From Mind to Message: Oral Performance
In 1 Corinthians 15

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> Prior to the introduction of the printing press . . . texts in manuscript were routinely shared in oral-performative settings. "Reading" was primarily a social activity in which a declaimer delivered the written text to its audience. In such settings, the oral-performative tradition included not only the recitation of the written text, but also the inflections of voice, gesture, and interpretive amplification through which the performer gave audible life to the script. In the culture of Second Temple Jewish scribal groups, oral-performative tradition was a common medium for sharing written texts.

> From Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition
> in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE – 400 CE*, p. 8.

Recent studies on orality and literacy in ancient Greece and more recently in the Jewish context of Roman Palestine may indicate the need for a more refined conceptual apparatus for understanding the composition, deliverance, and reception of Paul's letters to his communities.[1]   New Testament scholars have considered from time to time how background issues of orality have affected the written composition of the gospel narratives and letters,[2] but the advancing of sustained analytical models requires

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[1] Ancient Greece: William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Kevin Robb, *Literacy and Paideia in Ancient Greece* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), Ian Worthington, "Greek Oratory and the Oral/Literate Division" in *Voice into Text: Orality and Literacy in Ancient Greece*, ed. Ian Worthington, 165-77 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), Jocelyn Penny Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind: Cognitive Studies of Memory and Literacy in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1997). Jewish Roman Palestine: Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE-400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). See also , Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

[2] Among others, Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* with *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity*, Reprint with new preface and a foreword by Jacob Neusner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermenueutics of Speaking and Writing in the*

refinement.[3] Here I offer a conceptual model of orality and literacy that can be applied to sections of Paul's letters. This demonstration significantly illuminates the analysis of 1 Corinthians 15 as oral performance.

1. Orality, Literacy, and Paul

The Greco-Roman world at the time of the New Testament was predominately an oral culture.[4] Social relationships functioned through long established methods of oral communication that slowly and increasingly were supported by literacy levels of varying complexity.[5] Recent scholarly investigation is properly interested in the dynamic interplay between orality and literacy – not the complete animosity or polarization of the systems from each other.[6] Written language is to be assessed according to its use in

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Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q (New Introduction by Author; Indianapolis, In: Indiana University Press, 1997), Bruce E. Shields, *From the Housetops: Preaching in the Early Church and Today* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000).

[3]Of note here are Peter J. J. Botha, "Mark's Story as Oral Traditional Literature: Rethinking the Transmission of Some Traditions about Jesus," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 47 (1991): 304-31, Joanna Dewey, "The Gospel of Mark as an Oral-Aural Event: Implications for Interpretation" in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*, ed. Elizabeth S. Malbon and Edgar V. McKnight, JSNTSup 19, 175-197 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), Richard A. Horsley with Jonathan A. Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1999), Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001). For the Pauline letters, see John D. Harvey, *Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) and Casey W. Davis, *Oral Biblical Criticism: the Influence of the Principles of Orality on the Literary Structure of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

[4] Paul J. Achtemeier, "*Omne Verbum Sonat*: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity," *JBL* 109 (1990): 3-27.

[5] Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 326-31.

[6] See Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 2-17, for a recent review of literature concerning this issue.

certain social functions and its use by certain social groups. Even though the majority of the population was not literate, persons of varying social levels could still participate in literate mechanisms for which there were symbolic issues connected with the use of writing: for example, funeral inscriptions (some commissioned by the non-literate) gave status and established family lineage; magical amulets gave control over daily issues of life; laws and written decrees structured power relationships in the socio/political/ religious sphere.[7]

Literacy, in the sense of being able to read and write with proficiency, was low in antiquity – perhaps, 10-15% of the total population, most notably the social elite, may have been literate in this sense.[8] Definitions and descriptions of literacy are, however, illusive. Analysis of literacy levels gains clarity by examining to what effect literacy was or was not propagated over time through elementary schooling and in what social situations it may have functioned when present to any degree.[9] From a broader perspective, it may be necessary to recognize that a rather wide-ranging section of the population participated in or was affected by literary usage. That is to say, some persons may have been able to read but not write, others may have obtained a low level of "craft literacy" necessary for participating in economic contexts, and still others may have

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[7] Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 74-100, 128-57; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 489-95.

[8] Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 327-31. Literacy levels may have risen beyond this point in a few larger cities of the Hellenistic period.

[9] Ibid., 25-42.

participated in literate functions with the help of a literate family member or through the services of a professional scribe.[10]

Paul's letters give us every indication that we should view his ministry operation as participating in an oral culture that significantly interacts with the ways of literacy. Paul was an oral proclaimer – a preacher and evangelist of God's gospel based in the death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus. His letters give us descriptions of this activity of oral proclamation: 1 Cor 2:1-5; Gal 3:1; 1 Thess 2:2-9. Indeed, Galatians 3:1 may indicate that Paul's proclamation took the form of oral performance: "a picture of Jesus Christ marked by crucifixion was painted before your eyes."[11] Paul's ongoing paraenetic ministry used a combination of oral and written conventions. Paul made repeat visits for face-to-face communication; Paul sent letters along with co-workers (envoys) who could reinforce his communiqué with oral speech. Practically, Paul used the conventions of Greco-Roman letter writing, he occasionally noted that he wrote (at least) the latter section of certain letters in his own hand (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Philemon 19), and he at one point confessed that the written letter was a better strategy than a personal visit (2 Cor 2:1-4; cf. 2 Cor 13:10). From the perspective of some members of his later Corinthian audience, Paul's letters carried much weight, but for them that weight did not seem congruent with Paul's oral expression while in their midst (2 Cor 10:10).

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[10] Ibid., 5-7, 34-35; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 473, 487-95.

[11] Translation from J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 281. Martyn notes that the verb προγραπὴ can have either of two main accents: to proclaim publicly, or to proclaim by providing a vivid portrait. Here we see a combination of the two." "Like other ancient storytellers, Paul was able to speak 'so vividly and so impressively that his hearers imagined the matter to have happened right before their eyes'" (283, quoting H.D. Betz).

