here the focus is not on moral qualifications or disqualifications for entering or inheriting the *basileia*, but on physical disqualification. In short, Paul is asserting that human beings in their present mortal physical bodies cannot inherit the *basileia*.³⁷

However, this reading of "flesh and blood" as referring to "present mortal physical bodies" is problematic. Other uses of this phrase in Paul and the rest of the New Testament argue against this understanding. Elsewhere the phrase indicates *emphatic humanness* as opposed to *divinity* (Gal. 1:16; Eph 6:12; cf. Matthew 16:17). This reading is confirmed here by Paul's expansion of his depiction of the incapability of "flesh and blood" to include the influence of law, sin, and death, those factors that hamper and frustrate humanity.

Patristic writers, on the whole, read "flesh and blood" as referring to fallen, sinful, mortal *humanity*. Athenagoras makes a distinction between *having* flesh and *being* flesh: the former is essential to resurrection, while the latter is incongruous with it.³⁸ Tertullian thinks of the phrase "flesh and blood" as referring to "the old man", caught up in an earthly manner of life.³⁹

³⁶ Jeffrey R. Asher, for example, writes: "Given the nature of Paul's argument in vv35-57, it seems quite likely that some of the Corinthians denied the resurrection because they believed it violated the principles of their cosmological doctrine. They probably argued that it is absurd to think that a terrestrial body could be raised to the celestial realm" Jeffrey R. Asher, "Speiretai: Paul's anthropogenic metaphor in 1 Corinthians," *JBL* 120/1 (2001): 101-123; 103.

³⁷ Ben Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World: A Comparative Study in New Testament Eschatology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1992), 56.

³⁸ Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians*, chapter 31.

³⁹ Tertullian, *On the Resurrection*. See *Against Marcion* Book 5, Chapter 10, in which Tertullian defines "flesh and blood" as "the works of flesh and blood".

Irenaeus understands the phrase as referring to humans without the Spirit of God, likening the “flesh and blood” person to a fruitless wild olive which has not been tended and grafted.⁴⁰ Augustine reads the phrase as referring to humanity subject to decay.⁴¹ Elsewhere he gives as synonymous the terms “corruption”;⁴² “mortality”;⁴³ or “human corruption”.⁴⁴ Ambrosiaster takes the phrase to be a reference to human disobedience.⁴⁵ Chrysostom understands the phrase to refer to intentional evil deeds: “For he calls evil deeds ‘flesh’ here”.⁴⁶ As Joachim Jeremias affirms (on different grounds), “the meaning of verse 50 is: neither the living nor the dead can take part in the Kingdom of God – as they are”.⁴⁷

The dichotomy between reliance on that which is *human* and reliance upon *God* is established in chapters 1–4, and may similarly underlie this climactic chapter (see for example 15:32, where it is not for “human” reasons that Paul labours). Indeed, this endpoint of the chapter’s rhetorical movement in 15:50-57 as *divine victory over powers that cannot be “humanly” conquered* calls into question the idea that “bodilyness” is actually the key problem addressed throughout the chapter.

Birger Albert Pearson⁴⁸ and Winter’s⁴⁹ insistence that νεκροί could be naturally understood to mean “corpses” throughout the chapter – that is, dead *bodies* – ought to be carefully considered. But the fact that Paul assumes a difference in meaning between νεκροί (as dead

⁴⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* Book 5 Chapters 9-10.

⁴¹ Augustine, *Sermon* 362.

⁴² *Enchiridion*, chapter 91.

⁴³ *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*, 16.

⁴⁴ *On the Psalms*, 51.

⁴⁵ Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles*.

⁴⁶ Homily 42; PG 61.363. Chrysostom comments on verse 58: “Do you not know that the promise is beyond humans? It is not possible for those who march about on the ground to ascend to heavenly arches”. Homily 42; PG 61.366.

⁴⁷ J. Jeremias, “Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God,” *NTS* 2 (1956): 151-59; 152. Similarly, N.T. Wright writes, “‘flesh and blood’ is a way of referring to ordinary, corruptible, decaying human existence”. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 359.

⁴⁸ “It seems to me preferable, on the basis of the clear statement in 15.12 and the whole context of Paul’s argument, to posit the existence in Corinth of people who denied the resurrection of the body”. Birger Albert Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology: A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and Its Relation to Gnosticism* (SBL Dissertation Series 12; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1973), 15.

⁴⁹ See for example Winter’s rendering of 15:32b: “What does it profit me if dead bodies are not raised?” Winter, *After Paul*, 103.

people) and σώμα (as the *body* of the dead) in 15:35 calls such an understanding into question. Furthermore, the νεκροί are repeatedly paralleled with τῶν κεκοιμημένων, a term that for Paul most naturally refers to *dead people* rather than corpses (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Correspondingly, ἀνάστασις is paralleled in 15:21-22 with ζωοποιηθήσονται, “made alive”. It would seem that Paul has not gone out of his way to draw exclusive attention to the physicality of the afterlife (although he assumes it). In 15:1-11, similarly, Paul labours the witnessed-resurrection of Jesus without specifically emphasising that it occurred in a body.

It is simply not evident that Paul exclusively envisages the *physicality* of the dead as being problematic in Corinth. Tuckett points out that even in the section that undeniably focuses on the body, 15:35-49, it is not just the problem of renewed physicality but the broader issue of *life proceeding from death* that is intentionally present (“Fool! Do you not know that a seed will not come alive [ζωοποιεῖται] unless it dies [ἀποθάνῃ]?”):

It seems hard to deny that the main force of Paul’s argument here is the assertion of a radical discontinuity between present existence and resurrection life.... Paul is thus stressing the reality and facticity of death quite as much as emphasizing the certainty of resurrection.⁵⁰

Garland objects:

The assertion that the seed does not live unless it dies is not intended to underline a pattern of dissolution and new life or to underscore the necessity of death (contra Godet 1887: 403; Riesenfeld 1970: 174; cf. John 12:24), since Paul specifically argues in 1 Cor. 15:51-54 that not all will die.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Tuckett, “Corinthians Who Say,” 261.

⁵¹ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 728.

But this objection is problematic. Firstly, it renders the whole of verse 36 both *unnecessary* and a *distraction*. This verse is *unnecessary* for setting the theme of “sowing” since the subsequent verse adequately achieves this. The verse becomes a *distraction* because it appears to be patently affirming the necessity of death, an affirmation that Garland denies is intended.⁵² Secondly, Garland’s appeal to 51-54 needs qualification: Paul does not insist there that all will not die; he insists that all will not “sleep”. It would seem that in 1 Corinthians (as in 1 Thessalonians), the euphemism of sleep is only used to refer to the physical decease of Christians (11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; Cf. 1 Thess. 4:13, 14; 5:10). “Death”, “die”, or “dead”, contrastingly, are at times used to refer to physical decease (15:3, 22); a personified apocalyptic enemy (15:26, 54-56); and toil or cruciformity (15:30-32; Cf. *ektroma* 15:8-10). It is significant that Paul employs this latter use in a chapter about the resurrection of “the dead”. Indeed, throughout the letter, Paul has arguably been calling the Corinthians to imitate his own metaphorical appropriation of the death of Christ (4:16).⁵³ It ought to be considered, then, whether perhaps Paul aims to insist in this chapter that all Christians *must* accept death – whether literally *or metaphorically* – as the precursor to the divine gift of resurrection; but those who will not *literally* die (i.e. those who will not “sleep”) must still receive eschatological change from God.

