

# A STRUCTURAL OUTLINE OF I CORINTHIANS

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*The major sections of the book are marked by one of two repeated headings:*

*περι δε ... ("now concerning ..."): 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12  
... δε υμας αδελφου ("now ... you brethren," where ... is a verb  
of speaking in the first person singular): 1:10; 11:2; 15:1.  
On the basis of 7:1, we hypothesize that the "now concerning"  
sections address topics raised by the Corinthians in a previous  
correspondence, while the "now I say to you brethren" sections  
introduce material which Paul is initiating.*

## Block 0 Prologue 1:1-9

*This block is marked*

- 1. by standing outside the system of headings outlined above;*
- 2. by its regular parallels in Paul's other epistles.*

### I. The Salutation, 1:1-3

#### A. From, 1:1

1. Paul, described in two directions:
  - a. "a called one," his origin;
  - b. "an apostle [sent one]," his purpose.
2. Sosthenes (Acts 18:17)

#### B. To, 1:2

1. The church at Corinth.
2. All believers. This is the most general heading of all P's epistles. Compare universal notices in 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33; 16:1.

#### C. Greetings, 1:3

1. Their nature: grace and peace (always in this order).
2. Their source.

### II. The Invocation, 1:4-9

*These verses are divided syntactically into two sentences: a prayer of thanksgiving (1:4-8), and a statement about God's faithfulness (1:9) which summarizes the prayer. We are surprised not to find a request associated with the prayer, as in many other epistles. Perhaps Paul felt this would have been inconsistent with their positional completeness, which he emphasizes in the thanksgiving. But 1:9 does give the theological basis for further progress in their spiritual lives.*

#### A. Thanksgiving (1:4-8)

#### B. Statement (1:9)

## Block 1

## "Now I beseech you, brethren"--Unity

1:10-6:20

Note repetition of παρακλήω "beseech" in 1:10 and 4:16, in the first case urging them not to follow Paul, and in the second, urging them just the opposite. Church unity depends on right authority in the church (1:10-4:13--the Holy Spirit, not man), and right conduct in the believers' lives (4:16-6:20--here, human example is important). These two main sections are marked by keywords: "wise," "wisdom," "fool," "foolish," "foolishness" in the first, "fornication" and "judge" in the second. 4:14-15 is transitional. The singular "I" is a break from the plural "we" of 4:13, and looks forward to 4:16ff, while "these things" in 4:14 refers back to the previous context.

## I. Church Unity and the Question of Authority, 1:10-4:13

Chiastic structure of 1:10-3:4 marks it as a unit. The remainder of the section consists of several metaphors of Christian ministry (3:5-4:5), followed by some non-figurative comments based on those metaphors (note 4:6 "in a figure"). This division is further reflected in the concentration of keywords, γινώσκω "to know" in 1:12-3:4, and ἐργάζομαι "to work" in 3:5-4:13.

## A. A man-centered authority betrays a faulty view of Christian teaching, 1:12-3:4.

The various sections are marked by changes in pronouns. "I" and "you" occur at the extremes and in the middle (A and C of ABCBA), while "we" and "they" are used in the intermediate sections (B). The center section is further divided, since "I" is used only in the second half. Note also "brethren" at the start of the A's, and at the start and center of C.

The Corinthians were arguing over differences in the doctrine and authority of various human teachers. Paul responds that the relevant contrast is between the wisdom of the world (unsaved) and that of God (and his saved people), and that the circumstances of the origin of the Corinthian church illustrate this.

## 1. The party divisions of the Corinthians, 1:12-17; 3:1-4.

Each of these paragraphs has the same three-part internal structure: Their order is reversed, extending the chiasm of the whole section.