Paul, then, is literate to some degree– he can take up the pen to write. In a number of places, Paul appears to dictate a letter to an amanuensis,[12] prior to sending it on to primarily illiterate followers[13] who are able to comprehend the letter's "reading"[14] before the assembly. At least at Corinth (and possibly Thessalonica), some community members found a way to inquire in writing for clarification.[15] The relationship of orality and literacy raises the question of what is the relationship between Paul's own oral expression of the gospel and his written expression within his letters.

Paul as Composer

We know that Paul participated in the conventions of literacy, but the question is: within what parameters? Some aspects are relatively clear: Paul regularly took up the pen to write at the end of his letters; Paul most likely dictated his letters to an

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[12] "We know that he [Paul] was aided by scribes: in addition to the explicit statement by Tertius (Romans 16:22), the phrase 'in my own hand' at the conclusion of other letters indicates that an aide was taking dictation at least some of the time." M. Luther Stirewalt, Jr., *Paul, The Letter Writer* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 9, 10 n43.

[13] Assuming broadly that the social makeup of most Pauline communities mirrored somewhat that of Corinth: "not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth" (1 Cor 1:27).

[14] The form, function, and expression of "reading" may differ greatly from our modern conceptions and experience. Hence, we investigate that matter in detail below.

[15] With reference here to the very well regarded thesis which states that περι δε ("Now Concerning …"; 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12) marks in 1 Corinthians a number of questions conveyed to Paul by letter. Scholars are divided over the same function of two περι δε usages in 1 Thessalonians (cf. 4:9 and 5:1).

amanuensis; there is some evidence that Paul does not regularly rework the dictation.[16]

What we must more carefully theorize about is: how did Paul the (full) "letter-writer"

move his "message" into dictation?

Memory and its problems of retrieval, available mechanisms of literacy, and the

dominant context of orality are the complex elements from which to examine

"composition" of written texts in the Greco-Roman world. It is typical (and tempting) to

think that Paul would have composed and written in a manner similar to what modern

academics might do: research sources; write notes; Xerox or lay out marked books;

construct a written outline; write; revise. However, the texture of "composition" in the

Greco-Roman world would urge caution to such theorizing. Time, resources, and social

position would limit access to sources from significant private or public libraries. The

ancients relied strongly on memory rather than note-taking for information gathering,

learning, and understanding. With constraints to memory and retrieval caused by *scriptio*

continua, research emphasized reviewing (by oral reading) larger sections of interest

rather than the extremely difficult process of "finding passages" for copying. When

"notetaking" was employed it generally consisted of dictating to a scribe the "gist" of

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[16] Stirewalt, *Paul, The Letter Writer*, 20-24, gives as evidence for extemporary composition: spur-of-the-moment corrections and amendments, parentheses, anacolutha, and chains of metaphors that appear to come to Paul's mind in spontaneous fashion. He concludes: "Immediate corrections, parentheses, and anacolutha give evidence that the initial drafts of Paul's epistles were not revised" (24).

what the source meant to convey at any point.[17] Sources (scrolls) were usually handled

one at a time, not laid out in groupings to be consulted from time to time.[18]

According to recent studies[19] concerning the writing of texts in antiquity the

procedures employed in composition stemmed from internal "reflection," followed by

dictation to a scribe from the author's memory. "Reflection" is the compiling, ordering,

and stylizing of the text that is to be recorded in one's short-term memory.[20] It has a

basis in rhetorical theory and was a taught practice. Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria*

10.6.1) states:

> For there are places and occasions where writing is impossible, while both
> are available in abundance for premeditation [*cogitatio*: "reflection",
> "thought", or "premeditation"] . . . this practice will not merely secure the
> proper arrangement of our matter without any recourse to writing, which
> in itself is no small achievement, but will also see the words which we are
> going to use in their proper order, and bring the general texture of our
> speech to such a stage of completion that nothing further is required
> beyond the finishing touches. And as a rule the memory is more retentive
> of thoughts when the attention has not been relaxed by the fancied security
> which results from committing them to writing.[21]

This process of reflection should move with intention to meet the proper goal. So

Quintilian (10.3.15) also states:

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[17] Here, my observations in this paragraph are based on the ancient research techniques and the issues of ordering excerpts or ideas in memory as set forth in Small, *Wax Tablets*, 160-81.

[18] Small notes that we are unduly influenced by the medieval painting creation of "the writing evangelist" and modern reconstructions of Roman libraries with a large flat table(s) at the room's center. The evidence, however, only shows figures reading (never writing) and no basis for there being tables at all. See ibid., 162-63.

[19] Here I am indebted to the discussions of Small, *Wax Tablets*, 177-201 and Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 36-40.

[20] See the discussion in Small, *Wax Tablets*, 181-85.

[21] Cited in and quoted from ibid., 182.

> We need judgement as well. So long as we do not lie back with eyes
> turned up to the ceiling, trying to fire our imagination by muttering to
> ourselves, in the hope that something will present itself, but turn our
> thoughts to consider what the circumstances of the case demand.[22]

Rhetorical speech is speech in oral performance.[23] Quinitilian's counsel for composition, therefore, would have one take note of circumstances of context with attention to audience identification, disposition, expectations, and methods of engagement. Various techniques from rhetorical theory (such as those found in the Greco-Roman handbook tradition), then, present themselves as a handmaid to oral performance.[24]

Composition in memory usually has "the use of a single source [as] a common trait."[25] Ancient authors follow closely one account and bring other sources (via memory) in for additional material. Rhetorical theory also indicates that the *dispositio* (arrangement) of a speech may be structured around a well-known scheme or pattern of discourse (story, worldview) that is key to the identity and value system of the speaker.[26] Speaker and audience ostensibly shared this piece of cultural lore in whole or part.

Composition might take place in installments (from short-term memory) over a period of time. Pliny the Younger's own description is illuminating:

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[22] Cited in and quoted from ibid., 183.

[23] This holds true for written speeches from the technical handbook tradition as well as published works by rhetoricians. Speeches composed for others were not necessarily given without instruction on oral presentation. Published speeches were reworked with additions based on the oral performance. See the discussion in Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 124-25.