It is simply not apparent in the text that the Corinthians perceive *bodies* as contemptible, yet *death* as “the moment of the liberation of a primal, immortal spirit”, as de Boer suggests above.⁵⁴ Rather, it would seem that the Corinthians make no such distinction between the two: *both death (26, 36, 53-4) and the body (35) are looked down upon in Corinth; whereas for Paul, death and the body form the necessary setting and locus for divine victory.*

⁵² Irenaeus, for one, appears to assume that an affirmation of the necessity of death *is* intended: Irenaeus uses this verse as a proof that mortality is bodily, necessarily involving corporeal corruption, before corporeal incorruption. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* Book 5, Chapter 7, 1-2. See similarly Minucius Felix, *The Octavius* Chapter 34.

⁵³ I argue for this extensively in chapters 3 and 4.

⁵⁴ See footnote 35.

Paul's strenuous argument for the resurrection of Christ and of the dead who belong to him seems to be more than simply the corrective to an ill-formed conception of the nature of the afterlife. At stake is a bigger problem: a lack of knowledge of the God who graciously gives life to *the dead*:

So wie ohne Liebe alles nichts ist (13,1-3), so ebenso ohne die Auferstehung Jesu und damit auch der Toten (15,12-19).⁵⁵

Each of the three groupings of views identified by Thiselton, then, offers useful insights, but fails to suggest exclusively a coherent explanation for the problem of those who deny the resurrection of the dead in Corinth:

The *first grouping* rightly acknowledges that Paul is addressing a relatively straightforward objection ("There is no resurrection of the dead"), and that this objection appears to result in a licentious attitude. However, this grouping of views may be hard to reconcile with the apparent assumption of 6:14 that some sort of future resurrection already represents common ground for an ethical appeal. It is also not the only reconstruction that makes sense of a morally lax attitude in Corinth, and provides no explanation for Paul's insistence on the *deferral* of immortality.

The *second grouping* is rightly attentive to Paul's insistent emphasis on the *presence* of death, and the *futurity* of resurrection/immortality. However, this grouping of views requires a rather qualified understanding of the Corinthian stance "There is no resurrection of the dead".

The *third grouping* rightly perceives that Paul expects resistance to the corporeal in Corinth, along with at least an openness to the concept of immortality. But this grouping (if taken to be

⁵⁵ Wolfgang Schrage, *Studien zur Theologie im 1. Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Neukirchener, 2007), 207. Further, Merklein rightly notes that Paul goes out of his way to emphasise the issue of *the dead*: "Allerdings fügt Paulus gegenüber dem tradierten Wortlaut des Kerygmas der Auferweckungsaussage (<*hoti egegetai*>) (v.4b) den Präpositionalausdruck *von den Toten* (<*ek nekron*>) hinzu". Merklein, *Der erste Brief, Kapitel 11,2 - 16,24*, 303.

a comprehensive account of the situation) has no satisfying explanation for Paul's emphatic insistence on the necessity of death (e.g. 15:36) and the *futurity* of immortality; or Paul's assumption that the resurrection-deniers are effectively setting their hope on *this life* (15:19).

J. Delobel rightly warns:

The problem is perhaps that all three elements [the reality of death, the futurity of resurrection, the problem of corporeality] should be taken into account, whereas the solutions mentioned above most often concentrate on one (or two) of them, either by not taking into account the others or by dismissing them as being of secondary importance. A one-sided choice may produce more easily a coherent explanation, but it falls short of integrating all the data of the text.⁵⁶

Positively, it would seem that Paul's response to the issues includes at least: the overall setting of an encouragement to present *labour*; the necessity of present *mortality* (literal and metaphorical); the *futurity* of participation in the consummation of Christ's victory; the inability of *humans* to autonomously claim this victory; and the importance of *God's* ability to raise *bodies*.

Most interestingly, all of these themes (labour, mortality, futurity, humanness, and divine ability) are found in the rhetorical destination of the chapter, 15:50-58. Any attempt at a comprehensive conception of the nature of the resurrection-denial in Corinth, then, will need to do justice to the fact that this chapter peaks with *the necessity of future gracious divine victory over present human fallen mortality; a future victory which has present ethical implications for apparently vain human labour*.

⁵⁶ J. Delobel, "The Corinthians' (Un-)belief in the Resurrection," in *Resurrection in the New Testament: Festschrift J. Lambrecht* (ed. R. Bieringer et al.; Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 343-355; 348.

3. Rhetorical Entextualisation

In considering this flow of the chapter, it should be noted that Paul has chosen to represent his opponents in a certain way, and to frame his correction correspondingly. This decision by Paul may tell us more about his rhetorical intention than about the historical problems of the Corinthian church. Anders Eriksson warns:

A... problem with many reconstructions is the assumption that Paul correctly represents the Corinthian opinions. Even those interpreters who claim that Paul does not correctly represent the Corinthians, claim that he, in that case, must have misunderstood them. Seen as a rhetorical argumentation, the assumption that Paul is so “accurate” and “truthful” in his use of sources that he gives an unbiased account is naïve. In a rhetorical argumentation, the biased representation of opponent opinions is the rule.⁵⁷

The value of Eriksson’s warning is not the allowance that Paul may be using *deception* (indeed, an intentional misrepresentation of his opponents would surely not advantage his persuasion). Rather, the value lies in the reminder that Paul has a rhetorical purpose that may not be exhaustively revealed by socio-historical reconstructions.⁵⁸ Paul has his own reasons for selecting, placing, and framing this issue.

To speak about the inscribed rhetorical situation is to speak about the entextualization of the situation. That is, the rhetorical situation exists as a textual or literary presentation within the text or discourse as a whole. It is possible to think of the rhetorical situation as a literary construct embedded in the text as a rhetorical device

⁵⁷ Anders Eriksson, *Traditions as Rhetorical Proof: Pauline Argumentation in 1 Corinthians* (ConB, New Testament Series 29; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1998), 237.

⁵⁸ Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele make a similar point: “The Paul of the text is in fact the ‘Paul’ the author most desires to give to (and be for) his readers; to try to go behind that is to miss the primary function of rhetorical constructions of *ēthos*”. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, “Unveiling Paul: Gendering *Ēthos* in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse* (ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 214-237; 228.

or figure which contributes to the overall rhetorical aim or to the argumentation of the text.⁵⁹

I suggest, then, that it may be fruitful to consider the rhetorical function of the entextualised problem of resurrection denial before returning to relate it to a conceivable historical reconstruction.

4. The Rhetoric of Reversal and the Resurrection of the Dead

We thus turn to the question: What rhetorical function is served by this discussion of the resurrection of the dead?

Chapters 1–4 and Chapter 15

As signalled already in the first chapter of this dissertation, a striking feature of 1 Corinthians that has been largely neglected is the number of themes that are conspicuously common to chapters 1–4 and chapter 15. In fact, in considering the main sections of chapter 15, one can see that each of the points Paul makes in response to the resurrection-deniers has been anticipated in chapters 1–4, with a similarity of terminology and rhetorical function:

15:1–11

In both chapter 15 and chapters 1–4 Paul insists that he proclaimed the gospel (1:17–18, 21, 23: εὐαγγελίξεσθαι/ κηρύσσομεν; 15:1–2, 11: εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν/ κηρύσσομεν), and that the Corinthians received it with faith (2:4–5; 4:15: ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν; 15:11: οὕτως ἐπιστεύσατε). In both parts of the letter he hints at the danger of this proclamation being made vain by the Corinthians (1:17: ἵνα μὴ κενωθῇ ὁ σταυρὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ; 15:2, 14: εἰ μὴ εἰκὴ ἐπιστεύσατε/

⁵⁹ Dennis L. Stamps, “Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation: The Entextualization of the Situation in New Testament Epistles,” in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 193–210; 199.

κενή καὶ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν). Thus the wisdom-boasters in chapters 1–4 and the resurrection-deniers in chapter 15 are warned that their behaviour is inadvertently endangering the apostolic *kerygma*.

