INTRODUCTION

The unity, arrangement, and central theme of 1 Corinthians are not viewed with consensus in New Testament scholarship.[1] In this monograph, which is a revision of my Ph.D. 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[2] that

[1] Two recent commentaries are illustrative. Pheme Perkins sees in the letter a 'checklist division of topics' which may well have been written 'over some time'. P. Perkins, *First Corinthians*, PCNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), p. 25. George T. Montague similarly refrains from discerning a cohering theme to the structure, noting that 'Paul treats many topics in this letter'. G. T. Montague, *First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), p. 20.

[2] I use the word 'rhetoric' here in its broadest sense. J. Paul Sampley adopts this sense of the term when he characterises rhetoric as 'the art of persuasion', and notes that the undisputed Paulines 'are rhetorical through and through, because the different letters are oriented towards future performance and try to move their audiences to live out the gospel more fully, or to amend their ways, or to behave better toward one another, or to refrain from judging one another'. J. P. Sampley, 'Ruminations Occasioned by the Publication of These Essays and the End of the Seminar', in J. P. Sampley and P. Lampe (eds.), *Paul and Rhetoric* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), pp. ix–xvii; p. ix. Similarly, it is this broad sense that is relevant in Vernon K. Robbins' reflection on his own project: 'The question for us is how first century Christians appropriated and reconfigured conventional rhetorical discourses in the Mediterranean world, which included the discourses in the Hebrew Bible.' V. K. Robbins, 'Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation', in A. Eriksson, T. H. Olbricht, and W. Übelacker (eds.), *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2002), pp. 27–65; p. 29. With great relevance to my own project, Peter Lampe utilises the broad sense of the term in posing the question, 'Does a genuinely early Christian rhetoric begin to emerge already in New Testament times?' P. Lampe, 'Rhetorical Analysis of Pauline Texts – Quo Vadit? Methodological Reflections', in J. P. Sampley and P. Lampe (eds.), *Paul and Rhetoric* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), pp. 3–21; p. 20. Ben Witherington's distinction in uses of the term is useful: 'Most NT scholars at this juncture are quite convinced that micro-rhetoric can be found in NT documents, particularly in Paul's letters, but also elsewhere. By micro-rhetoric I mean the use of rhetorical devices within the NT documents – for instance the use of rhetorical questions, dramatic hyperbole, personification, amplification, irony, enthymemes (i.e., incomplete syllogisms), and the like. More controversial is whether macro-rhetoric is also used in the NT. By macro-rhetoric I mean whether the overall structure of some NT documents reflects the use of rhetorical categories and divisions used in ancient speeches.' B. Witherington III, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament*

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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 large-scale epistolary arrangement and ethical formulation. I suggest that this results in an analysis that does eloquent justice both to the historical Paul and to the flow of the letter.

My contention is that Paul assigns a pastorally conceived unity to the complex of problems in Corinth, and allows the pattern of his *kerygma* to give overall shape to his epistolary response. The Corinthians are conceived as exhibiting boastful, present-obsessed autonomy, and are summoned rather 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.[3] Thus the main body of the letter (1:10–15:58) proceeds from *cross* to *resurrection*. This overall kerygmatic movement renegotiates 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. The central ethical portion of the letter (Chapters 5–14) renegotiates Hellenistic-Jewish patterns of ethical argumentation, such that they are now configured in terms of bodily union with the cruciform Messiah.

Thus Paul's *kerygma* informs the governing macro-rhetoric of the letter, building on and renegotiating previously existing communicative resources. Within this macro-rhetorical kerygmatic schema, one can detect numerous conventions of arrangement that Paul adopts and adapts at lower rhetorical levels, from utilisation of epistolary formulas, to adoption of *ABA'* oral patterning, to interlocutions, to positive and negative proofs. While attention to techniques at this level will illuminate Paul's argumentation, I suggest they must be viewed as subservient to the movement of Paul's gospel-driven macro-rhetoric.

My argument proceeds in five chapters.