[24] Compare the observations of Stirewalt, *Paul, The Letter Writer*, 116-21.

[25] Small, *Wax Tablets*, 186.

[26] I have suggested composition of 1 Corinthians based on an arrangement according to the cultural lore of Judean apocalyptic rhetoric. See, Rollin A. Ramsaran, "Resisting Imperial Domination and Influence: Paul's Apocalyptic Rhetoric in 1 Corinthians" in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2003). See the discussion on pages 16-17 below.

> [When I wake] my shutters stay closed, for in the stillness and darkness I feel myself surprisingly detached from any distractions and left to myself in freedom; my eyes do not determine the direction of my thinking, but, being unable to see anything, they are guided to visualize my thoughts. If I have anything on hand I work it out in my head, choosing and correcting the wording, and the amount I achieve depends on the ease of difficulty with which my thoughts can be marshaled and kept in my head. Then I call my secretary, the shutters are opened, and I dictate what I have put into shape; he goes out, is recalled, and again dismissed. Three or four hours after I first wake (but I don't keep fixed times) I betake myself according to the weather either to the terrace or the covered arcade, work out the rest of my subject, and dictate it.[27]

Indeed, individual sections of a work or the combined whole might be reworked and sharpened by presentation through performance. Another example that has captured scholars' interest of late is the fifth century figure, Herodotus, who is writing history no less:

> One scholar has recently explored the possibility that Herodotus engaged in extensive 'pre-publication' for his *Histories*: that is, extensive 'publication' of various sections through readings, recitals or written texts, before the whole work was completed. Oswyn Murray's idea that Herodotus was the last Ionian story-teller envisages a somewhat similar situation – a series of tales told separately and in series, but woven finally into the written text we have. Murray's version presents an Herodotus more firmly rooted in the archaic period. I would add a third possibility, on the principle that oral performance or recital is by no means confined to an earlier 'oral' age, that Herodotus' readings might have been akin in some ways to the performances of the Sophists which became fashionable in the latter half of the fifth century. At any rate, this was a world where performance was the most effective way of making your work known. So a picture of numerous performances before publication of the final written text is attractive.[28]

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[27] Cited and quoted from Small, *Wax Tablets*, 181.

[28] Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 125.

Recording of a text by writing or dictation for later use functions as an aid to memory and is not intended to convey the recital/performance aspects that can be neither contained nor expressed in writing.[29] Paul's letters would have needed oral performance to actualize the totality of the communication process. Jaffee has demonstrated that a primarily scribal community such as those at Qumran used written texts to prepare for communication among members *through oral performance*.[30] If ancient writers, including those connected with Second Temple groups and movements, predominately expressed and cultivated their living traditions through oral performance, should we not at least explore more carefully how the Apostle Paul may have fit into such a context?

A key question: who benefits from the recording and dictation of Paul's communiqué to a believing community? Our inclination is to say that "the letter," understood as Paul's written instructions, benefits the community in which it "was read." Various understandings vie for what it actually meant to have a Pauline letter "read" in his communities: (1) the letter is delivered by a letter-carrier to be read (by some capable community member) to the assembly; (2) the letter-carrier brings the letter to be read and is available to provide confirmation/comments on points in the apostle's name; (3) the letter-carrier upon arrival reads the letter and is available to provide further confirmation/comments; (4) the letter-carrier performs the letter with additional

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[29] Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 117-27.

[30] Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 32-38.

elaboration as needed in context (= "the reading") and provides input to discussion on behalf of the apostle.[31]

The last point (4) seems most desirable in light of the important work by Stirewalt, who contends that Paul's letters show the influence not only of social conventions and structures associated with personal correspondence but also with that of official correspondence as represented from the courts of Hellenistic kings and Roman officials in the east. Paul's letters follow these official letters in their use of co-senders; a defined letter structure;[32] composition based on counsel with others leading to dictation; designated envoy(s) for delivery, performance, and extended counsel to the targeted audience.[33] Stirewalt concludes:

> In Paul's case the functions of carrier and /or reader are not explicitly described, but one or both, carrier or presenter, would have become his personal representative before the people. In the secular realm the carrier was an envoy who was informed and responsible for interpretation, expected to speak for and report back to the sender. Enough evidence has been gleaned from Paul's letters to conclude that he arranged similar assignments to complete the letter-event. A personal surrogate was of special importance to Paul [in that writing did not convey

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[31] For the first three instances, compare the discussion on "sending letters" in Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 37-41. On his view of "co-authorship," see 16-34.

[32] 1. Salutation
    a.   identification of the primary sender
    b.   naming of co-senders
    c.   address to multiple recipients
  2. Body:
    a.   background (sometimes divided into past and present)
    b.   basis or explanation for the message
    c.   message; order, request, commendation
    d.   promise
  3. Subscription

[33] Stirewalt, *Paul, The Letter Writer*, 33-55.

certain aspects of personal presence such as inflection, tone, gesture, or overt emotional behavior].[34]

       Such personal aspects the reader supplied, and Paul was certainly conscious of the shift in personnel required for the oral delivery of his message. He must have known that presenters would inevitably color the message with their own personal aspects and speech habits. Separated from the people, confronted by the necessary temporal delays, Paul depended on a third party to complete and update communications and to return messages from the correspondents – to expand and interpret his written word, and to translate his thought and intention when the messages were presented orally before the assembly.[35]

We can refine and increase the payoff of Stirewalt's work by returning to our yet unanswered question: Who benefits from the recording and dictation of Paul's communiqué to a believing community? In light of our discussion, the one who most directly benefits is the individual sent to perform Paul's message in its initial delivery to the community. The letter provides an "aid to memory" from which the performance can be prepared or reviewed.   The believing community benefits from the performance that is based on the written text. In addition, the written text has a foundational quality of authority and provides an opportunity to be reviewed by capable members.   From there, other capable performers might extend the life of the "performance" through re-performance based on the initial

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[34] Ibid*, 23.   Bracketed material summarizes the author's close following of Stanley K. Stowers, "Social Typification and the Classification of Ancient Letters," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee*, eds. Jacob Neusner et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 78-90.