- a. The party claims of the Corinthians, 1:12; 3:4. "I am of X, I am of Y, I am of Z." The claim to be "of Christ" may have been made by eyewitnesses of the resurrection, 15:6.
- b. The claims expounded through rhetorical questions, 1:13; 3:3-4.
  - i. The questions of 1:13 expect negative answers.
  - ii. The questions of 3:3-4 expect positive answers.
- c. How Paul sought to avert this problem, 1:14-17; 3:1-2.
  - i. 1:14-17, by avoiding "centerpiece" roles in the church.
  - ii. 3:1-2, by keeping his teaching simple, so that the believers could see his points from the Scriptures, rather than relying on his authority.

2. The true division, between human and divine wisdom, 1:18-25;  
2:6-16.

*The outermost pair of paragraphs featured the pronouns "I" and "you," setting Paul as the teacher and corrector over against the Corinthians as the errant students. This pair of paragraphs shifts to "we" and "they," which set Paul and the Corinthians together over against the world.*

a. 1:18-25.

*1:18 summarizes the categories which dominate the rest of the paragraph. 1:19-25 are a chiasm.*

i. Summary, 1:18. The verse distinguishes "them that perish" from "us which are saved," on the basis of how we and they view the gospel. Two metaphors are introduced--that of intelligence (according to which the gospel is either "foolishness" or "wisdom"), and physical ability (with the options "weakness" and "strength" or "power"). All four terms are used in the following verses. We may arrange them in a matrix, below. The upper case entries are the ones actually used by Paul in 1:18. Notice how by selecting diagonally related elements, he implies the entire matrix without itemizing it exhaustively.

	Them	Us
Intelligence	FOOLISHNESS	Wisdom
Physical ability	Weakness	POWER

For a similar phenomenon, see John 6:32.

ii. Detail, 19-25.

*The verses form a chiasm, ABBA. The outermost members (1:19-20, 25) both present reasons for the superiority of God's wisdom over man's. The innermost members (1:21, 22-23) both begin with επειδὴ, literally "since," and explain how God (1:21) and the apostles (1:22-23) present that wisdom. The metaphor of wisdom is used throughout the structure; that of strength is introduced only in the second half.*

(a) 1:19-20, Scripture shows God's wisdom superior to the world's.

(b) 1:21, Because worldly wisdom is powerless to reveal God, he uses proclamation.

(c) 1:22-24, Because of (in spite of?) the natural inclination of the unsaved, the apostles use proclamation.

(d) 1:25, Reason shows God's wisdom and strength superior to the world's.

## b. 2:6-16.

*2:6a provides a summary outline for the rest of the paragraph. 2:6b-9 describe the WISDOM that "we speak," while 2:10-16 describe "them that are perfect." Note how the key word "Spirit," introduced in 2:10, persists throughout this section.*

i. Summary, 2:6a.

ii. Detail, 2:6b-16.

(a) "We speak wisdom . . . ," 2:6b-9

(i) 2:6b-8a, Paul STATES the nature of this wisdom as foreign to and hidden from the world.

(ii) 2:8b-9, Paul ARGUES that this is the nature of this wisdom.

((a)) 2:8b, argument from experience

((b)) 2:9, argument from Scripture

(b) ". . . among them that are perfect [mature]," 2:10-16

*In Greek, 2:10,12 both begin with "we" or "us," while 2:11,16 both begin with "for who knows" (or "has known"). The verses thus form an alternation, of which the first panel summarizes the second.*

(i) 2:10, we have special wisdom from God.

(ii) 2:11, union with God needed for such wisdom.

(iii) 2:12-15, we have special wisdom, distinguished by three contrasts from that of the world:

((a)) 2:12, it is given by a different SPIRIT,

((b)) 2:13, it comes in different WORDS,

((c)) 2:14-15, it comes to different HEARERS.

(iv) 2:16, union with God needed for such wisdom.

