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Method and Perspective

Method

This study will examine how the authorial (i.e., the "implied" or "textual") audience responds to the chiastically structured arguments in 2 Cor 1:1—6:2, and particularly how they respond to the climactic call to reconciliation in 2 Cor 5:16—6:2. This examination is based on the authorial audience's (i.e., the Corinthian community's)[1] prior knowledge and recollection, which would include 1 Corinthians, the events that transpired between the letters, and the content of 2 Cor 1:1—6:2. The audience-oriented method of this investigation will treat 5:16—6:2 as a climax within its immediate contextual argument, which begins in 4:15.

Audience Oriented

The methodology of this proposed study will employ the tools of audience-response criticism. This method focuses on how the "authorial audience" responds to Paul's rhetorical argument in the text as the letter progresses. Within the scope of the audience-oriented method, the "authorial audience" is understood to be a historical group of addressees of whom the author is cognizant as he/she writes.[2] This is not a group

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1. To avoid cumbersome repetition, the authorial audience in this study may also be referred to as "the Corinthians," "the Corinthian community," and "the Christian community in Corinth."

2. Carter and Heil, *Matthew's Parables*, 12–13.

that is historically reconstructed or created by the reader; rather, the authorial audience is understood as the group of addressees implied within the text, and thus may be referred to as the "implied," "textual," "intended," or "ideal" audience.[3]

In employing the audience-oriented method, this study follows the work of Peter Rabinowitz and its developments by Warren Carter and John Paul Heil. The "authorial audience," as Rabinowitz explains, is "the hearers or readers the author has 'in mind' in creating the text," that is, "the hypothetical [audience] who the author hoped or expected would" experience the text.[4] This audience is deduced from the text itself and is not "created" in the mind of the reader as the text progresses, as some reading theorists propose.[5] The author "assumes this audience possesses the socio-cultural knowledge and interpretive skills necessary to actualize the text's meaning."[6]

Pace Wolfgang Iser, this study agrees with Carter's and Heil's adoption of Rabinowitz's terminology of audience as opposed to "reader."[7] As Carter and Heil explain, "the term 'reader' suggests interaction with the text through reading of one's own copy."[8] "Reader" then is anachronistic

3. "Intended/ideal audience" here is to be taken as synonymous with the "implied," "authorial," and "textual" audience since within audience theory all five of these terms are dependent on the author's understanding of the audience as he/she addresses them in the text. This is distinct from reading theories that differentiate the above categories in the following manner: the intended audience is the addressees to whom the author intended to write; the implied audience is constructed by the reader in the process of reading; and the ideal audience is the group that would understand all of the author's rhetorical allusions and strategies. Audience theory, however, equalizes all of these categories under the auspices of "authorial" or "textual" audience. Since the "implied/intended" audience is the group of addressees that the author imagines as he/she writes, this group is ipso facto "ideal" in the sense that the author intends for them to be able to understand his/her allusions and rhetorical strategies within the text as the letter is composed.

4. Rabinowitz, "Whirl without End," 85.

5. See, e.g., Moloney, *Belief*, 9–10; Byrne, *Romans*, 3–4; Osborne, "Hermeneutics," 285. In reading theory, the reader molds the text and identity of the implied author and implied reader(s) like clay. However, in audience theory, the identities of the implied author and implied audience are more static since they are defined within the text by the author. For this reason, the "implied" audience in audience theory may be referred to as the "authorial" or the "ideal" audience. This is not a "real" audience that is presently reading, nor a historical construct, but is based on how the author describes the audience within the text.

6. Rabinowitz, "Whirl," 85.

7. Iser, "Indeterminacy," 29.

8. Carter and Heil, *Matthew's Parables,* 15.

for the life setting of an ancient letter since the author did not imagine individuals reading his/her letter privately, but rather imagined his/her surrogate delivering the letter in an oral, public performance before the intended audience. Furthermore, "hearing a text means interacting with it not as a printed object but more as a process and event."[9]

In addition, this study is "rhetorical" (in the broad sense of the term) in that it utilizes a "text-centered" approach that focuses not on classical rhetorical forms but on listening carefully to the repeated terms, themes, and chiastic structures in the text of the letter to determine and evaluate Paul's rhetorical strategy.[10] Paul's focus on his ministry and the call to reconciliation dominate the first half of the letter. This study evaluates the climactic section, 5:16—6:2, of Paul's apologia and call for the community to be reconciled to him.