[35] Stirewalt, *Paul, The Letter Writer*, 23. Also, 108, "Paul is writing letters socially and theologically bound to the oral word. He does not conceive of a context in which, on reception, his word is not reanimated by oral speech."

performance and then the learning and memory aid provided by the sent written document or a copy.[36]

This theorizing leads to some interesting implications. The oral performer of a Pauline letter would need the social cues and context that stand behind the aid to memory (the written letter) in order to fully communicate Paul's message. How might this occur? Possibly, the letter performer might be involved in the composition process through input (a type of co-authorship) or observation (Paul composing through oral performance that is recorded – then re-performed by Paul? by the letter performer?).[37] It is not possible to retrieve the exact process, though it does appear, however, that there is a real and significant place for oral performance in that process. If this is so, then it is appropriate to ask how the aspects of oral performance may be indicated in the *aide—memoire*, the written text.

An Imaginative and Heuristic Construct: From Mind to Message

Pulling things together, we might imagine Paul's composition of a letter like this:

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[36] One might reflect on how a modern preacher sermonizes a Pauline text, not from an "initial" performance, but often reflecting the performances of other sermons experienced through the course of his/her church experience.

[37] This is not to imply that the goal of the process is some kind of word for word memorization. It is the gaining of a full oral/aural context that responds with words, varied tone, pause, demonstrated emotion, gestures and so forth reflective of the Apostle's own presence. Cf. the perspective of Richard F. Ward, "Pauline Voice and Presence as Strategic Communication" in *SBL 1990 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 288-92.

Responding to a need for communication to one of his believing communities, Paul begins to conceive mentally of a structure for response based on his understanding of the circumstances of the community, his perception of possible responses by his audience, and nature of the issues to be addressed. Mentally, Paul might arrange commonplaces[38] within the structure. It is conceivable that he reviewed collected notes or previous letters – appropriating, via short-term memory, the gist of sections that might be utilized within his developing structure.[39] Paul may have conferred with "co-authors/senders" of the letter for material, argument, or critique of his developing scheme. With his ad hoc retinue of co-authors, secretary, and envoy/letter performer,[40] Paul began the process of "reflection" – choosing, structuring, and refining words and sentences to be performed to his perceived audience via short-term memory. Paul's expression of his reflection would most naturally be expressed, even refined, in oral performance. For longer letters, this process would conceivably be divided up according to the limits of short-term memory.[41]

In this model, Paul's composition would be recorded in two ways. The secretary would record Paul's performance as a written letter with its content and more limited written oral performance cues. Concurrently, Paul's letter envoy, the oral performer of the letter, would record via memory/experience the oral cues (tone, emotion, inflection, humor, stance, etc.) of Paul's composition/ performance that would guide the later performance in context. Paul's envoy would perform the letter in the new context[42] and be available to represent Paul further in discussion with community members. The envoy would report back to Paul the community's response and messages.

The process and details would be subject to the contingencies of Paul's circumstances – such as the availability of resources and personnel, time constraints, additional messages or information received. Even among such contingencies, it would seem that good and effective communication would demand attention to the element of oral performance. Of

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[38] Commonplaces are set topical pieces quite familiar to and contained in the memory of a teacher, philosopher, or rhetorician.

[39] So Murphy – O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer*, 35-37. His analysis references the later Pastoral Letters for evidence and is a bit hesitant about the role of memory overall.

[40] Stirewalt, *Paul,The Letter Writer*, 19, states: "Paul's logistics were modeled on the official letter setting. A staff of volunteers supported him; some of them contributed to the formulation of messages, while others aided in the actual writing. His post was an organized and dependable service."

[41] See page 9 above and discussion in Small, *Wax Tablets*, 181-85.

[42] See note # 37 above.

course it is only the limited cues to oral performance as recorded in the written text that remain for us to examine at this distance. To that task we now turn.

2. 1 Corinthians 15: Paul's Composition Through Oral Performance

To examine 1 Corinthians 15 as an instance of oral performance/composition involves careful observation and analysis with continuously developing tools.[43] Ancient written records that have passed down to us are, of course, unable to record the totality of an oral event. Folklorists, however, have alerted us to oral markers that remain embedded in written records of oral presentation. Important also are factors such as the performer's stance, his or her tone, and the movement of the oral presentation as it relates to our knowledge of composition from memory in the ancient world. In what follows, I discuss how these aspects point to 1 Corinthians 15 as a written record behind which stands an oral performance of the Apostle Paul (and Paul's agent/performer).

"Single Theme Structuring" through Apocalyptic Rhetoric

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[43] It is beyond the scope of this paper to compare/contrast or synthesize the working models available in this area of oral performance analysis. A fine history of scholarship can be found in Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears You*, 150-74. The reader would profit from study of the working models put forward by Dewey, Horsley and Draper, Davis, and Harvey. See note #3 above.

A Judean apocalyptic topos – critique of rulers, renewal of the people, and vindication of the faithful – is what provides the structure of Paul's overall arrangement and argument in 1 Corinthians 1-15: (1) a criticism of the Roman imperial order and Corinthian leaders who aspire to its aristocratic ideals (1 Cor 1-4); (2) the deliverance and discipline of the people of God (1 Cor 5-14); and (3) vindication of the faithful through a projected resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15).[44] Such an arrangement fits a scribal apocalyptic way of communicating identifiable in Judean literature of the 2nd Temple period (known and here used by Paul).[45] In addition, it demonstrates "single theme structuring" common to oral composition in performance. "Single theme structuring" is oral performance/composition built around a central narrative theme that integrates sub-themes, examples, and materials from other sources around it.[46] In a lengthy letter like 1 Corinthians, we can imagine Paul composing in memory certain segments over a period of time, using this apocalyptic topos as his guide. This "third part" of the apocalyptic topos (1 Cor 15: "vindication of the martyrs") is suitable in length and movement for a single session of composition.

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[44] See note 26 above.

[45] For more information on this descriptive scheme for Judean apocalyptic, see Richard A. Horsley, "The Kingdom of God and the Renewal of Israel: Synoptic Gospels, Jesus Movements, and Apocalypticism" in *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 1, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Continuum, 1998), 303-09.