15:12-28

In both chapters 1–4 and chapter 15 Paul indicates that believers are on their way to salvation and vindication at the time of God’s future judgement (1:18; 2:9; 4:5: σωζομένοις/ ἡτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν/ ὁ ἔπαινος γενήσεται ἐκάστω ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ; 15:22: ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ πάντες ζωοποιηθήσονται), while hostile rulers are destined for destruction (1:18-19; 2:6-9: ἀπολλυμένοις/ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου τῶν καταργουμένων; 15:24-7: καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν). Just as the *Epistle of Enoch* foresees the doom of “sinners” who scoff at the thought of a divine reversal of fortunes,⁶⁰ Paul considers that the proud, gospel-endangering behaviour of the wisdom-boasters in chapters 1–4 and the resurrection-deniers in chapter 15 must be corrected by appeal to an apocalyptic eschatology.

15:29-34

Just as in chapter 15 Paul confronts resurrection-deniers with the reality of those whose baptism on behalf of the dead (15:29: οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν) and deathly apostolic conduct (15:31: καθ’ ἡμέραν ἀποθνήσκω) imply a hope for future resurrection, so in chapters 1–4 Paul raises the issue of baptism in relation to the apostles (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου ἐβαπτίσθητε;),⁶¹ and presents his apostolic vocation of proclaiming “Christ crucified” (1:23;

⁶⁰ 1 Enoch 102:6-9: “When you died, then the sinners declared: ‘The godly died according to fate – and what did they gain from their works? They die just like us! See how they die with grief and darkness – what is the benefit to them? From this time, will they be raised, and will they be saved, and see into eternity? We eat and drink for this very reason, swindling and sinning and stealing and seizing property and seeing good days’”.

⁶¹ On a connection between the two sections on baptism, see especially White, “Baptised on Account of the Dead” and Patrick, “Living Rewards for Dead Apostles”. White in particular argues convincingly that those who are “baptised on account of the dead” are the Corinthians themselves, who are squabbling (evidenced in chapter 1) over which of the leaders baptised

2:1-5: κηρύσσομεν Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον) and of being “condemned to death” (4:8-13: τοὺς ἀποστόλους ἐσχάτους ἀπέδειξεν ὡς ἐπιθανατίους). In both parts of the letter the imagery of the arena is adopted to picture the apostolic example⁶² (4:9: ὅτι θέατρον ἐγενήθημεν τῷ κόσμῳ καὶ ἀγγέλοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις; 15:32: εἰ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον ἐθηριομάχησα). Both wisdom-boasters in chapters 1–4 and resurrection-deniers in chapter 15 are expected to feel “shame” (4:14; 15:34) at the incongruity that this apostolic example illuminates in relation to their own conduct. They are depicted in a similar way to the “ungodly” in the Wisdom of Solomon, whose lack of faith in divine reversal leads them to treat the present as a time for satisfied indulgence rather than dependent hope.⁶³

15:35-49

Like the mother who reminds her dying son of the creative power of God to bring about eschatological reversal in 2 Maccabees,⁶⁴ Paul labours God’s creative power and initiative with regard to resurrection and spirituality in chapter 15 (15:38,46: θεὸς δίδωσιν αὐτῷ σῶμα καθὼς ἠθέλησεν/ ἀλλ’ οὐ πρῶτον τὸ πνευματικὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ ψυχικόν, ἔπειτα τὸ πνευματικόν). Similarly in chapters 1–4 Paul insists that God chose “the things that are not” in order to reduce to nothing “the things that are” (1:26-31: τὰ μὴ ὄντα, ἵνα τὰ ὄντα καταργήσῃ). He emphasises that *God* is the source of the Corinthians’ life (1:30: ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), and that God alone is able to grant and interpret that which is “spiritual” (2:10-

them – leaders who are, according to Paul’s irony, pursuing a vocation of *death*. Murphy-O’Connor likewise notices the relation of apostolic suffering to the mention of “the dead”: “Verse 30 gives the impression of being a transition which suggests that there is, in Paul’s mind, some intrinsic relationship between vv. 29 and 31-2”. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “‘Baptized for the Dead’ (1 Cor 15:29): A Corinthian Slogan?” in *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues* (rev. and enl.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 242-256; 243.

⁶² V. Henry T. Nguyen hints at a link between 4:9 and 15:32: V.H.T. Nguyen, “The Identification of Paul’s Spectacle of Death Metaphor in 1 Corinthians 4.9,” *NTS* 53/4 (2007): 489-501; 496.

⁶³ Wisdom of Solomon 2: see above.

⁶⁴ 2 Maccabees 7:28-9: “I beg you, child: Look up to heaven and to the earth, and see everything that is in them, and know that God did not create them out of existing things – and so it is also with the human race. Do not fear this executioner, but be worthy of your brothers in also accepting death, in order that in His mercy, I might receive you back along with your brothers”.

16: ψυχικός δὲ ἄνθρωπος οὐ δέχεται τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ, μωρία γὰρ αὐτῷ ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ δύναται γινῶναι, ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται). According to Paul, both the wisdom-boasters and the resurrection-deniers are effectively claiming “spiritual” status in a way that undermines the ultimacy of God.

15:50-58

Just as in chapter 15 Paul scoffs at the ability of “flesh and blood” – a phrase which is elsewhere used to mean “mere humanity” (Galatians 1:16; Ephesians 6:12; cf. Matthew 16:17⁶⁵) – to inherit the kingdom of God (15:50: σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομῆσαι οὐ δύναται), so in chapters 1–4 he repeatedly emphasises the inability of *humans* to usurp God’s position as the object of Corinthian security and boasting (1:31; 2:9; 3:21; 4:7: ὥστε μηδεὶς καυχάσθω ἐν ἀνθρώποις), lamenting that the Corinthians are acting in a way that is “human” (3:4: οὐκ ἄνθρωποὶ ἐστε;). Following the Jewish wisdom tradition, Paul presents himself in chapters 1–4 as being the recipient of the revealed “mystery” of divine wisdom, as opposed to the “wise men” in positions of elite influence (1:20; 2:1-8; 4:1). Similarly, in 15:51, Paul expresses his assertion about the necessity of divinely granted transformation as the disclosure of a “mystery”. Wisdom-boasters and resurrection-deniers alike are confronted with human inability and divine enablement in Jesus Christ, revealed in a mystery. However, whereas chapters 1–4 relentlessly emphasise the absurdity of human boasting, chapter 15 finally gives way here to exalted thanksgiving for divine victory, much like the thanksgiving sections of Psalms of lament.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Pheme Perkins rightly notes that this phrase is “a Semitic expression for human being” that “often appears in contexts that stress creatureliness and mortality”. Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 306.

⁶⁶ Or the elaborate thanksgiving of the “three Jews” after they receive divine vindication following the fiery furnace: Prayer of Azariah 1,88: “Bless the Lord, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael; sing and highly exalt him forever, because he has taken us out of Hades, and saved us from the hand of Death, and rescued us from the midst of the flaming furnace, and freed us from the fire!”

It would seem that in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul is not simply setting out a corrective for a confused understanding of the afterlife; he is carefully returning to the themes and terminology of chapters 1–4. The difference is that in chapters 1–4 the emphasis is on the way in which the *cross* confronts the divisive values of boastful status and secular power that tempt the Corinthians, while in chapter 15 the emphasis shifts to the way in which the *resurrection* lays bare such an exalted disdain for things marked by death, by ensuring the future end of would-be powers⁶⁷ and the divinely-wrought vindication of those who presently belong to the cross:

15:1-11: The gospel of Christ's death and resurrection, proclaimed by Paul, believed by the Corinthians, but in danger of vanity

15:12-28: The trajectory of Christ's resurrection from the dead – a trajectory that ends with the resurrection of believers and the destruction of enemy powers

15:29-34: The example of those who effectively accept death in this life, including Paul's ongoing experience of death

15:35-49: God's creative ability to raise bodies and initiate Spiritual status for those who would otherwise be "natural"

*15:50-58: A deferral of immortality to the power and timing of God, rather than the ability of flesh and blood*⁶⁸

⁶⁷ It is noteworthy that here the rulers are not particular humans. They are hostile powers, and ultimately, death itself. This is one indication that Paul's rhetoric of reversal should not be thought of as a straightforward rhetoric of *revenge*: Paul does not envisage a simple exchange of power, but rather an eschaton in which the values of power, victory, wealth and wisdom have been radically "christo-morphed".

