PAUL AND THE RHETORIC OF REVERSAL IN 1 CORINTHIANS

The first letter to the Corinthians is one of the most discussed biblical books in New Testament scholarship today. Despite this, there has been no consensus on its arrangement and central theme, in particular why the topic of the resurrection was left until the end of the letter, and what its theological significance would have been to the Corinthian church. Matthew R. Malcolm analyses this rhetoric of ‘reversal’, examines the unity of the epistle, and addresses key problems behind particular chapters. He argues that while Jewish and Greco-Roman resources contribute significantly to the overall arrangement of the letter, Paul writes as one whose identity and rhetorical resources of structure and imagery have been transformed by his preaching, or kerygma, of Christ. The study will be of interest to students of New Testament studies, Pauline theology and early Christianity.

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Paul and the Rhetoric of Reversal in 1 Corinthians

The Impact of Paul’s Gospel on His Macro-Rhetoric

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Frontmatter
More information
CONTENTS

Acknowledgements viii
Formatting, translation, and abbreviations x
Macro-structure of 1 Corinthians xiv

Introduction 1

1 The kerygma of reversal 5
2 The unity and coherence of 1 Corinthians 58
3 1 Corinthians 1–4: divisive boasting over human leaders is set against the present inhabitation of Christ’s cross 113
4 1 Corinthians 5–14 and Paul’s ethics ‘in the Lord’ 168
5 1 Corinthians 15: pessimism for the dead is set against the future inhabitation of Christ’s resurrection 231

Conclusion 267

Bibliography 271
Biblical index 296
Ancient index 301
General index 303
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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:

AGAJU Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJT American Journal of Theology
AnB Analecta Biblica
ANRW Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
ANTC Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
AYB Anchor Yale Bible
BBR Bulletin for Biblical Research
BECNT Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
Bib Biblica
BL Bible and Literature Series
BNTC Black’s New Testament Commentaries
BR Biblical Research
BSac Bibliotheca Sacra
CBET Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBR Currents in Biblical Research
CEIL Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CELCR Converging Evidence in Language and Communication Research
Formatting, translation, and abbreviations

CLSCC  Cognitive Linguistic Studies in Cultural Contexts
CNT  Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConB  Coniectanea Biblica
CrTR  Criswell Theological Review
CTM  Currents in Theology and Mission
CTR  Chinese Theological Review
DCCE  Doctrine Commission of the Church of England
DisS  Discourse Studies
DJ  Direction Journal
ECF  The Early Church Fathers
EKKNT  Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
EQ  Evangelical Quarterly
ETRel  Études Théologiques et Religieuses
ExAu  Ex Auditu
ExpT  Expository Times
GAP  Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha
GBS  Guides to Biblical Scholarship
GTJ  Grace Theological Journal
Hermen  Hermeneia
Hesp  Hesperia
HNT  Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTA  Historisch Theologische Auslegung
HTR  Harvard Theological Review
HTS  Harvard Theological Studies
HUZ  Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
HvTSt  Hervormde Teologiese Studies
ICC  International Critical Commentary Series
Interp  Interpretation
ISBE  International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
JAAR  Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JBL  Journal of Biblical Literature
JBR  Journal of Bible and Religion
JCC  Journal of Cognition and Culture
JES  Journal of Ecumenical Studies
JETS  Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JSI  Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNT  Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOT  Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JTS  Journal of Theological Studies
xii Formatting, translation, and abbreviations