The Authorial Audience in Corinth

The audience-oriented method explicates how the audience implied by the text is expected to respond based on what is stated in the text. In this case, the authorial audience is the Christian community at Corinth whom Paul founded, preached to, and visited. The letter 2 Corinthians serves to convey Paul's presence and stands as one event among many in the relationship between the apostle and the community.[11] The method of this study presumes that the letter was written in such a manner as to be understood by the authorial audience and thus conveys terms, positions, and phrases that would be readily understood when heard by the Corinthian community.[12]

9. Ibid., 16.

10. For a similar approach to rhetorical study, see Heil, *Ephesians*, 9.

11. In efforts to defend the letter's integrity, or to explain away the shift in tone at 2 Cor 10, some scholars (e.g., Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, 28) have argued that the letter has different intended audiences. For example, 2 Cor 1–7 is written for the pro-Pauline contingent in Corinth, 2 Cor 10–13 is written for the anti-Pauline contingent and the opponents, and 2 Cor 8–9 is intended for both the Corinthians and the churches in Achaia. These positions, however, are unsupported by the textual evidence. The Corinthians and their relationship to Paul are addressed throughout the letter, including 2 Cor 10–13 (esp. 10:12–18; 12:14–21). Furthermore, why would Paul say that he loves the opponents (11:11)? From a text-centered perspective, the "audience" is the group of addressees listed in 2 Cor 1:1–2, and the letter they are intended to receive is 2 Corinthians in its present canonical form (with textual variants to be considered).

12. Heil, *Rhetorical Role*, 6–8.

One system of terms and phrases that Paul presumes his audience to understand is Scripture. During his initial visit, Paul likely preached the gospel with OT support. This fact is important to an audience-oriented reading since the community was likely comprised of Jews and Gentile "God-fearers" from the synagogue, as well as Greek and Roman pagan converts (1 Cor 1:22–24; 7:18; 9:20-21; 12:13). Given the number of OT allusions and citations in 1 and 2 Corinthians, it is likely that Paul presumed that the Corinthians were familiar enough with Israel's Scriptures to understand their use in his rhetorical argument.[13]

This study follows the unanimous position of scholarship that the author of 2 Corinthians is the historical apostle Paul, the author of the uncontested Pauline letters. The historical Paul wrote 2 Corinthians within a timeline of events in his relationship with the Corinthian community. The letter was likely written eight months to a year after 1 Corinthians and shortly after Paul found Titus in Macedonia (2 Cor 7:5), thus placing the writing of the letter in Macedonia around the fall of 55 CE.[14]

It is at this point that Paul would have imagined his authorial audience as he composed 2 Corinthians. The history between Paul and the Corinthians—seen particularly in the tone of 1 Corinthians and 2 Cor 1:8—2:13—made necessary Paul's rhetorical strategy in which he defends his previous actions, and his ministry, against internal dissidents and external opponents. For this reason, the authorial audience is also to be understood as a mixture of pro- and anti-Pauline factions. The proportions of these groups are disputed with little consensus. For the present study it is sufficient to recognize the community as a complex entity that includes both receptive and resistant contingencies. The letter as a whole, however, is addressed to all members of the Corinthian community. The on-again, off-again relationship between Paul and this complex group, now complicated by the opponents' arrival, made the apologia for his ministry of central importance in the letter.

The Rhetorical and Heuristic Aspects of the Letter

The authorial audience Paul has in mind as he writes is aware of all of the events mentioned above. They have come close to reconciling with Paul following the tearful letter (7:5–17), but the opponents represent

13. Ibid., 9–10; Meeks, *First*, 73.

14. Schnelle, *History*, 79–88.

a new threat (3:1; 4:2; 10:1—12:12). In his apologia, Paul sets forth the content of his gospel—new creation and reconciliation in Christ—as evidence of his apostolic integrity. God has sent him to proclaim reconciliation and new creation in Christ (5:18–20). The opponents, in causing dissension, were frustrating God's plans of salvation for his chosen elect in the community (6:1).