⁶⁸ Thus, rather than culminating an appeal for congregational unity, as Mitchell argues (*Paul and the Rhetoric*, 38, 290-91), verse 58 may be heard more naturally as an encouragement to the sort of God-dependent cruciform *labour* that has shaped Paul's summons to self-imitation throughout the letter: "Each will be rewarded according to their own labour. For we are God's co-workers" (3:8-9); "We work with our own hands" (4:12); "Are you not my work in the Lord?" (9:1); "Is it only myself and Barnabas who must work for a living?" (9:6); "I worked harder than all of them – but not myself, but the grace of God that was with me" (15:10). Interestingly, Paul, Timothy and Stephanas are all modelled as taking part in "the work" in chapter 16.

A Challenge: Join the Dead

So chapter 15 presents a challenge to those who deny the resurrection of the dead, which is in fact a heightening of the same challenge that Paul has been presenting throughout the letter: join the ranks of the *dead*, and so look forward to divinely granted *resurrection*.

Consider again to what extent this chapter exudes an obsession with the inescapability of *death*:

15:1-11:

He appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at once, of whom most remain alive to this day, but *some have fallen asleep*

And last of all, *as to one who had been miscarried*, he appeared also to me

15:12-28:

But if it is proclaimed that Christ was raised *from the dead*, how is it that some of you are saying that there is no resurrection *of the dead*?⁶⁹

But in fact Christ has been raised *from the dead* as the firstfruits of *those who have fallen asleep*.

The final enemy to be brought down is *death*.

15:29-34:

Every day *I die*, as surely as you are my boast

⁶⁹ As John Chrysostom notes, Paul is “continually adding ‘from the dead’”. Homily 39; PG 61.332.

15:35-49:

You should know that the seed that you sow will not come to life *unless it dies*

It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.

15:50-58:

For the trumpet will blast and *the dead* will be raised imperishably, and we will be changed. For it is necessary for... *this mortality* to be clothed with immortality.⁷⁰

Death [will be] consumed by victory.

Where, *O Death*, is your victory?

Where, *O Death*, is your sting?

....But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul thus uses the problem of “denial of resurrection *of the dead*” as the ultimate paradigm of the puffed up, status-obsessed Corinthian refusal to adopt the position of the crucified. There is something of a parallel here to the rhetorical function of an insistence on resurrection in the book of 2 Maccabees. George W.E. Nickelsburg writes:

The book in general is directed toward the non-Jewish reader, who might think that people who suffer in this way have no portion with God.⁷¹

Likewise, those in Corinth who consider the foolish (4:10), the defrauded (6:7-8), the obligated (7:5), the weak (8:7), the enslaved (9:19), the restricted (10:23), the subject (11:3), the unimpressive (12:15), the restrained (14:28), and the dead (15:12) – that is, the *cruciform* – to

⁷⁰ Chrysostom draws attention to the fact that even those who are alive are thus labelled with death: “What he means is this: We will not all die, but we will all be changed, even those who do not die – *for they are also mortal*”. Homily 42; PG 61.364.

⁷¹ Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 123.

have no portion with God have fundamentally misunderstood the God who raises the dead.

Those who look down on the dead have no knowledge of the God who raises the dead.

Nickelsburg's comments on the Wisdom of Solomon similarly echo the rhetorical function of Paul's discussion of death and resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:

[T]here is a sense in which there is an identity, or at least continuity between death and exaltation. This exaltation is not the prerogative of every righteous person. It is promised only to the persecuted righteous (3:1-9) and, in the context of the story, only to those who are put to death for the faith. Viewed in this manner, the righteous man's persecution and death are the *cause* of his exaltation.⁷²

The Corinthians, in Paul's estimation, are faced with a challenge: Will they embrace the death of *the* Righteous Man, and so look forward to being clothed with his resurrection when he appears? There can be no leaping ahead of present labour to manifest glory and immortality. Rather, the one pre-requisite for resurrected immortality is the inhabitation of death – Christ's death – in the present. In imitation of its apostle, the Corinthian church is called to "die every day", persevering in cruciform labour, even if Christ should return before they fall asleep.

Paul's interest is not just "to correct [a] misinformed opinion" in Corinth resulting from "honest confusion"⁷³ about the afterlife. His interest is more cunningly to confront what John Chrysostom would call their "disease" – their proud preference for Roman status over a Roman cross.

⁷² Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 115. Nickelsburg notes that this continuity between death and vindication in Wisdom of Solomon has resonance with Paul's conception of the work of Jesus in Philippians 2.

⁷³ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 678.

5. The Situation Behind 1 Corinthians 15

Throughout this dissertation I have contended that socio-historical and pastoral-theological perspectives on 1 Corinthians may be viewed as complementary. It is therefore worth considering whether this reading of the pastorally-driven rhetorical function of the resurrection discussion fits with a conceivable historical reconstruction of the situation in Roman Corinth.⁷⁴

It has been demonstrated above that no *one* of the interpretative groupings identified by Thiselton provides a comprehensively satisfactory reconstruction.⁷⁵ It may be that elements of the different views make up a coherent scenario. In particular, I find two such elements worthy of further consideration: *disregard for the body* and *disregard for the dead*.

Disregard for the Body

It will be useful, firstly, to demonstrate that Jewish, Greek and Roman literary sources all evidence significant variation in conceptions of corporeality and the afterlife.

Although Plato certainly held to the immortality of the soul (as opposed to the body), it seems noteworthy that the two main Greek philosophical schools of Paul's time – the Epicureans⁷⁶ and the Stoics⁷⁷ (whom, according to Acts 17, Paul had addressed in Athens prior to arriving in Corinth) both believed in the *mortality* of the soul.

⁷⁴ De Boer argues that an ability to pinpoint the precise nature of the situation is unnecessary because the chapter consists of “a case *for* the resurrection of the dead, not a case *against* a presumed alternative”. There is certainly an extent to which this is true; however if our interpretation cannot be squared with any likely historical reconstruction, the interpretation itself may justifiably be called into question. Therefore an investigation into possible historical backgrounds is not out of place. See Martinus de Boer, “The Deniers of the Resurrection and Their Social Status,” in *Saint Paul and Corinth: 1950 Years Since the Writing of the Epistles to the Corinthians* (ed. Constantine J. Belezos; Athens: Psychogios Publications, 2009), 329-345; 345.

⁷⁵ Thiselton himself notices this and suggests a combination of views two and three.

⁷⁶ Tomlin argues that “there are good reasons for thinking that this [that is, the widespread influence of Epicureanism] was especially so in Corinth.” Tomlin, “Christians and Epicureans,” 55.

⁷⁷ Albert V. Garcilazo argues that higher-status members of the Corinthian church were influenced by the cosmology, anthropology, and ethics of the Roman Stoa, resulting in a

The Epicureans held, following Epicurus himself, that the soul was extinguished with the death of the body. This is because the soul itself was corporeal, being intermixed with the bodily parts in such a way that post-mortal survival was impossible. On the corporeality of the soul, Epicurus writes:

Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus* 67

So those who say that the soul [ψυχήν] is incorporeal are speaking vainly.