## 3. The origin of the Corinthian church, 1:26-2:5.

*Paul returns to the "I"- "you" contrast. Now, the contrast is not to point up their present error (as in the outer paragraphs), but to recall Paul as the evangelist and them as the auditors of the gospel, some time previously.*

*The recurrence of "brethren" at 1:26 and 2:1, and the fact that "I" occurs only in 2:1-5, suggest that this center section has two halves. This is confirmed by the fine structure of the halves.*

1:26-31 gives two statements about the identity of the Corinthians in Christ, one negative and one positive, alternating with two purpose statements, again one negative and one positive. 2:1-5 similarly offers a negative and positive statement about the Corinthians (this time about their introduction to Christ), and a positive and negative purpose statement. This time, though, the two statements are contiguous, as are the purpose statements which follow them. If we let capital letters represent positive units and lower case letters represent negative units, with statements represented by "A" and "a" and purpose statements by "B" and "b", the overall order is abAB/aAbB.

a. The Corinthians' Identity in Christ, 1:26-31.

i. Negative statement, 1:26-28.

Note how the three categories of 1:26--wise, powerful, well-born--correspond to the three categories of 1:27, 28. Compare the 3 categories of I Jn 2:16.

(a) 1:26-28a, the details of whom God has chosen.

I Jn 2:16 Not these...

...but these

Pride of life	wise after the flesh	foolish of the world
Lust of flesh	mighty	weak
Lust of eyes	noble ("well-born")	base ("ill-born"), despised

(b) 1:28b, the summary: God has chosen the "are-nots" rather than the "ares."

ii. Negative purpose, 1:29.

iii. Positive statement, 1:30. Base sentence: "You are," contrasting with their status in the world's eyes as "are-nots."

iv. Positive purpose, 1:31.

b. The Corinthians' Introduction to Christ, 2:1-5.

i. Statement, 2:1-4.

(a) 2:1-3, Paul's method, - and + (cf. II Cor. 4:1-2)

(b) 2:4, Paul's content, - and +.

ii. Purpose, - and +, 2:5.

B. A man-centered authority betrays a faulty view of Christian teachers, 3:5-4:13.

3:5-4:5 is replete with metaphorical descriptions of the Christian teacher, as farmer, builder, household steward. 4:6 refers explicitly to these metaphors: "These things have I applied figuratively to myself and Apollos." Then Paul develops the application of the figures, in more personal terms.

1. Metaphors for Christian ministry, 3:5-4:5.

This part has two sections, each with three distinguishing features: titles that define the relation of the teacher both to the church and to God; a metaphorical description of the teacher's task and judgment; and an application introduced with *οὖν* "therefore" and a negative imperative. In the second section, these elements come in just this order, and only one metaphor is presented. In the first section, two metaphors are used, and the order is more complex. Schematically:

Titles-- manward	3:5, "ministers" ("waiters")	4:1, "stewards"
Godward	3:9, "laborers together"	"ministers" ("assistants")
Task & Judgment	3:6-8 Farming	3:10-20 Building
Application	3:21-23	4:5

a. The teacher as farmer and builder, 3:5-23.

i. The titles, 3:5,9a.

From their parallels in 4:1, we see that the titles form a natural pair, and go together. They are separated here to form an *inclusio* which marks off the farmer metaphor.

- (a) 3:5, "ministers," *διδάκονοι*, table-waiters, describing their role toward the believers.
- (b) 3:9a, "laborers together with God," describing their role toward God.

ii. The metaphors of farmer and builder, 3:6-20.

3:9b is a transition between these paragraphs. Its use of "you" contrasts with "I" and "he" that are dominant in the surrounding paragraphs. "You are God's husbandry" looks back to the image of the farmer, while "you are God's building" looks forward to the image of the architect and builder.

(a) 3:6-8, the farmer.

*The verses form an alternation between man's role (planting and watering), and God's (in the first two panels, giving the increase; in the last, rewarding). This metaphor indicates that workers will be judged on the basis of their EFFORT.*

(i) 3:6a,7a,8a, the human effort.

((a)) Plant--establish new churches.

((b)) Water--nurture existing assemblies.