This study anticipates that determining and analyzing the responses of the authorial audience will explicate the theological meaning of new creation and reconciliation within the rhetorical context of Paul's apology for his ministry, in that this method will study how the themes of new creation and reconciliation progress within the chiastic unit and how they are received by the authorial audience in light of what is said in 1 Corinthians and 2 Cor 1:1—5:15. It will follow closely the rhetorical argument of the letter and examine the chiastic structures within the immediate context of 5:16—6:2 and the macrochiastic structure found in 4:15—6:2. The identity of the chiasms and their respective structures will be dealt with in the next chapter.

The Oral Culture and Setting of Paul's Correspondence

Paul and his communities lived within a culture that emphasized oral communication. Letters were dictated and performed aloud to the addressee(s). The oral milieu was so prevalent that "no writing occurred that was not vocalized."[15] The emphasis on sound patterns in NT studies gained wide attention with Paul Achtemeier's presidential address at the 1989 Annual SBL meeting.[16] Achtemeier claims that the NT texts were composed and intended to be performed audibly within the oral culture of late Western antiquity. These texts are, in every sense, "oral to the core," and so should be studied with sensitivity to how the texts sound. Sound patterns, such as repetition, inclusion, parallels, anaphora, and alliteration (among others) help to delimit borders, structures, and otherwise unheard meaning of the texts.[17]

Common formulae within an oral culture's literature included parallelism (the pairing of synonymous or antithetical terms or themes)

15. Achtemeier, "*Omne*," 15–16; see also Harvey, *Listening*, 40–42.

16. Achtemeier, "*Omne*," 18.

17. Ibid., 19–21.

and the chiasm. In its most general structure, a chiasm consists of "inverted parallelism—a passage in which the second part is inverted and balanced against the first."[18] An example may be found in 2 Cor 1:5:

> 5a Because just as *overflow* [perisseuei]
> 5b the sufferings of *Christ* [tou/ Cristou/]
> 5c to us,
> 5d so too, through *Christ* [tou/ Cristou/],
> 5e *overflows* [perisseuei] our consolation.

Since Greco-Roman literature and correspondence had limited line-breaks and punctuation, chiasms served as the oral equivalent of a paragraph. The chiasm's structure helped to frame the author's argument and distinguish his/her main point, which lay in the final element of the structure.[19] The closure of a chiasm (the connection of the final A´ unit with the beginning A unit) also alerted the audience that the present section had concluded and a new section would follow.

Chiasmus in Ancient Rhetoric and Literature

Extent Ugaritic, Sumero-Akkadian, Greek, and Latin examples demonstrate the ubiquity of this oral literary form both temporally and geographically.[20] Examples, such as the one given here from Amos 5:4–6, are numerous throughout the Hebrew Bible:

> **Seek** me and you shall **live**:
> But do not seek **Beth el**
> nor enter into **Gilgal**
> and do not pass to Beer-sheba;
> for **Gilgal** shall surely go into exile
> and **Beth-el** shall come to nought:
> **Seek** the Lord, and **live**.[21]

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18. Stock, "Chiastic Awareness," 23; see also Bailey and Vander Broek, *Literary Forms*, 49–50.

19. Stock, "Chiastic Awareness," 23.

20. Smith, "Sumero-Akkadian"; Welch, "Ancient Greek and Latin"; Douglas, *Thinking in Circles*, 112–15.

21. Translation from Klaus, *Pivot Patterns*, 227; emphasis his. See also, e.g., Muilenberg, "Form Criticism"; Boadt, "A:B:B:A Chiasm"; Fredericks, "Qoheleth 5:9—6:9."

Aramaic and Haggadic examples add evidence of the form in religious, political, and domestic spheres.[22] Cognizance of the form and its use in textual interpretation is seen in rabbinic comments on Lev 6:16; Josh 24:4; Ruth 1:5.[23]

The term chiasmus comes from the Greek verb ϲιαζω. Although this verb is only first seen in rhetorical handbooks in Dio-Hermogenes (fourth c. CE), the Homeric commentator Aristarchus notes the inverted structure of the discussion between Odysseus and his mother (*Od.* 11:170–74).[24] These inverted patterns in Homer, sometimes referred to as *hysteron proteron*, were also noted by Crates and the Stoics of Pergamum as essential to the analysis of the text.[25] Other examples may be found in Isocrates, Demosthenes, Aristotle, Cicero, Dio-Chrysostom, and the Cynics.[26] Along with larger texts, chiasms are also found in both public and private letters of antiquity.[27]