Lucretius, writing in Rome in the first century BCE, similarly argues:

Lucretius, 3.175-6

Therefore the soul [animi] is necessarily of a corporeal nature, as it labours under the impact of corporeal spears.

3.275

Intermixed with our members and entire body is the power of the soul and of the spirit.

Epicurus consequently reasons that death is nothing to be feared:

Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 125

Therefore death, the most fearsome of evils, is nothing to us, seeing as when we exist, death is not present; and when death is present, we do not exist. So death is nothing to those who are living or to those who have died, seeing as for the former, *it* is nothing, and for the latter, *they* are nothing.

Again, Lucretius concurs:

rejection of the future resurrection of the dead. Albert V. Garcilazo, *The Corinthian Dissenters and the Stoics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

Lucretius, 3.830

Death, therefore, is nothing to us – of no concern at all, if we understand that the soul has a mortal nature.

Stoicism similarly appears to have held to the non-eternality of the soul, although at the time of Paul, this did not necessarily mean immediate extinction upon the death of the body. Like the Epicureans, Stoics held that the soul could not be usefully thought of as independently incorporeal, given that it was inextricably linked to sensation and activity – characteristics of the corporeal. Sextus Empiricus reports:

Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 8.263

For according to them [the Stoics] the incorporeal is not such that it can either act or suffer.

Plutarch states (as a critic):

Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1053d

And the proof he [the Stoic Chrysippus] uses that the soul is generated – and generated after the body – is mainly that the manner and character of the children bears a resemblance to their parents.

Eusebius elucidates a (middle/late) Stoic conception of the afterlife,⁷⁸ indicating that some souls might be expected to endure without the body for quite a time, while others would be destroyed:

⁷⁸ The position Eusebius describes would seem to be true of the Stoics of Paul's time, although earlier Stoicism denied any personal afterlife.

Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* 15.20.6

They [Stoics] say that the soul is both generated and mortal. But it is not immediately destroyed upon being separated from the body. Rather it remains for some time by itself – that of the diligent remains until the dissolution of all things by fire; and that of the foolish remains only for a limited time. About the endurance of the soul they say this: that we ourselves remain as souls which have been separated from the body and have been changed into the lesser substance of the soul; whereas the souls of irrational beings are destroyed along with their bodies.

It would certainly be too simplistic, then, to claim that a “Greek” notion of the afterlife in the first century generally involved the liberation of the soul into utopian immortality. Greco-Roman understandings of corporeality, immortality and the afterlife in the first century were clearly varied.

Judaism of the period also tolerated a degree of diversity. Alongside beliefs in bodily resurrection (exhibited in 2 Maccabees, for example), was a range of Jewish beliefs about the immortality of the soul and the nature of the afterlife.

The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides evidence a Jewish belief in immortality of the soul:

Pseudo-Phocylides, *Sentences* 105-108

For souls remain unharmed in those who have perished. For the spirit is God’s loan to mortals, and his image. For we have a body from the earth; and then after we are released to earth again, we are dust. But the air receives the spirit.

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The soul is immortal and ageless, living forever.

Likewise, the Wisdom of Solomon envisages the afterlife as involving immortal souls:

Wisdom of Solomon 3:8

They [that is, the immortal souls of the once-persecuted righteous] will judge the nations, and rule over peoples, and the Lord will rule over them for eternity.

The Epistle of Enoch looks ahead to the blessed survival of good souls after death:

1 Enoch 103:1-3

I swear to you: I understand this mystery.... That goodness and joy and honour have been prepared and written down for the souls of those who have died while godly.

Similarly, Josephus appears to hold to the immortality of the soul, as opposed to the (initial) temporality of the body:

Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.203

For [in the act of sex] the soul is divided, departing to another place; for it suffers when being implanted in bodies and similarly at death when it is divided from them.

Therefore purifications for all of these things are commanded.

According to Josephus, even the Pharisees, like the Essenes, held to a “Greek-like” idea of an immortal soul for all people. Unlike the Essenes, they held that good souls would also receive new bodies:⁷⁹

Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.154-5

For this is their doctrine [that is, the Essenes]: that bodies are mortal, and their material is not permanent; but that souls are immortal and endure forever; and that

⁷⁹ Of course, it should be kept in mind that Josephus may have had a significant rhetorical purpose in presenting the views of the “sects” in such a way. C.D. Elledge suggests: “Josephus... has translated these underlying beliefs [about the afterlife] into a Hellenistic philosophical synthesis that has obscured their original forms”. C.D. Elledge, *Life After Death in Early Judaism: The Evidence of Josephus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 98.

they come out of thin air, so that they are bound to their bodies as to a prison, drawn in by a certain natural enticement; but being released from their fleshly bonds, as set free from a long slavery, they then rejoice and rise upwards. And this is similar to the opinions of the Greeks who hold that good souls have a dwelling beyond the ocean.

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[The Pharisees say that] every soul is immortal, but that only those of good people are removed into another body; while those of the simple are subjected to everlasting punishment.

The Psalms of Solomon, arguably representative of Pharisaic thought, only once refer to resurrection, and there the reference is not unambiguously to a bodily experience:

Psalms of Solomon 3:11-12

The destruction of the sinner is forever

And such a person will not be remembered when God visits the righteous.

This is the fate of sinners forever;

But those who fear the Lord will be raised to eternal life.

And their life will be in the light of the Lord, and it will not go out.

It is worth considering which views of the plight of the dead may have been influential for those in the first century who had yearnings for Roman respectability, a yearning generally present in Corinth,⁸⁰ and specifically notable in the church.⁸¹ One obvious resource is

⁸⁰ Sophia B. Zoumbaki demonstrates that in this period, Corinth represented a centre of elite Greek desire for Roman respectability: "Connections of the upper Peloponnesian class with the most prominent colonists, especially of Corinth, could be equally useful both for economic and political benefit. It is not a mere coincidence [sic] that wealthy and ambitious Peloponnesians, who obtained Roman citizenship as a first step necessary for the fulfilment of their dreams of pursuing a Roman career, were in closer contact with the colony of Corinth, where they indeed held colonial offices". Sophia B. Zoumbaki, "The Composition of the Peloponnesian Elites in the Roman period and the Evolution of their Resistance and Approach to the Roman Rulers," *Tek* 9 (2008): 25-52; 45.

Josephus, who, it seems, consciously attempted to present Jewish conceptions of the afterlife in a way that would make sense and appeal to his Greek-reading Roman readership.⁸²

It is worth noting that although Josephus generally highlights a dualism between body and soul (with the soul being immortal),⁸³ he apparently does not consider the idea of future inhabitation of new bodies to be completely inaccessible to his readership.

Josephus' presentation of the views of the Pharisees in this regard (above) is evocative of the reception of both Pythagoras and Socrates, in allowing for the return of the soul to an earthly body. Elledge cites Poseidonius' summary of Pythagorean teachings:

For the teaching of Pythagoras is strong among them..., that the souls of men are immortal... and after an ordained number of years they come to life again..., as the soul enters into a different body.⁸⁴

Similarly, Socrates is presented by Plato as holding that "the living come to life again from among the dead". Elledge identifies this as "an ancient tradition of *palingenesis*"⁸⁵ – a word

⁸¹ Clarke argues that "in 1 Corinthians, Paul specifically addresses some in the congregation who were from the higher classes of Graeco-Roman society". Clarke, *Secular and Christian*, 57. Chrysostom comments: "He was sending this to the Corinthians, among whom there were many philosophers, who were always making fun of these things". Homily 39; PG 61.339.

⁸² Lester L. Grabbe comments: "Josephus is an apologist for Judaism and attempts to interpret Jewish history and religion in categories that would appeal to the educated Greek or Roman. On the negative side, this can lead to distortions; but, on the positive side, he makes clearer the common beliefs held by both Jew and gentile of the Mediterranean world". Lester L. Grabbe, "Eschatology in Philo and Josephus," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity Part 4: Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection, and the World to Come* (ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 163-186; 174.