In Chapter 1, I present *the kerygma of reversal*. I argue that *divinely accomplished dual reversal* was an important cultural conceptualisation

(Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), p. 7. In this work, I am particularly interested in what Witherington labels 'macro-rhetoric', although I also recognise the need to consider the relationship of this level of rhetoric to other levels.

[3] I am in agreement with J. Brian Tucker, who argues that 'Paul's apocalyptic eschatology focuses on Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. For him, these two events are the bridge between the two aeons and provide the central wisdom from which the identity of the Corinthian Christ-followers must be formed.' J. B. Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling: Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), p. 191.

of early Judaism, and was significant in early Christian interpretation of Jesus. I suggest that, renegotiated as apostolic *kerygma*, this was a viable communicative 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) rather to take the role of the *cruciform sufferer* (who will be vindicated).

In Chapter 2, I step back to situate my interpretation within relevant scholarship on the letter. I investigate arguments against the compositional unity of the letter and survey different models of the letter's coherence. A number of these models illuminate particular micro-rhetorical techniques in the letter, and certain approaches go some way towards acknowledging the impact of Paul's renegotiated theological heritage on the macro-rhetorical movement of the letter. 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 *socio-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 current leaders were being undermined and pushed aside as a result of the believers' preference for polished oratory. 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. In harmony with Chrysostom, I consider that Paul responds to this pastorally conceived problem by making use of certain conventional rhetorical motifs and techniques at a micro-rhetorical level, but without utilising a conventional Greco-Roman macro-rhetorical arrangement. Rather, I argue that the conceptual governance of Paul's *kerygma* makes good sense of the place of these opening chapters within the letter.

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 of passionate desire to indulge bodily taboos (especially sexual immorality, greed, and impurity) to a commendation of interpersonal 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 kerygmatic corrective of Chapters 1–4 of

1 Corinthians, as Paul insists that the Corinthians identify 'bodily' with the cruciform Christ.

In Chapter 5, I consider the historical background, micro-rhetorical flow, and macro-rhetorical function of the resurrection discussion in 1 Corinthians 15. In terms of historical background, I suggest that the situation may be illuminated by the culturally recognisable themes of *celebration of the (present) body* and the assumption of the *inferiority of the dead*. In terms of micro-rhetorical movement, the chapter may be interpreted by using the terminology of conventional positive and negative proofs. In terms of macro-rhetorical function I argue that the resurrection-denial is presented as the epitome of Corinthian refusal to accept the role of *the dead* (and thus the cruciform), while Paul insists that it is in fact *the dead* in Christ who will receive resurrected vindication from God when present powers are brought to nothing.

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 communicative resource for Paul as a first-century writer, or for the recipients as first-century hearers. This study seeks to demonstrate this credibility, and, furthermore, to argue that such a reading of the letter carries substantial explanatory power for all parts of the letter.

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THE *KERYGMA* OF REVERSAL

The concept of reversal as a communicative resource

The question of the arrangement of 1 Corinthians necessarily raises the question of *communicative 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]

[1] Lampe, 'Rhetorical Analysis', p. 19; emphasis original. This imbalance has been recognised for some time. In 1994, Khiok-Khng Yeo commented, 'In rhetorical study of the NT [New Testament], 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.' K.-K. Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10: A Formal Analysis with Preliminary Suggestions for a Chinese, Cross-Cultural Hermeneutic* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), p. 64. In 1990, Dale Patrick and Allen Scult commented, 'In order to lead to a deeper penetration into the particularity and concreteness of the text, the "rhetoric" in rhetorical criticism must be broadened to its fullest range in the classical tradition, namely, *as the means by which a text establishes and manages its relationship to its audience in*

6 *The* kerygma *of reversal*

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

> 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]

Kenneth Bailey has proposed a redirected emphasis on *Hebrew* modes of argumentation:

> [I]n 1 Corinthians, Paul, a Middle Easterner Jewish Christian, uses rhetorical styles that were available to him in the writing of the Hebrew prophets (particularly Isaiah and Amos).[4]

It is my contention that although Paul employs certain Greco-Roman and Jewish oratorical and literary devices, the overall movement of the letter is not sufficiently explained by these conventions.[5] Rather, I propose that the macro-structure of the letter evidences the innovative compositional impact of Paul's *kerygma*.[6] The movement of the letter body from 'cross'

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order to achieve a particular effect. This, of course, includes stylistic devices, but goes beyond style to encompass the whole range of linguistic instrumentalities by which a discourse constructs a particular relationship with an audience in order to communicate a message.' D. Patrick and A. Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*, BL 26 (Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), p. 12; emphasis original.