KEKNT  Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
LCL    Loeb Classical Library
LNNTS  Library of New Testament Studies
LITE   Library of Theological Ethics
NCBBC  New Cambridge Bible Commentary
Neot   Neotestamentica
NGC    New German Critique
NCICT  New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC  New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT   Novum Testamentum
NTS    New Testament Studies
ÖTKNT  Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
PBMT   Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monographs
PCNT   Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament
PNMC   Pillar New Testament Commentary
PTMS   Princeton Theological Monograph Series
RHPR   Revue D’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses
RNT    Reading the New Testament
RSQ    Rhetorical Society Quarterly
RTR    Reformed Theological Review
SacP   Sacra Pagina
SBJO   Southern Baptist Journal of Theology
SBL    Society of Biblical Literature
SBT    Studies in Biblical Theology
SIJD   Schriften Des Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum
SJC    Studies in Judaism and Christianity
SJIT   Scottish Journal of Theology
SP     Studia Patristica
Spring Springfelder
SVTP   Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TB     Tyndale Bulletin
TBW    The Biblical World
Tek    Tekmiria
TGST   Tesi Gregoriana Serie Teologia
Them   Themelios
THNNT  Two Horizons New Testament Commentary
TKNT   Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
TNNTC  Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>WGRW</td>
<td>Writings from the Greco-Roman World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WUNT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>WW</td>
<td>Word and World</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZNW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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MACRO-STRUCTURE OF 1 CORINTHIANS

Chapters 1–4: divisive boasting over human leaders is set against the present inhabitation of Christ’s cross
(first major rhetorical unit, establishing the divine corrective of the kerygma with the witness of Scripture, climaxing with a summons to imitate the deathly paradeigma of the apostles)

1:10–2:5: God’s foolish/weak/ignoble cross (which saves) and human wisdom/strength/nobility (which will be abolished)
2:6–3:4: God’s Spirit and human capability
3:5–4:5: God’s work and human authority
4:6–21: God’s (cruciform) way and human boasting

Chapters 5–14: the cross applied

Chapters 5–7: The cross applied (I): ‘Your body belongs to the Lord’
(opening topics of ethical application, placement of which is informed by the kerygmatic renegotiation of ethical convention)

Sexual immorality, impurity, and greed
(second major rhetorical unit, with demonstrations informed by the imagery of the kerygma)

A: 5:1–13: Sexual immorality and the sacrificed Christ
B: 6:1–11: Greedy exploitation by those who will judge the world

A’: 6:12–7:40: Sexual immorality, the body, and marriage of those bought by God.

Chapters 8–14: The cross applied (II): ‘Discern the body’
(subsequent topics of ethical application, placement of which is informed by the kerygmatic renegotiation of ethical convention)
Macro-structure of 1 Cor.

Knowledge and rights
(third major rhetorical unit, with demonstrations informed by the imagery of the kerygma)
A: 8:1–13: Meat offered to idols and scandalising the ‘weak’
B: 9:1–27: Paul’s example/defence in becoming weak
  A’: 10:1–11:1: Meat offered to idols: are we stronger than he?

Tradition and division
(fourth major rhetorical unit, with demonstrations informed by the imagery of the kerygma)
A: 11:2–16: ‘I praise you for keeping the traditions’ but ‘all things come from God’
B: 11:17–22: ‘I do not praise you’
A’: 11:23–34: ‘I passed on to you what I also received’, but you invite God’s judgement of weakness, illness, and death

Gifts and love
(fifth major rhetorical unit, with demonstrations informed by the imagery of the kerygma)
A: 12:1–31: Gifts within the body are given, such that the weak/dishonourable/ignoble are indispensable
B: 12:31–13:13: Love will not be abolished
A’: 14:1–40: Gifts and self-restraint for the ordered edification of the whole

Chapter 15: Pessimism for the dead is set against the future inhabitation of Christ’s resurrection
(sixth major rhetorical unit, confirming the corrective of the kerygma with the witness of Scripture, culminating with a liberating summons to persevere in labour)
15:1–11: The gospel of the died and risen Christ, attested by witnesses who are marred by death
15:12–19: The Corinthian denial of ‘the resurrection of the dead’ undermines apostolic witness and its effects
15:20–8; 29–34: Christ has been raised, initiating both the resurrection of the dead who belong to him (such as the apostles), and the abolition of rival rulers
15:35–49: While humans offer a dead, bare ‘seed’ of a body in the present, the creator God will bring transformative spiritual clothing in the future
Macro-structure of 1 Cor.

15:50–7: All human (‘flesh and blood’) mortality must be clothed with divine immortality in Christ
15:58: This validates labour in the present

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