Chiastic structures were likely perpetuated in Greco-Roman literature by the culture's method of education. At the age of seven, young men began to memorize the alphabet *alpha* to *omega*, then *omega* to *alpha*. Once this was mastered, the student was required to learn and recite the alphabet in successive concentric groups: *beta* to *psi* (and *psi* to *beta*), *gamma* to *chi* (and *chi* to *gamma*), up to *mu-nu* (and *nu-mu*).[28] In secondary stages of education, texts were read aloud repeatedly and memorized, meaning that young students would be reading and memorizing arguments framed in a chiastic structure. In rhetorical training the students were taught to begin and end a speech with similar material.[29] They were also often encouraged to arrange the content of their argument in three- or five-part groups of concentric patterns in order to emphasize a central point.[30]

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22. Porten, "Aramaic Contracts and Letters"; Frankel, "Talmudic-Aggadic Narrative"; Klaus, *Pivot Patterns*, 15–18.

23. Klaus, *Pivot Patterns*, 15.

24. Welch, "Greek and Latin," 254.

25. Ibid., 256.

26. Harvey, *Listening*, 71–82; Douglas, *Thinking*, 110–18; Stephen Nimis, "Cycles."

27. Heil, "Philemon"; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 73.

28. Stock, "Awareness," 24.

29. Ibid., 25.

30. Wuellner, "Arrangement," 78–79.

The consistent indoctrination of reading aloud and writing in chiasms over a period of seven to fourteen years would produce writers who listened for, analyzed, and composed texts in chiasms. Based on the prevalence of the form in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin texts, the awareness and utilization of the form in ancient textual analysis, and its occurrence at all levels of public education, it is plausible that Paul and his audience in Corinth were exposed to, and aware of, chiastic and inverted patterns within correspondence and literature.

That said, this study does not see cognitive awareness as a necessity in the audience's reception. As Heil explains, "Chiastic patterns serve to organize the content to be heard and . . . lead an audience through introductory elements to a central point." Due to the ubiquity of inverted and chiastic patterns in late Western antiquity "the original ancient audience may and need not necessarily have been consciously identifying or reflecting upon any of these chiastic structures in themselves," but rather "experienced the chiastic phenomenon, which had an unconscious effect on how they perceived the content." A study of how an intended audience experiences these structures is useful because it demonstrates to the modern reader what the text originally conveyed in its aural structure to its intended ancient audience.[31]

As this section closes, it is reasonable to note that not all corresponding elements within a chiasm are of equal value. In some cases, a pair of elements will share more superficial, rather than substantive, connections. In such cases, however, the weakness of two elements does not necessarily negate the strength of the unit as a whole. First, even if substantive correlation is lacking, so long as there is an aural connection—be it grammatical echo, alliteration, or repetition of sound—the authorial audience still experiences the elements' contributions to the unit's overall structure. Second, these less substantive connections often occur within units where the other elemental connections are significant in both meaning and sound, such that even if one or two elements appear ambiguous, the other elements in that unit and adjacent units suitably manifest the chiastic structure.

Also, it is not necessary for a composition to be made completely of chiasms. In some texts, chiasms are used only occasionally for effect (as in Amos, seen above). In the present work, however, twenty chiastic

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31. Heil, *Ephesians*, 15–16; see also Nimis, "Cycles," 191.

units do happen to be evident. These structures will be presented with explanation in the next chapter.

Chiasmus and Interpretation

Chiastic structures are prevalent throughout Western literature, geographically and temporally. Literary scholars have found chiastic structures in the works of William Shakespeare, Nathanial Hawthorne, and even in modern-day literary works.[32] Since chiasms frame particular sections of an author's argument and distinguish the central point, literary scholars for centuries have used chiastic structures for effective textual analysis. For example, scholars in Roman Britain used chiastic analysis in their study of ancient British poetry.[33]

The study of chiastic structures in biblical texts, however, is relatively new. In 1930, Nils Lund became the first to evaluate chiasms in New Testament literature.[34] Since Lund's work, the use of chiasms has aided biblical scholars of both Testaments. The benefits gained from the study of chiasms are manifold: they are able to (1) deduce the literary limits of a section when grammar is inconclusive;[35] (2) determine the proper referent and action where pronouns are unclear;[36] (3) explicate narrative or character development in a story;[37] (4) examine the relationship of poetic cola;[38] and (5) argue for or against the literary integrity of a text.[39] Still, the strongest and most basic benefits from the study of chiasms are the ability to deduce the structure and main point of the author's argument and perceive the development of that argument as it progresses through the chiastic structure.