(ii) 3:6b,7b,8b, the divine contribution.

((a)) 3:6b,7b--give increase.

((b)) 3:8b--reward workers.

(b) 3:9, the transition.

(i) Paul and Apollos: laborers with God.

(ii) The Corinthians:

((a)) God's husbandry (looking back to vv 6-8)

((b)) God's building (looking ahead to vv 10-20)

(c) 3:10-20, the builder.

*The structure is quite complex.*

*We begin by noting a shift in pronouns from "I/he" in 10-15 to "you/he" in 16-20. These two halves may be roughly contrasted as illustration and interpretation. The two panels together form a chiasm, ABCCBA.*

*The outer members of the chiasm are 10 and 18-20, listing the qualifications for the workman. "Wise" in 10a corresponds with "wise" and "wisdom" in 18b-20. The workman must be wise, yet not with this world's wisdom.*

*Moving in one layer to B, we find the injunctions in 10b ("let every man . . .") and 18a ("let no man . . .").*

*The C elements of the chiasm form an alternation, DEDE, where D describes the components of the structure, and E describes the judgment which will pass on this work.*

*This metaphor indicates that workers will be judged on the basis of what they PRODUCE.*

(i) 3:10a,18b-20. The qualifications: heavenly wisdom.

(ii) 3:10b,18a. The warnings:

((a)) Let every man take heed how he builds.

((b)) Let no man deceive himself.

- (iii) 3:11-12,16, the components of the structure.
  - ((a)) 3:11, the foundation: Christ.
  - ((b)) 3:12, metaphors for one's work.
  - ((c)) 3:16a, the superstructure: believers, the church.
  - ((d)) 3:16b, the tenant: the Holy Spirit.
- (iv) 3:13-15,17, the judgment.
  - ((a)) 3:13-15, figurative. Purged by fire; what is of no value burns up. Compare Luke 3:16,17; Heb. 6:7,8 (both describing purging of the believers).
  - ((b)) 3:17, literal. "destroy" = "defile." "If I mess up God's temple, God will mess me up."

iii. The application, 3:21-23.

- (a) 3:21a, the command: "let no man glory in men."
- (b) 3:21b-23, the reason:
  - (i) The mere creatures to whom you attached yourselves as party heads (1:12) do not own you ("I am of [= belong to] Paul"). Rather, you own them. They all are God's gifts to you.
  - (ii) It is not true that some of you, as a distinctive party, belong to Christ. All of you do.
  - (iii) Ultimately, all belongs to God. Compare I Cor 15:24-28.

b. The teacher as steward, 4:1-5.

*Recall from the diagram on page 6 that the structure of this section is parallel to that of 3:5-23.*

i. The titles, 4:1.

*We have the same manward and Godward categories that patterned 3:5,9a, but in chiastic order (Godward first this time).*

- (a) "ministers [ὀνηρέτης, 'assistant,' of John Mark to Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13:5] of Christ." While 3:9a presented us as God's fellowworkers, and thus more or less on a par with him, here we clearly see ourselves as his subordinates. This is our role toward God.
- (b) "stewards of the mysteries of God." Compare Luke 12:42. Our duty manward, to feed God's people.



## ii. The metaphor of steward, 4:2-4.

- (a) 4:2. The responsibility: be faithful to discharge the trust.
- (b) 4:3-4. The judgment:
  - (i) 4:3a, not the opinion of other men.
  - (ii) 4:3b,4a, not even his own evaluation. Cf. Ps. 19:12.
  - (iii) 4:4b. Only the Lord, because, as 4:5 shows, the judgment is on the basis of motives, which only the Lord can accurately assess.

## iii. The application, 4:5.

- (a) The command: don't form premature judgments of men (by exalting some, and ignoring others).
- (b) The reason: the true judge is coming.
  - (i) Basis of his judgment:
    - ((a)) "Hidden things of darkness," compare Eph. 5:11,12. Suggests secret sins, negative things.
    - ((b)) "counsels of the heart," including our [good] intentions.
  - (ii) Result: every man shall have the (= his proper) praise from God.