⁸³ Elledge draws attention to this: "The majority of Josephus' comments on immortality present a *dualistic anthropology*. This anthropology preserves the *immortality of the soul* by accentuating the *mortality of the physical body*". Elledge, *Life After Death*, 128; emphasis original.

⁸⁴ Cited in Elledge, *Life After Death*, 104. Grabbe notes that this Pythagorean concept was influential on the "Middle Platonism" evidenced in Philo: "Eschatology," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity* (ed. Avery-Peck and Neusner), 165. However, Grabbe concludes of Philo: "One cannot imagine Philo's looking with favor on the idea of a general resurrection in which the souls of the righteous were again reunited with the body". 173.

⁸⁵ Elledge, *Life After Death*, 107; emphasis original. Thomas Aquinas believed that Platonists' belief in the soul's immortality was necessarily accompanied by belief in *re-incorporation*

utilised in the New Testament in relation to renewal (Titus 3:5) and, arguably, to the resurrection at the end of time (Matthew 19:28).⁸⁶

Josephus himself puts forward the view that virtuous souls will return to human bodies:

Josephus, *Jewish War* 3.372-74

We all, indeed, have mortal bodies, and they are made up of perishable matter; but the soul is immortal forever.... Do you not know that those who depart from life in accordance with the law of nature, giving back the loan they had received from God, when the Giver wishes to reclaim it, receive eternal fame, and their houses and families are kept firm, and their souls remain pure and obedient, being assigned to the holiest place in heaven. From there, at the revolution of the ages *they return to inhabit sanctified bodies*.⁸⁷

This echoes similar wording in Wisdom of Solomon:

Wisdom of Solomon 8:19-20

I was a good child, receiving a good soul, or rather, being good, *I came into an undefiled body*.

(Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* (trans. Fabian Larcher, O. P. and Daniel Keating) 923; Cited March 2010. Online: <http://www.aquinas.avemaria.edu/Aquinas-Corinthians.pdf>).

⁸⁶ J. Duncan M. Derrett surveys the ancient use of this word: “*Palingenesia* (resurrection) was visualized (1) in quite actual terms: of nature regenerated, of the world re-established, the dead reanimated, and animals resuscitated; (2) metaphorically of memory, or revival from fright, ‘rebirth’ in a substitute, revived fortunes, a spiritual regeneration; and (3), by way of fantasy, in Buddhist or Hindu reincarnation, Pythagorean or Stoic or Philonic/Pharisaic theory, of entities in space, of Dionysus or doctrines related to him, of Osiris, in Hermetic, magical and Mithraic cults, in Johannine soteriology, by Christian baptism, and in resurrection”. J. Duncan M. Derrett, “Palingenesia,” *JSNT* 20 (1984): 51-58; 58.

⁸⁷ A similar idea is found in *Against Apion* 2.30: “To those who keep the laws, and if it is necessary to die for them, eagerly die, God has granted them to exist again, and a better life at the revolution [of the ages]”. Grabbe comments that this perspective (of transmigration of souls into new bodies) is often overlooked in the study of Josephus: “This belief in *metempsychosis* seems to be a problem for some commentators, because they either ignore it (e.g., Bousset) or attempt to explain that this was not Josephus’ view”. Grabbe, “Eschatology,” in *Judaism in Late Antiquity* (ed. Avery-Peck and Neusner), 176.

It seems that the idea of a soul entering a body was not necessarily objectionable in a “Jewish Hellenistic” context, so long as it was a body fit to receive a soul. Such a possibility also appears to be the case in Seneca’s (notably, first century Roman) Stoicism. Elledge points to Seneca’s conception of future bodily restoration following a cosmic conflagration:

In the future,

when the time shall come in which the world extinguishes itself in order to be renewed, these things will destroy themselves by their own powers, and stars will clash with stars and whatever now shines forth from the (current) order (of the world) will burn, as all matter blazes in a single fire – us too. When it will seem good to God to set these things in motion once again, as all things are falling, *we who are blessed souls and who have been allotted eternal things shall be turned again to our former elements* as a small appendage to this vast ruin.⁸⁸

It should not be immediately assumed, then, that those inclined to fashionable Roman views in first-century Corinth would have found the idea of the enlivening of “our former elements” utterly inaccessible. Winter is too sweeping when he claims:

[R]esurrection would have been a complete enigma to the first-century Gentile who believed in the immortality of the soul and the cessation of the body’s senses at death.⁸⁹

It is certainly true that resurrection was a foreign belief in Roman Corinth, but it is not necessarily the case that the idea would have been an inaccessible enigma – especially for those who had been converted to a religion for which Messianic resurrection was central.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Cited in Elledge, *Life After Death*, 112; emphasis mine.

⁸⁹ Winter, *After Paul*, 104.

⁹⁰ Tomlin appears not to take this significant point into account when he states: “The difficulty the Corinthians have with the idea of resurrection is not that it has already taken place, but that

Thus it *may* be that alongside a denial of “the resurrection of the dead” in Corinth was an insistent preference for the immortality of the bodiless soul; but it would seem that a universal conviction on this matter is by no means certain. A general disregard for *bodiliness*, however, is common to many of the varied perspectives examined above and is implied by 15:35 (as well as earlier in the letter, in 6:13; for further exploration of this theme, see the section on the “third grouping” above).

Disregard for the Dead

One other feature of a range of early views of the afterlife is worthy of further consideration. Despite arguing for the extinction of the soul at death, Epicurus insists that a qualitative sort of immortality will be borne by those who practise his ways:

Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 135

But you [the follower of Epicurus’ ways] will live as a god among humans. For a person living amidst immortal goods is nothing like a mortal being.

The fact that Plutarch refers to Epicureans as those who call themselves immortal/imperishable indicates that such a concept of “qualitative” immortality was alive in the first century:⁹¹

Plutarch, *Against Epicurean Happiness* 1091b-c

What great pleasure belongs to these people [the Epicureans], and what blessing they enjoy, rejoicing about their lack of suffering and grief and pain! Therefore, is it not

given the corruptibility of the body, it just cannot happen.” Tomlin, “Christians and Epicurians,” 61; emphasis mine. The fact that Paul argues from a shared belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ (15:1-11) to a necessary belief in the bodily resurrection of Christians would indicate that it was not the conceivability of resurrection *per se* that was the issue. Delobel urges: “One ought not to forget that they regarded themselves as Christians!” Delobel, “The Corinthians’ (Un-)belief,” in *Resurrection in the New Testament*, 351.

⁹¹ Garcilazo, *The Corinthian Dissenters*, suggests that an idea of inaugurated immortality may have arisen through *Stoic* influence.

fitting, on account of these things, also to think and to speak as they do speak, calling themselves imperishable and equal to gods...?

Indeed, the Epicurean “rejoicing” in personal immortality went hand-in-hand with their lack of hope for the *dead*, a taunting of death that Hollander and Holleman also find in the Stoics and Cynics of the first century.⁹²

It may be possible that for Christian converts in Roman Corinth, a bold assumption or implication of qualitative personal immortality developed alongside Christian ideas of inaugurated spirituality, and accompanied the effective dismissal of the continued significance of community members (perhaps including leaders⁹³) who had died. Thus the problem would not primarily be focused on the personal postmortal expectations of the sloganists themselves but rather on the standing of *the dead*. Such a disdainful attitude need not have involved the conclusion that the dead were eternally lost; simply that their witness or participation was unable to be retrieved for the present enthusiastic experience of Christian spirituality. In the words of Aquinas’ caricature:

I do not care about sins, I do not care about the dead, as long as in this life I have peace and quiet.⁹⁴

This is somewhat similar to the way in which Charles A. Wanamaker envisages the problem in Thessalonica.⁹⁵ The “dead” are not considered to be beyond salvation or out of God’s hands; but they are assumed to be disqualified from participating in the immanent (or, in Corinth, *present-obsessed*) experience of superior spirituality and, in some sense, immortality.