[2] D. F. Watson, 'The Three Species of Rhetoric and the Study of the Pauline Epistles', in J. P. Sampley and P. Lampe (eds.), *Paul and Rhetoric* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), pp. 25–47; p. 47; emphasis mine.

[3] D. F. Watson, 'The Role of Style in Pauline Epistles: From Ornamentation to Argumentative Strategies', in J. P. Sampley and P. Lampe (eds.), *Paul and Rhetoric* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), pp. 119–39; p. 122.

[4] K. E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), p. 19.

[5] I address this in some detail in Chapter 2.

[6] I do not deny James Dunn's point that it is more responsible to speak of early Christian *kerygmata* than a singular primitive *kerygma*: J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, 3rd edn (London: SCM, 2006), especially pp. 11–35. Nevertheless, while it is true that Seeberg, Dodd, and others argued too forcefully for a neat early proclamation as they sought an influential form, it remains reasonable that the apostolic kerygmatic proclaimers had a discernible concordance. Indeed, Paul himself assumes as much in 1 Corinthians 15:11. For a further exploration of this topic, see the following: B. S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993); B. Edsall, '*Kerygma*, Catechesis, and Other Things We Used to Find: Twentieth-Century Research on Early Christian Teaching Since

to 'resurrection' exemplifies the early Christian interest in identifying believers with Christ's passion, which was itself interpreted with the Jewish conceptual motif of divine reversal.[7]

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.

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.[8]

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.[9]

Alfred Seeberg (1903)', *CBR* 10/3 (2012), 410–41; and my own article, M. R. Malcolm, 'Biblical Hermeneutics and *Kerygmatic* Responsibility', in S. E. Porter and M. R. Malcolm (eds.), *The Future of Biblical Interpretation: Responsible Plurality in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, forthcoming).

[7] There may be various ways in which the early Christian *kerygma/ta* resource the formulation and arrangement of early Christian communication; but 1 Corinthians in particular evidences this impact in terms of *dual reversal*.

[8] G. E. Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (London: SCM, 1952), p. 13; emphasis original.

[9] A. C. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 43; emphasis original. See also A. C. Thiselton, 'Knowledge, Myth and Corporate

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.[10]

From the 1950s with Eduard Schweizer,[11] 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.[12] 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.[13] So the enemies of the king – the 'rulers' – are variously pictured as 'devious', 'evildoers', 'arrogant', 'haughty', 'boastful', and merely *human* (e.g. Psalm 9:20–1, Greek: ἄνθρωποί 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.

Memory', in *Believing in the Church: The Corporate Nature of Faith, DCCE* (London: SPCK, 1981), pp. 45–78.

[10] J. Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), p. 165.

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

[12] 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.' R. B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 118.

[13] 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'. Y. Gitay, 'Psalm 1 and the Rhetoric of Religious Argumentation', in L. J. de Regt, J. de Waard, and J. P. Fokkelmann (eds.), *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1996), pp. 232–40; p. 232.

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
>
> 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 worship[14] 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 motif 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:[15]

> Thanksgiving Psalms 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 –
> For my steps come from you.
> And these people have fought against my life because of you,

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

[15] 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 (=4Q*491* 8–10 i 8,12).' E. Schuller, 'A Hymn from a Cave Four Hodayot Manuscript: 4Q427 7 i + ii', *JBL* 112/4 (1993), 605–28; 616.

> 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,[16] but is a prominent pattern nonetheless, informing the world-view of those who share in its recitation. The boastful enemy, being merely human, eventually receives mortal 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

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