## 2. Paul's Example of Christian Ministry, 4:6-13.

*After a transitional verse setting forth the motives for the metaphors and for the following testimony (4:6), he analyzes their boast (4:7-8) and follows it with his own (4:9-13).*

## a. The motives, 4:6.

*Note the twofold repetition of "that." The first motive is more general; the second, more specific.*

- i. That they might learn the truth of the maxim, "Don't think beyond that which is written." The syntax indicates that Paul is citing a motto or general principle of some sort, exhorting people to have minds controlled by Scripture. Compare Deut. 29:29; II Cor. 10:4,5.
- ii. That they might apply this maxim to the scriptures which he has already cited (in 1:19; 3:19,20), and not take sides over human leaders.

## b. The boasts, 4:7-13.

## i. Their boast, 4:7-8.

(a) 4:7. They do not correctly identify the GIVER.

(i) WHO is he? God, of course, I Sam. 2:6-8.

(ii) WHAT has he given? All things, I Chron. 29:10-16.

(iii) WHY do they glory? Shows that they neglect the force of the first two questions.

(b) 4:8. They do not understand the GIFT.

(i) What they think they have: the kingdom, on the basis of material satisfaction. Contrast Rom. 14:17.

(ii) Paul's correction: they have not, in fact, arrived. Compare Phil. 3:12-15. To think that one is mature is one of the clearest signs of immaturity.

## ii. Paul's boast, 4:9-13.

(a) 4:9a. The GIVER: "God has set us forth."

(b) 4:9b-13, the GIFT.

*Though the correspondence is only logical and not formal, we may have here a chiasm, ABCBA, as developed below.*

(i) 4:9b,13b. Worthless status in the eyes of the world. They are seen as condemned criminals fit only to feed to the lions; as rubbish and refuse.

(ii) 4:10,12b-13a. At a disadvantage with their evaluators, by the world's standards.

(iii) 4:11-12a. Sufferings.

## II. Church Unity and the Question of Purity, 4:14-6:20.

*4:14-21 and 5:1-6:20 each have their own chiastic structure, establishing them as separate units. 4:16 is the heading to this section on practical purity, answering to 1:10, and contrasting with the appeal earlier NOT to follow men. The shift in pronouns from "we" to "I" between 4:13,14 shows clearly that 4:14,15 belong with the rest of 4:14-21. However, "these things" in 4:14 seem to refer to what has gone before. We suggest, then, that 4:14-21 is a transitional paragraph introducing the discussion of purity.*

## A. The Example, 4:14-21.

1. Two resources for instructing them, 4:14,21.
  - a. Negative: "shame you," "rod."
  - b. Positive: "warn you," "love and meekness".
2. Two kinds of helpers, 4:15,17-20.
  - a. The "instructors," of whom Timothy is an example.
  - b. Paul, the "father," who will shortly come to them.
3. "Be followers of me," 4:16 (center of chiasm; focal point)

## B. The Exhortation, 5:1-6:20.

*These chapters present two concurrent structures.*

*The first structure is coded through complementary distribution of two keywords in chiasmic fashion: "fornication" and cognates (in 5:1-11 and 6:9-20) and "judge" and cognates (5:12-6:8).*

*The second structure is a shift in the middle of the judgment section from discussing the church's attitude toward an erring brother (chapter 5) to discussing the believer's personal involvement in judgment and fornication (chapter 6).*

*Fornication is condemned in both chapters. The attitude toward judgment, though, is radically different. 5:12-13 discusses judgment before BELIEVERS concerning an offense against GOD. This the Corinthians had neglected, and need to carry out. On the other hand, 6:1-8 discusses judgment before UNBELIEVERS concerning offenses against OURSELVES. These judgments the Corinthians were undertaking, and should drop.*