[46] Small, *Wax Tablets*, 186-88, states: "Time and again, we find Greek and Roman historians claiming a wide range of reading, and deserving to be believed; yet, time and again, we find them demonstrably basing their narrative of individual episodes on a single source." In addition, she quotes Aristotle, *Problems* 18.9: "Why do we feel more pleasure in listening [ακοὺμεν] to narratives [ιστορὶν] in which the attention is concentrated on a single point than in hearing those which are concerned with many subjects? Is it because we pay more attention to and feel more pleasure in listening to things which are more easily comprehended, and that which is definite is more easily comprehended than that which is indefinite?"

1 Corinthians 15 is the "climax" of Paul's letter because it is the climax of the "story" – pointing both to the "final triumph [and renewal] brought by God" and to a courageous moral stance in the face of death-dealing powers (15:30-31), which brings assurance of participating in God's final triumph over and renewal of the present order.[47] This brisk dramatic movement to climax maintains a concrete engagement to what might be a rather theoretical or abstract subject – resurrection of the dead. Noticeable to oral performance is a tendency to employ very concrete terms and images over more theoretical ones.[48] This written record of 1 Corinthians 15 must be mined for a variety of clues and effects which attribute to it the full power of oral performance: occasion, register, performance arena, dramatic movement, sounds, rhythms, pauses, emphases, tone, and resonated tradition.[49]

Register and Performance Arena

Different expressions of oral composition are guided by variances in occasion and context. Performers choose various "registers" from which they launch an oral communicative event. A register represents a well-established speech style that coheres closely to a speaker's role in specific social contexts (the typical speech configuration

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[47] See Ramsaran, "Resisting Imperial Domination."

[48] Davis, *Oral Biblical Criticism*, 70-71.

[49] Here, considering the model offered by Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears You*, 175-227, esp. 185, 210.

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that can be attributed to a judge, a teacher, or a lawyer, for instance).[50] An audience's

ability to discern the register and participate in the occasion constitutes the setting up of a

specific "performance arena."[51]

Paul utilizes a scribal apocalyptic register that provides assurance to the faithful,

while revealing content within an apocalyptic scheme. Paul's assumption of the scribal

apocalyptic register provides a distinct performance context for 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11.

In these verses, Paul speaks as one who is both a deposit and fount of the common

community tradition (cf. 1 Cor 7:10 – "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord";

1 Cor 11:23 – For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you …"). Paul has

"handed on" to the Corinthians what was "handed on" to him (15:3). Paul's "writing"

here in 15:1-11 has, by his own testimony, a very strong basis in oral performance. This

foundation of the gospel is based on Paul's initial oral performance of preaching at

Corinth (15:1 – "in what terms I preached to you the gospel").

This oral performance in 15:1-11 is a powerful repetitive presentation centering

on the idea that Jesus was raised/appeared (the foundational preaching on which their

faith was grounded). The function of 1-11 is then to "remind" the Corinthians (15:1 –

"Now I would remind you …") of this foundation by re-presenting it in oral performance.

Paul replays a common heritage built on traditional references of symbols, phrases, and

formulas: I/we preached;[52] he (Jesus) was raised;[53] he (Jesus) appeared;[54] Paul has a

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[50] Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears You*, 164-66.

[51]Ibid.

[52] A ring device to the section at verses 1 and 11. It combines with their response of belief.

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special place among apostles by grace;[55] you believed.[56] "Christ raised" becomes the basis for Paul's argument through oral performance in 15:12-58. Going forward, Paul does not attempt to "prove" that Jesus was raised – he assumes it and he expects his audience to continue following him in that common belief. Paul, through his envoy, comes alive once again before the Corinthians as the proclaiming apocalyptic teacher and guide who was, in that very preaching, originally the occasion for their coming to faith.

Ultimately it may be more helpful to see Paul operating with a combination of registers. Evidence suggests that in addition to the scribal apocalyptic register, Paul also functions with a register of "prophetic-performance" in 1 Corinthians 15. While this is not generally recognized,[57] it does bear on our consideration of oral performance in this passage. Here, I can only outline the argument briefly.

It is fitting to see Paul's use of prophecy in chapter 15 as an application of his instruction on prophecy in chapter 14, and it is a mistake, therefore, to separate 1 Corinthians 12-14 from chapter 15. For in chapter 15, Paul, himself a prophet,[58] claims his place among those who may bring forward prophecy in the assembly (a common

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[53] "Raised" is the theme word from which Paul constructs the entire chapter.

[54] "Appeared" provides an emphatic repetition (4x) in support of Jesus having been raised. It takes a stylized expression along with Paul's use of "then."

[55] Pauline autobiographical passages generally function to advance Paul's personal example – exemplary material continues in the ethical sections of 15:30-34 and 58 (esp. with respect to "labor").

[56] A ring device to the section at verses 1 and 11. It combines with apostolic preaching by way of response.   See note #52.

[57] Here I intend to pick up and extend the often-overlooked argument of Thomas W. Gillespie, *The First Theologians: A Study in Early Christian Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 199-235.

[58] For Paul's apostolic self-understanding and transformation viewed from the perspective of a prophetic call, see Karl O. Sandnes, *Paul Among the Prophets?: A Contribution to the Apostles's Self-Understanding* (WUNT 2.43; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1991).

occurrence at Corinth – 1 Cor 14:1-5; 29-33).   In 1 Corinthians 15:51, Paul reveals one

"mystery" from among "the wisdom of God in mystery" (2:7) that he is so reluctant to

share with the ostensibly immature Corinthians in earlier chapters (2:6-3:4). This

mystery in 1 Corinthians 15:51– 52 is commonly thought among scholars to be one of at

least three passages that constitutes the use of early "Christian" prophecy by Paul (with

Romans 11:25-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).[59]

In addition, 1 Corinthians 12-15, as a whole, fits into Paul's structural ABA'

argumentative pattern –   (A) instruction, (B) personal example, (A') instruction – evident

in chapters 8-14: chapters 8-10 – chapter 8/instruction, chapter 9/personal example, and

chapter 10/instruction; chapters 12-14 – chapter 12/instruction, chapter 13/personal

example, and chapter 14/instruction. In chapter 15, Paul's personal example and

instruction emphasizes the areas of tradition bearer (1-11), moral living (29-34), and *the

use of prophecy* (12-28; 35-57).