The analysis of chiastic structures has benefited Pauline studies since the Second World War in several ways.[40] The structure of the

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32. Davis, "Secrets"; Ullen, "Hawthorne's Romances."

33. Davis, "Secrets," 238.

34. Lund, "Presence of Chiasmus."

35. Holmgren, "Isaiah LI 1–11"; Parunak, "Transitional Techniques."

36. Holladay, "Chiasmus."

37. Assis, "Biblical Narrative"; Jackson, "Retracing"; Yudkowsky, "Chaos."

38. Willis, "Juxtaposition."

39. Luter and Lee, "Philippians."

40. Lund, *Chiasmus*, 137–225; Jeremias, "Chiasmus"; Collins, "Chiasmus"; Lambrecht, "1 Cor 15:23–28"; Myers, "Chiastic Inversion"; Luter and Lee, "Philippians"; Porter and Reed, "Philippians"; Martin, "Scythian"; Heil, *Ephesians*, 13–45.

chiasm demonstrates a rhetorical strategy that is otherwise unapparent to the modern reader, and the comparison of parallel elements aids the exegesis of any given textual unit.[41] This is made all the more important when a letter's structure is presumed to be unclear. Beyond setting the borders, a chiasm also denotes the center point, or pivot, of a unit. This pivot may operate in one of two ways: as "the interpretive focal point of the passage," or as "an important transition in the movement of thought" of the unit.[42]

Chiasmus in 2 Corinthians

At the present time, the chiastic structures previous scholars have proposed for 2 Corinthians, in my opinion, have not been satisfactory. Some scholars attempt to find "concentric" patterns in 2 Corinthians without using exhaustive criteria. Jan Lambrecht, e.g., proposes a concentric and complicated structure for 2 Cor 2:14—4:6.[43] His execution, however, does not follow a set of criteria, and the pattern he deduces becomes cumbersome. Blomberg follows useful and strict criteria in his proposal of a chiastic structure for 2 Corinthians 1–7, but his analysis produces a synthetic pattern of disjointed units.[44] In addition, the center unit he proposes (5:11–21), although central to Paul's overall theology, seems too late in the letter itself (as Blomberg determines the text) to be the proper center of 2 Cor 1–7. The structures proposed by Peter Ellis are thematically based and asymmetrical in their final form.[45]

The majority of structures scholars propose for 2 Corinthians at this time are subjectively delimited or focus on thematic connections. In the next chapter I will propose chiastic structures for 2 Cor 1:1—6:2 that are grounded objectively in lexical and grammatical criteria and that are aurally apparent to the authorial audience. In particular, by paying close attention to the sound patterns that are inherent within oral literature, these structures *demonstrate* what the authorial audience *hears* within the text. This method of listening closely to the text is in line with Achtemeier's concern that some aspects of oral literature "are

41. Baily and Vander Broek, *Literary Forms*, 51.

42. Ibid, 53.

43. Lambrecht, "2 Cor 2:14—7:4."

44. Blomberg, "Structure," 4–8.

45. Ellis, *Seven*, 139–72.

more apparent to the ear than to the eye" and treats the text as it was originally intended, that is, as correspondence that was both written and performed aloud.[46]

Chapter Summary

This study utilizes the audience-oriented method in order to pay close attention to how the authorial audience responds to Paul's rhetorical argument as it progresses within the text. The authorial audience is not a group of flesh-and-blood addressees, but rather is a literary entity that corresponds to the audience the author has in mind as he/she writes the text. The authorial audience then equates to a historical audience but is not in itself the original or historical audience. This method pays close attention to the oral milieu of late Western antiquity and treats the letter as a text that was composed and intended to be performed aloud to its addressees. Like many of its contemporaneous texts, the aural structure inherent in 2 Corinthians consists of oral patterning and, in particular, chiasms. Scholars have utilized chiasms in critical exegesis of Paul's letters for decades. However, many of these past studies have been based on thematic rather than objective lexical criteria. The next chapter will demonstrate chiastic structures that are objectively grounded on lexical and grammatical criteria. These findings lay the groundwork for the remainder of the study.

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46. Achtemeier, "*Omne*," 19: "To be understood, the NT must be understood as speech."