*The relationship between the two chapters is emphasized not only by the similar keywords, but also by the close parallel between the lists of sins in 5:11 and 6:9,10.*

1. Dealing with sin in another, 5:1-13.

*I have not detected as many formal structural clues in this chapter as the others lead me to expect. So my analysis, which is essentially topical, must be considered tentative.*

- a. The problem, 5:1-2. It is twofold:
  - i. The man's sin, 5:1.
  - ii. The church's lack of response, 5:2.
- b. The solution, 5:3-13.
  - i. What Paul does, 5:3-5.
    - (a) The judgment: "deliver to Satan." Paul is the one who does this (cf. I Tim 1:20). For possible examples, see Acts 5:1-11; 13:9-11. The apostle must be present,

at least "in spirit." Apostles of the Lord Jesus could do special things that we do not expect to see today: II Cor 12:12.

- (b) The purpose: "destruction of the flesh...spirit may be saved." Not vindictive or malicious, but with a desire for restoration. Was this end achieved in this case, II Cor 2:5-8?
  - (c) The context: "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together..." Such actions are the duty and prerogative of the church, not of an individual. Note how Matt 18:15-19, which give authority for such proceedings, are followed immediately by 18:20, "where two or three are gathered together in my name...."
- ii. What Paul tells them to do, 5:6-13.
- (a) The metaphor, 5:6-8.
    - (i) You are unleavened. Probably written at Passover season. The Cor. church began next door to the synagogue, and drew its early converts from there (Acts 18:7,8). Jewish Christians even today observe Passover for its reminders of Christ.
    - (ii) But a crumb remains that you missed.
  - (b) The literal instruction, 5:9-13.
    - (i) The "letter" may be this one. Gk. letters often use a past tense ("epistolary aorist") to describe their own writing, because when the recipient reads it, the act is past.
    - (ii) "any man that is called a brother"--these actions only concern those in the assembly.
    - (iii) The sins which occasion such discipline (5:11) are the sort that leave doubts about a person's salvation (6:9,10).
    - (iv) The judgment: "put away"... "not to eat." Refers at least to the Lord's Supper.

## 2. Dealing with sin in ourselves, 6:1-20.

*6:1-8 are marked not only by "judge" and "judgment," but also by derivatives of the Greek stem ἀδυν- "unjust" ("unjust" 6:1; "take wrong" 6:7; "do wrong" 6:8; "unrighteous" 6:9). This keyword pulls 6:9-11 toward 6:1-8, while "fornication" in 6:9 pulls it toward 6:12-20. We conclude that 6:9-11 is a hinge.*

### a. The sin of treating a brother unjustly, 6:1-8.

*The criticism has three stages, the first two articulated by a hinge (6:6), and the last two (6:7,8) by an extracted alternation.*

- i. You take one another to court before unbelievers, 6:1-5.  
(Hinge, 6:6. The first half of the verse looks ahead to 6:7, while the second half recalls 6:1-5.)
- ii. You take one another to court at all, 6:7.
- iii. You offend one another in such a way as to make court an option, 6:8.

b. Hinge, 6:9-11.

*We have two statements about people who shall not inherit the kingdom. The first recalls 6:1-8, while the second anticipates 6:12-20. The note of encouragement in 6:11 has no clear correspondent. Compare the function of Heb 6:9 in its context.*

- i. The warnings, 6:9-10.
  - a. The UNRIGHTEOUS (6:1-8) shall not inherit the kingdom.
  - b. The IMMORAL (6:12-20) shall not inherit the kingdom.
- ii. The encouragement, 6:11.

*There is a subtle structural link between this verse and 6:6,8. The earlier verses both have the structure ἀλλὰ... καὶ τοῦτο/ταῦτα... "but/nay...and that..." 6:11 offers the same elements, in reverse order: καὶ ταῦτα...ἀλλὰ... ἀλλὰ...ἀλλὰ... "and such...but...but...but..."*

c. The sin of fornication, 6:12-20.