Furthermore, Paul's use of prophecy and its expression in the larger context of

chapter 15 show a remarkable coherence to Paul's counsel on prophecy in chapter 14.

First, Paul's prophecy is revelatory (15:51-52: "Lo! … a mystery"; compare 1 Cor 14:30:

"If a revelation is made to another [prophet]…") Second, Paul's prophecy confirms his

discussion of the bodily resurrection (15:52:"the dead shall be raised" relates to 15:12-28)

and his discussion of the "kind" of risen body (15:51: "we shall be changed" relates to

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[59] For full information and other possible instances of prophecy in Paul, see David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 248-62.

15:35-50).[60] Hence, Paul advances the implications of his prophecy to be "weighed" or

evaluated by members of the community (compare 14:29: "let the others weigh what is

said").   Third, Paul's discussion is intended to "exhort" and therefore "build up" the

assembly (14:3: "the one who prophesies speaks to persons for their upbuilding and

encouragement"). Both his personal example (15:10) and his final exhortation (15:58)

exhort believers to labor fearlessly on behalf of the Lord, knowing that vindication and a

transformed body lie ahead (15:10: "his grace toward me was not in vain [οὐ κενὴ] . . . I

labored harder [περισσότερον . . . ἐκοπιασα]; 15:58: "brothers and sisters, be steadfast,

immovable, always abounding [περισσεύοντες] in the work of the Lord, knowing that in

the Lord your labor is not in vain [ὁ κοπος ὑμῶν οὐκ ἐστιν κενὸς). Finally, Paul's

counsel on moving through death in chapter 15 has a consolatory function (14:3:

"prophesies … for their … consolation").

There is no doubt that the manifestation of prophecy and other forms of

Corinthian worship as depicted in 1 Corinthians 14 took place in a context of lively oral

performance. [61] Prophetic speech has an oral performance background with certain

expectations in the community of its experience. This experience shared previously by

Paul and the Corinthians includes spontaneity of revelation (14:26, 30); *spoken* words

that bring conviction (14:23-25); multiple assembly members participating (14:1 –

general exhortation: "Make love your aim and earnestly desire the higher gifts"; 14:26 –

"*each one* has …).   Paul intends to enter the Corinthian arena of prophetic performance

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[60] In the flow of Paul's argument, the prophetic oracle confirms his teaching rather than being presented as the starting premise upon which the teaching is based.

[61] 1 Corinthians 14:26: "When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation."

via his communiqué and he even intends to reshape the performance arena itself by his counsel: spoken words must be in a recognizable language or interpreted in a way that all may understand (14:13); members should submit to "a proper ordering of worship expressions" that befits God's character (14:26-33, 39-40); "manifestations of the Spirit" are given primarily for the building up of the assembly rather than its individual members separately (14:12). Hence, if it is correct, as I have argued, (1) that Paul's discussion in 1 Cor 15 should be held close to that of 1 Cor 14, (2) that it is shaped in terms of a personal example that aims to exemplify how prophecy can be expressed "decently and in order" (14:40) so that it might be "weighed by other prophets" (14:29), and (3) that it might have the intention of "building up, exhortation, and consolation" (14:3), then no doubt Paul would have composed the section against an imaginative backdrop of orally-delivered prophecy and its teaching/application in the Corinthian worship assembly.

Sectioning

As a whole, 1 Cor 15 is easily sectioned. Its oral composition through memory is aided by reference to tradition, a dialogical structure marked by questions, and dramatic movement through a repetitive thematic emphasis on the apocalyptic "victory of God." Here, I will deal with the latter two aspects.[62] The dialogical structure in 1 Corinthians 15:12-50 is marked by five questions, two (15:12 and 35) directly related to the prophetic

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[62] The first, tradition, was dealt with above in relationship to the scribal apocalyptic register. See pages 18-19.

oracle in 15:51-52 and a series of three (15:29-30) introducing an ethical interlude. Paul's first question in 15:12 ("How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"), from a set of imaginary (?) interlocutors in Corinth, provides an opportunity to assert the necessity of Christ's resurrection as the representative pattern for believers. Paul's conclusion is that believers are made alive at Christ's coming as God becomes directly related to all (15:28). His conclusion aligns with the phrase "the dead will be raised imperishable" as found in his prophetic oracle (15:52).   Paul's last question in 15:35 ("But some one will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"), from a single interlocutor, allows Paul to engage the issue: "in what kind of body are the dead raised?"   Paul answers that the dead shall be raised in a body analogous to immortal things not mortal. This answer aligns with the phrase "we shall be changed" in the prophetic oracle (15:51,52). Midway between these two extended discussions (15:29-34), Paul brings forth a series of three questions about the actions of people (including himself) in light of Christ's resurrection and his argued resurrection of believers in pattern with it. Exhortation through Paul's example of "dying daily" follows.

A strong thematic emphasis on "the victory of God" undergirds the various parts of this compositional structure. It plays like a refrain in 3 of 6 sections: the victory of God coming in Christ will vanquish imperial and cosmic powers of resistance: "destroying every rule and every authority and power … that God may be everything to everyone" (15:24-28); "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"(15:50); "thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:57). It is

this "victory of God" that also gives assurance that the "labor" of Paul (15:10) and the

faithful Corinthians (15:58) will not be in vain.