Whereas in Thessalonica this led to mourning, conceivably the equivalent situation in Corinth

⁹² As mentioned above; see Hollander and Holleman, “Relationship of Death,” 276.

⁹³ It is interesting that “the dead” largely includes those who bear foundational witness to the gospel, including the 500 (“some of whom have fallen asleep”) and Paul (who “labours” and “dies every day”). The subsequent chapter then commends respect for those local leaders who “labour”.

⁹⁴ Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, 923.

⁹⁵ Wanamaker, *Epistles to the Thessalonians*.

led to actual or implied boasting: “Don’t worry about the dead; *we* are the spiritual and immortal ones”.

Perhaps, then, Wayne Meeks’ summary of the situation in Corinth could be fruitfully adapted:

The *pneumatikoi* of Corinth are using eschatological language, especially in forms that have already been adapted in the ritual of baptism, to warrant their claim to transcend some norms of ordinary behaviour and to support their conviction that their status is superior to that of persons still concerned with the fleshly world, including “weak” and “psychic” Christians.⁹⁶

To Meeks’ list of “weak” and “psychic” Christians could be added “the dead” as the allegedly pitiable inferiors of Corinthian spiritual superiority.

I take these two general orientations of *disregard for the body* and *disregard for the dead* to be historically reasonable elements of a worldview in first century Roman Corinth for Christian converts who demonstrably emphasised overconfident “spiritual” status.⁹⁷ Together, they provide a strikingly agreeable backdrop for the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15 provided in this chapter. From Paul’s perspective the Corinthians evidenced *proud human autonomy* in discounting the need for future divine enablement of “spirituality” and “immortality”. Against this situation, Paul emphasises the perspective that *humans are in need of the embodied Spiritual immortality that comes from God to the dead who belong to the resurrected Jesus Christ, at the time of his future revelation*. To rephrase, I reiterate what was said earlier. *Both death and the body are looked down upon in Corinth; whereas for Paul, death and the body form the necessary setting and locus for divine victory*.

⁹⁶ Meeks, “Social Functions,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World* (ed. Hellholm), 699.

⁹⁷ Delobel reasons: “The emphasis on salvation through baptism (v. 29!) proves that the Corinthians relate eternal life to a specifically Christian experience, the possession of the πνεύμα. The Corinthians are convinced that they are πνευματικοί already”. Delobel, “The Corinthians’ (Un-)belief,” in *Resurrection in the New Testament*, 350.

6. *Kerygmatic Rhetoric* and the Resurrection Chapter

Paul uses the problem of “denial of resurrection of the dead” as a paradigm of presumptuous human autonomy. In doing so, he strikingly uses terms and concepts that are reminiscent of chapters 1–4, where this fundamental pastoral problem was established. This revisiting of previous themes serves to signal a return from hortatory application to densely theological argumentation, and to bring to those themes intensifying reinforcement and climactic resolution. Corinthian boasting in the face of the cross (chapters 1–4) swells into proud (but perhaps unwitting) denunciation of the plight of the dead (chapter 15); but Paul insists that it is *the dead* in Christ who will be raised to share Christ’s resurrected Spirit-uality and immortality.

It may be that the slogan “there is no resurrection of the dead” represents Paul’s entextualisation of a proudly superior attitude in Corinth by which it was implied that “the dead” were disqualified from participating in the present experience of heightened spirituality. It would seem reasonable that the culturally recognisable issues of *disregard for the body* and *disregard for the dead* held some influence in the Corinthian church and go some way to illuminating the situation behind this chapter.

It would seem then that the question prompted by John Chrysostom and John Calvin regarding the placement of this discussion at the *end* of the letter might be answered with reference to the pastoral motivation of Paul’s *kerygmatic rhetoric*. Hearing about a variety of culturally-driven problems among the Christians of Corinth, Paul creatively perceives a unifying orientation of *boastful, present-obsessed human autonomy*. He seeks to subject this orientation, with its varied manifestations, to the corrective of his apostolic *kerygma*, insisting that believers must identify with the cross of Christ in the present, while looking ahead to sharing in Christ’s resurrected glory. The issue of “denial of the resurrection of the dead” thus lends itself naturally to the pinnacle of this rhetorical movement. The issue represents the epitome of bold Corinthian unwillingness to inhabit Christ’s cross, and provides an opportunity for Paul to

counter this unwillingness with the climactic solution of the divine gift of *future resurrection for the dead in Christ*.

They gave up their lives for the crucified one.⁹⁸

The one who has descended will rise with great gain.⁹⁹

Conclusion to Chapter 5

In this chapter I have noted that both Chrysostom and Calvin comment that the placement of the resurrection discussion defies the expectations of an arrangement governed by priority of importance.

Scholars often attempt to account for the material in this chapter by understanding the underlying issue as either a rejection of postmortality, a belief that the resurrection had already occurred, or a rejection of postmortal corporeality. Each of these perspectives brings clarity to some parts of the chapter, but none is exclusively sufficient.

The discussion may be illuminated by considering its rhetorical function before returning to consider the underlying situation. This rhetorical function, I argue, is best understood in terms of Paul's *kerygmatic* rhetoric of reversal. All of the main issues in the chapter are anticipated in chapters 1–4, such that the resurrection discussion heightens the problem of proud human autonomy raised in those chapters, while bringing climactic resolution: humans are in need of the glory and immortality that can only come *from God to the dead in Christ*.

The historical situation behind this discussion may be illuminated by the themes of *disregard for the body* and *disregard for the dead*, observable to varying degrees, for example, in first century Stoicism and Epicureanism. It seems possible, in particular, that some in Corinth are downplaying the ongoing significance of those who have died for the present experience of

⁹⁸ John Chrysostom, Homily 7; PG 61.65.

⁹⁹ Homily 22; PG 61.185.

“spirituality” and “immortality”. Paul counters that true Spirit-uality and immortality are *only* promised to the *dead in Christ*, at the time when present powers will be destroyed. Paul’s *kerygmatic* rhetoric of reversal is thus brought to a climax.

Conclusion

There are three broad areas in which this dissertation might be seen to offer a contribution to scholarship: firstly, the relationship between certain *interpretative approaches to 1 Corinthians*; secondly, the study of *Pauline rhetoric*; and thirdly, *the coherence and arrangement of 1 Corinthians*.

1. Interpretative Approaches to 1 Corinthians

One consistent interest throughout this study has been the complementarity of socio-historical and pastoral-theological perspectives on the issues of 1 Corinthians. These two perspectives enlighten *situation* and *entextualisation* respectively.

In the last three decades, much fruitful work has been done on the socio-historical background to the “problems” addressed in 1 Corinthians. Throughout the dissertation I have drawn on such investigations that elucidate the problems as accommodations to secular ethics in Corinth (particularly secular models of leadership). There are also many interpreters who have explored the pastoral or theological direction of the letter.

I pointed out in chapter 3 that John Chrysostom models an approach that combines both of these modes of attention. He understands the presenting situation in Corinth to relate especially to the prominence in the community of polished orators, whose would-be elite followers developed a disregard for the truly godly leaders. Chrysostom concurrently views this situation (and the parallel situation in fourth century Antioch) along the grain of Paul’s pastoral evaluation. The situation exudes *boastful, present-obsessed human autonomy*. In other words, in preferring polished orators while looking down upon socially unimpressive (but godly) leaders, the believers in Corinth are attaching their status to *humans* rather than to *Christ*, and are failing to defer their expectations for the full manifestation of “spirituality” and “immortality” to the time of *Christ’s* cosmic manifestation.