*After stating a general principle (6:12), Paul raises two possible applications of it (6:13,14). An ambiguous metaphor in the second leads him to expand it in two ways (6:15-18, 19-20).*

- i. The general principle, 6:12. "All things are lawful unto me" may have been a common pauline motto: cf. 10:23, and the idea behind Rom 14:14; I Tim. 4:4,5. But two qualifications are needed.
  - (a) Not all things are expedient. Are we running the world acc. to the instructions? There is no law against trying to run a car on soda pop, but it won't work. The attempt is evidence of stupidity, not liberty.
  - (b) I will not be brought under the power of any. Cf. Rom 6:12-18. Some freedoms exist only so long as we do not exercise them.

## ii. Application to two questions, 6:13-14

## (a) Meat

- (i) Expediency: meat and the belly are intended for one another.
- (ii) Both will pass away. The issue is temporal and amoral. Cf. 7:29-31.

## (b) Fornication

*"Body" is ambiguous. Does it refer to the individual human corpse, or to the assembly (as in chapter 12)? The individual interpretation fits well. But, considering the prevalence of fornication as a cultic phenomenon in the ancient world, so does the corporate. The local church is not to imitate the pagan temple in promoting fornication. Paul seems to be aware of both senses, for each of the next two paragraphs expounds one of them.*

- (i) Expediency: The body (in either sense) and fornication are not intended for one another.
- (ii) In view of the resurrection, the matter has eternal consequences.

## iii. The two "bodies" and fornication, 6:15-20

*Both sections begin, "Know you not...", and close with a command. The first is about bodies (plural and thus individual), while the second is about the single body (of Christ). The commands move from a particular sin (fornication) to the general need for people to glorify God.*

## (a) Fornication and the individual's body, 6:15-18.

- (i) The principle, 6:15-17. 6:15b should be rendered, "Shall I then take away the members of Christ...?" Compare 6:9,10. Fornication and Christianity are absolutely incompatible.
- (ii) The command, 6:18. FLEE fornication. Cf. Gen 39:7-12. Carefully distinguish:

((a)) Resist the Devil, Jas 4:7; I Pet 5:8,9;

((b)) Flee youthful lusts, here, I Tim 6:11, II Tim 2:22.

- (iii) The reinforcement, 6:18b.

## (b) Fornication and the body of Christ, 6:19-20.

- (i) The principle, 6:19-20a. The temple metaphor is elsewhere used only of the corporate body: Eph 2:19-22, I Pet. 2:4-5.

- (ii) The command, 6:20b. "Glorify God."
- (iii) The reinforcement, 6:20c. "which are God's."

Though 7:1-24, 25-40 have separate block headings, they are closely related. Both deal with the questions of celibacy and marriage. Both consist of blocks of text of three types.

Type A, "Duties of marriage," describes the concern and responsibility which each spouse has for the other's needs.

Type B, "Change Marital State?", contains the only finite forms of the verb "to marry" in the chapter; contemplates changes both from single to married and from married to single; distinguishes new revelation to Paul from earthly teachings of the Lord Jesus; and contains the only occurrences of οὕτως "so" in the chapter.

Type C, "Temporal State," presents a series of temporal contrasts that do not matter, and contains the only instances of χρῶμαι "to use" in the chapter (21,31).

Types A and C are similar in that both give reasons not to change marital state, while B tells when a change is appropriate. The first block presents these types in the order ABC, while the second inverts this chiasm to present BCxAB.

Our exposition of these blocks assumes that the Corinthians, in an effort to control fornication, sought to proclaim celibacy as a universal life style, and that the letter mentioned in 7:1 sought Paul's endorsement of that strategy. The chapter does not give such an endorsement, but tactfully points out that marital status is in most cases an amoral issue, to be decided on the basis of individual gift and circumstance rather than ecclesiastical fiat.