Hence, composition through memory for an oral performance of 1 Cor 15 would

be straightforward based on its six-section sequencing identification and its strong

thematic repetition:

 (1) Handing on of Tradition with a Personal Example of "Labor" (15:1-11)

(2) Response to First Inquiry: Are the Dead Raised? (15:12-28)
        Grounded in the Victory of God

(3) Ethical Exhortations (15:29-34)

(4) Response to Second Inquiry: With What Kind of Body? (15:35-50)
        Grounded in the Victory of God

(5) Confirming Prophecy to Responses 1 and 2 (15:51-57)
        Grounded in the Victory of God

(6) Summation with Community Exhortation to Abound in "Labor" (15:58)

Engagement

Much work has been done recently on analyzing the oral performance indicators

embedded in written texts (orally-derived texts).[63] My burden to this point has been to

show the likelihood of Paul's having composed the letter of 1 Corinthians in memory and

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[63] Key works in this area, among others are A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), John Miles Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), Ruth Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), M. A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (Baltimore: University Park Press, 1978). For a review of the literature and its development and usage, see Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears You*, 150-94.

then dictating it to a scribe. The written text then functioned as an *aide—memoire* for a

sent envoy who would orally perform Paul's message. 1 Corinthians 15 has key elements

that fit this composition-through-oral-performance model:

1.   The message is anchored in traditional material familiar to Paul and his audience.

2.   Composition is formed around a single theme – the story line of Judean apocalyptic, with 1 Cor 15 centering on removal of oppression and "vindication of the martyrs" as the climax and culmination of God's plan.

3.   Paul composes from a mix of registers – the scribal apocalyptic and the prophetic. The performance arena of the prophets at Corinth was most assuredly that of oral performance.

4.   1 Corinthians 15 is composed with ring-composition around the theme of faithful believers' "labor."[64]

5.   Paul structures the discourse around a teaching dialogue with a repetitive dramatic movement towards "the victory of God." His prophecy in 1 Cor 15:51-52 initiate a confirming climax to his presentation.

6.   The structured oral performance keeps Paul in close contact with the audience through dialogue, advancement of personal example, exhortations, and the use of concrete imagery.[65]

Orally derived texts must also demonstrate a sense of "listenability" (repetitive

sounds, rhythms, and structures; rhetorical figures; tone; pauses; oral formulas; traditional

material) at the close level of the text.[66] These become the aural cues that engage, hold

the attention, and make cognitive connections for the audience.[67] Here, a sampling of

indicators follows.

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[64] For ring-composition as a marker for oral patterning, see Harvey, *Listening to the Text*, 65-70; 103.

[65] See Davis, *Oral Biblical Criticism*, 19-20, following W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1982), 37-57.

[66] Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears You*, 175-227; Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind*, 187-88.

[67] These aural cues are accompanied, of course, by non-verbal cues that leave little, if any, indicators in an orally derived text.

1. *Emphatic theme: "raised/resurrection from the dead."* Paul consistently keeps three forms of ἐγείρω before his listeners in this chapter. The verb is used nineteen times with the same forms clustered together: ἐγήγερται (4x); ἤγειρεν (2x); ἐγείρονται (2x); ἐγήγερται (3x); ἐγείρονται (3x); ἐγήγερται (4x); ἐγερθήσονται (1x). The first usage comes in vs. 4 and the last in vs. 52. In addition, ἀναστασις νεκρῶν is used four times at 15:12, 13, 21, and 42.

2. *Key sub theme in symmetrical form – "appeared" in 15:5-8.* Attention to the Greek forms displays rhythmical structure of sounds producing emphasis and movement:[68]

    A   <u>ὤφθη</u> Κηφᾷ
    B   <u>εἶτα τοῖς</u> δώδεκα
    C   <u>ἔπειτα ὤφθη</u> ἐπάνω πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς ἐφάπαξ . . .
    C'   <u>ἔπειτα ὤφθη</u> ᾿Ιακώβῳ,
    B'   <u>εἶτα τοῖς</u> ἀποστόλοις πᾶσιν
    A'   ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων ὡσπερεὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι <u>ὤφθη</u> κἀμοί

3. *The cadence of inversion: inverted structures in 15:12-13 and 15:15b-16.* Inversion refers to introducing two subjects and then treating them in reverse order. There is significant overlap between these two inverted structures as to make an impression on the ear. The material in between the two ("faith in vain" and false testimony) and following it ("futile faith" and the dead who perish) produce a larger structure of alternation (ABA'B') between the parts in 15:12-19 (A – 15:12-13; B – 15:14-15a; A' – 15:15b-16; B' – 15:17-19).[69]

    15:12-13:

    A   εἰ δὲ <u>Χριστὸς</u> κηρύσσεται ὅτι ἐκ νεκρῶν <u>ἐγήγερται</u>,
    B   πῶς λέγουσιν ἐν ὑμῖν τινες ὅτι <u>ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν</u>;
    B'   εἰ δὲ <u>ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν</u>,
    A'   οὐδὲ <u>Χριστὸς ἐγήγερται</u>

    15:15b-16

    A   ἤγειρεν τὸν <u>Χριστόν</u> ὃν οὐκ ἤγειρεν,

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[68] Reproduced in Harvey, *Listening to the Text*, 173 from C. H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians* (New York: Crossroads, 1987), 70.

[69] For inversion as an oral pattern, see Harvey, *Listening to the Text*, 62-65; 100-101. The following examples are reproduced from Harvey (173).

B	εἴπερ ἄρα <u>νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται</u>.
B'	εἰ γὰρ <u>νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται</u>,
A'	οὐδὲ <u>Χριστὸς</u> ἐγήγερται

4. *A vivid dramatic movement towards the "right ordering" of " all things"* (τὰ πάντα). "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead…" Paul continues on to make use of the mythic pattern of the right ordering of chaotic evil forces as the culmination of God's purposes. The divine agent is the resurrected man, Christ, in whom all shall be made alive. Christ vanquishes all powers of oppression and finds his own proper order before God the Father. The grandness of this apocalyptic scenario is carried by the repetition of various forms of πάντος (12x) throughout and the emphasis on the deliverance of the kingdom, now "rightly ordered" through subjection (various forms of ὑποτάσσω – 6x). Neatly enfolded in this grand and ordered scheme ("each in its own order" – ἕκαστος δὲ ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τάγματι) are believers who belong to Christ and share in his resurrection at his coming.