My own approach, in emulation of John Chrysostom, has been to complement the recent socio-historical work on the letter by focusing on the way in which a pastoral-theological perspective illuminates the arrangement of these issues as cohesive communication. Thus I have viewed the issues of chapters 1–4 both as *political squabbles over leadership* and as *proud human autonomy*. I have viewed the correctives of chapters 5–14 both as *responses to secular ethical standards* and as *the summons to identify bodily with Christ*. I have viewed the denial of the resurrection in chapter 15 both as *a culturally observable response to the body and the dead* and as *the ultimate refusal to take on the role of the cruciform sufferer*.

2. Pauline Rhetoric

This “pastoral-theological perspective”, of course, relates to the nature of Paul’s *rhetoric*, a major interest in this study. I have argued that Rhetorical Criticism as it has often been practised in the investigation of *macro-structure* is a rather narrow exercise, involving essentially the attempted detection of particular *forms*, or the detection of functional correlations between letter sections and the *conventional parts of a speech*. I have suggested that attention to the *conceptual imagery* of the *kerygma* may be a fruitful way of further broadening the investigation of Pauline rhetoric.

I have suggested that it is too simplistic to view the communicative strategies of a particular subculture within the Roman Empire as being effectively dissolved into a generic “Greco-Roman rhetoric”. Rather, Paul is a figure whose experience on the Damascus Road led him to a life-altering *kerygma* of the Messiah who died, rose, and awaits cosmic manifestation. This *kerygma*, it seems, went on to shape the ways in which Paul adopted and adapted rhetorical resources, whether Jewish or Greco-Roman.

I have sought, therefore, to account for the rhetoric of 1 Corinthians by giving attention not only to general Greco-Roman oratorical and literary devices or *topoi* (such as the technique of digression or the image of the multi-membered body), or general Jewish literary techniques (such as culturally relevant summaries of the Torah in the Hellenistic period), but most

fundamentally to Paul's *kerygma* of Jesus Christ. It is in this *kerygma* that the pervasive cultural conceptualisation of divinely arranged reversal in early Judaism is renegotiated to become the message of the crucified, risen, and ascended Jesus Christ. It is in this *kerygma* that traditional patterns of (Greco-Roman-influenced) Jewish ethical catechesis are renegotiated to represent identification with Jesus Christ in his bodily death, resurrection, and deferred manifestation. And it is this *kerygma* that gives shape and substance to the body of 1 Corinthians.

I contend that this not only does better justice to the identity of Paul the "rhetor", but results in a more persuasive reading of 1 Corinthians. In particular, the placement and meaning of the resurrection chapter, which Mitchell's rhetorical analysis fails to elucidate, are explained simply and elegantly by the application of what I have called *kerygmatic rhetoric*.¹

This dissertation therefore represents one answer to the recent calls by Thomas Olbricht and Peter Lampe:

We need to invent a rhetorical criticism that is consonant with biblical discourse.²

Future research should carefully note also the features of Paul's rhetoric that *cannot* be "compared" and thus have become typically Pauline and Christian rhetoric.³

¹ This broader conception of Pauline rhetoric, which views the conceptualisation of the *kerygma* as a rhetorical resource, may prove fruitful beyond 1 Corinthians. Indeed, it should be noted that the letters of the New Testament commonly arose in an environment in which Jesus was experienced and conceptualised (not least in liturgy) as died-and-exalted Messiah and archetype. This conceptualisation may be evidenced flexibly in the arrangement and formulations of many New Testament letters – whether in a "*kerygmatic rhetoric of reversal*" (1 Corinthians), a "*rhetoric of kerygmatic identity and outworking*" (Ephesians), a "*rhetoric of kerygmatic exemplars*" (Philippians), or other forms. This is not to deny the adoption of Greco-Roman epistolary or rhetorical features in these letters; but rather to be attentive to the context in which such adoption or adaptation occurred: that of a cultural group decisively transformed by the *kerygma* of Jesus Christ.

² Olbricht, "Rhetorical Criticism," 27.

³ Lampe, "Rhetorical Analysis," in *Paul and Rhetoric*, (ed. Sampley and Lampe), 19.

I do not consider it unreasonable to describe 1 Corinthians as evidencing “deliberative rhetoric”, if by that term one means that the letter attempts to persuade its hearers to take a particular course of action. But I contend that the concept of a *kerygmatic rhetoric of reversal* presented in this study carries greater explanatory power than the conventional macro-structure of a deliberative speech as an account of the movement of 1 Corinthians.

3. The Coherence and Arrangement of 1 Corinthians

I therefore present a summary of the arrangement of 1 Corinthians, expressing the coherence of the letter as a pastorally-formulated response to problems of cultural compromise in Corinth (arising especially from contentions over leadership), urging *dependent identification with Christ in his death and deferred risen manifestation* as an alternative to the present Corinthian *boastful, present-obsessed human autonomy*.⁴

⁴ Although my study has particularly concerned the generally-agreed *main body* of the letter (1:10-15:58), it will be evident from this overview that chapter 16 fits entirely with the direction I have suggested for the rest of the letter. Paul applies the climactic exhortation of 15:58 to the primary presenting problem in Corinth, calling the community to *honour those who labour* (rather than being puffed up over them or crowding them out).

Chapters 1–4: Divisive Boasting Over Human Leaders is Set Against the Present Inhabitation of Christ’s Cross

1:10–2:5: The cross and human wisdom
2:6–3:4: The Spirit and human capability
3:5–4:5: Divine work and human authority
4:6–21: Divinely ordained death and human boasting

Chapters 5–14: The Cross Applied

Chapters 5–7: The Cross Applied I: “Your Body Belongs to the Lord”

Sexual Immorality, Impurity and Greed

A: 5:1–13: Sexual Immorality (the refusal to judge)
B: 6:1–11: Greedy exploitation (an apparent inability to judge)
A': 6:12–7:40: Sexual Immorality, the body, marriage

Chapters 8–14: The Cross Applied II: “Discern the Body”

Knowledge and Rights

A: 8:1–13: Meat offered to idols (using knowledge and rights to endanger weaker brothers and sisters)
B: 9:1–27: Paul’s example/defence (foregoing rights for others and self)
A': 10:1–11:1: Meat offered to idols (foregoing rights for self and others)

Tradition and Division

A: 11:2–16: “I praise you for keeping the traditions I passed on” (public worship)
B: 11:17–22: “I do *not* praise you” (in both v17 and v22)
A': 11:23–34: “I passed on to you what I also received” (tradition of Lord’s Supper)

Gifts and Love

A: 12:1–31: Gifts within the body (mutual interdependence)
B: 12:31–13:13: Love
A': 14:1–40: Gifts (for ordered edification of the whole)

Chapter 15: Disregard for the Dead is Set Against the Future Inhabitation of Christ’s Resurrection

15:1–11: The gospel of Christ’s death and resurrection, proclaimed by Paul, believed by the Corinthians, but in danger of vanity
15:12–28: The trajectory of Christ’s resurrection from the dead – a trajectory that ends with the resurrection of believers and the destruction of enemy powers
15:29–34: The example of those who effectively accept death in this life, including Paul’s ongoing experience of death
15:35–49: God’s creative ability to raise bodies and initiate Spiritual status for those who would otherwise be “natural”
15:50–58: A deferral of immortality to the power and timing of God, rather than the ability of flesh and blood

Chapter 16: Concluding Local Application: Those Who Labour

16:1–4: Collection for Jerusalem
16:5–12: External figureheads: Paul, Timothy, Apollos
16:13–18: Church labourers: Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus
16:19–24: Greetings

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