5. *The lively tone of an ethical appeal in 15:29-34.* Paul's tone of grandeur shifts gradually to puzzlement (why baptize on behalf of the dead?), then to mild indignation (why am I in peril?), then to strong protest (I protest! … I die daily! …I've fought with beasts!). Paul's question has changed from "if Christ has not been raised, then …?" to "if the dead are not raised, then …?" The second "if the dead are not raised, then …" drops the interrogative and leads directly into ethical instruction by way of feigned irony ("Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"). Paul, then, moves to three quick imperatival exhortations (the first accompanied by popular proverbial wisdom), followed by chastisement.

6. *The oral pattern of "alternation" arranged in strict antithesis – 15:42-44.*[70] The alternating of items in contrast with one another moves not only at the level of concepts but also at the aural impression made on the ear. In the following example, the presence of anaphora[71] and homoeoteleuton[72] are striking when hearing the text.

A	σπείρεται	ἐν φθορᾷ
B	ἐγείρεται	ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ
A	σπείρεται	ἐν ἀτιμίᾳ

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[70] Harvey, *Listening to the Text*, 174.

[71] "Repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive clauses." Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms,* 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 11.

[72] "The use of similar endings to words, phrases, or sentences." Ibid., 83.

B	ἐγείρεται	ἐν δόξῃ
A	σπείρεται	ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ
B	ἐγείρεται	ἐν δυνάμει
A	σπείρεται	σῶμα ψυχικόν
B	ἐγείρεται	σῶμα πνευματικόν
A	εἰ ἔστιν	σῶμα ψυχικόν
B	ἔστιν καὶ	πνευματικόν

7. *Parallelism and verbal repetition in 15:53-54a.*[73] Repetition is a key element of oral performance. "Repetition of all kinds is important, whether of content, syllables, verses, or lengthy passages. This is because redundancy enables the hearer to remember what is being said, since something said only once is quickly forgotten."[74] The following striking example combines keen repetition (note the consistent use of ἐνδύω in middle voice – "to clothe oneself in, put on") in parallel form with elements of alternation among synonyms. The effect is to reinforce strongly one point: what is mortal must be changed to immortal.

15:53	δεῖ γὰρ	τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο	ἐνδύσασθαι	αφθαρσίαν
	καὶ	τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο	ἐνδύσασθαι	αθανασίαν
15:54	ὅταν δὲ	τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο	ἐνδύσηται	αφθαρσίαν
	καὶ	τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο	ἐνδύσηται	αθανασίαν

These observations indicate that Paul's composition is ordered and stylized in a way consistent with composition in performance. Its "listenability" is assured through emphatic theme, aural cues of repetition, structural cadence through such means as alternation or parallelism, vivid imagery and movement, a lively and varied tone, and patterned word beginnings and endings.

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Assessing Paul's Performance

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[73] Harvey, *Listening to the Text*, 175.

[74] Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears You*, 184.

Paul fits nicely as a practitioner in the ancient world of orality and literacy. His

dictated letters fit best a model of composition from short-term memory through oral

performance. Such a performance would give guidance to the envoy who sought to

convey Paul's own presence in an oral performance to the designated assemblies of

believers. Paul's language and thought stay concrete and close to his audience.   His

communication is shaped for "listenability," with the oral patterns and rhetorical

techniques mirroring those of other contemporaries as well as the kind of counsel

reflected in various places such as the rhetorical handbooks of the time.

1 Corinthians provides a valuable model for seeing a composition based on

"single-theme structuring," with the analysis of 1 Corinthians 15 being the theme-

completion presented in a clearly sectioned and memorable unit. This composition

aspect, especially as it applies to Paul's apocalyptic themes elsewhere, bears further

comparison with other Pauline letter presentations. Further analysis of 1 Corinthians 15

demonstrated that it has a high level of engagement or "listenability" based on oral

indicators in the written record. Given the recent work of Harvey and that of Davis,[75]

along with the proliferation of rhetorical analysis on Paul's letters in recent years, we

might conclude that some model of oral composition fits each of Paul's letters (and some

model of oral performance should inform our understanding of its reception).

What proves to be increasingly of interest is Paul's use of a register and the

resulting performance arena as it relates to the full context of orality and literacy. I have

identified two specific registers for Paul that overlap in this passage: the scribal

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[75] Referenced in note # 3 above. Harvey explores "oral patterning" for all the seven undisputed
letters of Paul.

apocalyptic and the prophetic. Why may Paul have used or even consciously chosen these registers for this section of his composition? The prophetic register is, of course, appropriate within the context of the discussion taking place in 12-15 as it relates to prophesying in the community. But may it also be used to help Paul identify with a broad spectrum of the community who "fancy" direct revelation from God? Furthermore, may it also be used to identify with a specific segment of the community over against others (such as tongue speakers)? From another perspective, might a "prophetic performance" function metonymically to invoke the justice of God against earthly powers that oppress God's people?

Paul's use of the scribal apocalyptic register is necessary, in my estimation, from his choice about "single-theme structuring."   Hence, the resulting performance arena threatens any order, including the present Roman imperial order that stands over against the people of God and their opportunity to faithfully "labor" in the gospel. But what shall we make of Paul's overt use of literate markings in the text (15:45: "Thus it is written …; 15:54: "the saying that is written…)? [76] Is this also a "reminder" of the use of distinct textual traditions introduced in previous oral performances at Corinth? Or might Paul be using the "aura" of the written texts to undergird his argumentation – a perception to be felt by both the literate and non-literate alike?

Such questions – of which others could be put[77] – continue to indicate the complexity of interpreting this historical figure, Paul, and his communiqués to believing

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[76] We might add as well 15:27b: "But when it says, 'All things are put in subjection under him.'"

[77] In addition to received confessional material (15:3-8), scripture (15:25; 27b; 45; 54-55), and prophecy (15:51-52), Paul also offers up some popular proverbial wisdom based on Jewish and Gentile

communities. The use of written communication and its oral performance may have

hidden within it Paul's own authoritative claims to be teacher and guide to the Corinthian

community, along with his own direct challenges to the dominant forms of power and

discourse found in prevailing conventions of imperial society.

sources in 15:32 and 15:33, respectively. Is Paul also trying to integrate the register of a popular sage, and if so, why?