## Block 2

"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me"  
7:1-24

7:6-17 are set off by an internal inclusio between 7:6-7 and 7:17, leading to an overall three-fold division that is confirmed by the correspondences with the following block noted above.

### I. The Duties of Marriage, 7:1-5.

A. The Corinthian claim, 7:1. "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." Paul uses καλός "[aesthetically] good," not αγαθός "[morally] good," thus qualifying their claim (as we have reconstructed it) even as he summarizes it.

B. The Pauline qualification, 7:2-5.

1. The need for marriage, 7:2. Cf. Prov 5:15-20.

2. The nature of marriage, 7:3-5.
  - a. It is not a platonic relationship, 7:3-4. Cf. Exod 21:10
    - i. 7:3, husband and wife owe affection to one another. Compare Eph 5:25. Command and love can coexist.
    - ii. 7:4, husband and wife control one another's bodies.
  - b. Under three conditions, physical relations may be suspended, 7:5.
    - i. "with consent." Must be a mutual decision, not the whim of one party or the other.
    - ii. "fasting and prayer."
      - (a) The purpose is spiritual exercise. Compare Exod 19:15; I Sam 21:4,5; Zech 12:12-14.
      - (b) The need is so pressing that the appetite for food is to be denied as well.
    - iii. "for a time...come together again." The abstention is to be temporary.
  - c. Paul's instructions here suggest that the Corinthians were suggesting that believers who were already married should abstain from physical affection. His comments reject such an idea, while recognizing legitimate occasions for temporary abstention.

## II. Should believers seek to change their marital state? 7:6-17.

*A chiasmic inclusio from 7:6-7 to 7:17 sets off the section, which is divided into three parts by Paul's comments to each of three distinct groups.*

### A. The inclusio, 7:6-7,17.

1. Paul's authority, 7:6,17b. "I speak this...so I ordain..." The contrast between "permission" and "commandment" in 7:6 is probably between "commandments" given by the Lord during his earthly life (cf. 7:10,25) and revelations which Paul is graciously "permitted" to convey. One is not more authoritative than the other.
2. The principle of personal gift, 7:7,17a.

### B. The detailed discussion, 7:8-16.

*Two parameters govern each of the three sections: the group being addressed, and the source of Paul's comments. The instructions for the second group come (7:10) from the Lord's earthly teaching, while the third group comes (7:12) through Paul. 7:8 does not specify the source, unless 7:6 is cataphoric, in which case the three sets of instructions form a chiasm, "Paul-Lord-Paul."*



## 1. Paul addresses the unmarried and widows, 7:8-9.

*There is little detail here, probably because this group comes more into focus in 7:25-40.*

- a. 7:8. Celibacy is καλός, aesthetically good.
- b. 7:9. But marriage is preferable to sin (and thus implicitly not sinful).

## 2. The Lord commands saved couples, 7:10-11.

*The third group, the "rest" of 7:12, explicitly consists of believers married to unbelievers. This strongly suggests that the "married" of the second group are couples both of whose members are believers.*

- a. 7:10,11a. Instructions to the wife.
  - i. 7:10. Don't leave the husband.
  - ii. 7:11a. If you do leave, either
    - (a) stay single or
    - (b) be reconciled.
    - (c) Note that one so separated is NOT at liberty to marry someone else. They are not in the category of "unmarried and widows" of 7:8.
- b. 7:11b. Instructions to the husband: don't put away the wife. Unlike the wife in ii above, there is no second set of instructions in case the first is broken.

## 3. Paul instructs unequally yoked believers, 7:12-16.

*The Lord's earthly teachings on marriage and divorce were in the context of the law of Moses and the community of Israel, and thus presume that both members of the marriage are also members of God's people. In treating the problem of mixed marriages, Paul cannot appeal to that teaching, but here presents new revelation. He here shows that mixed marriages are to be handled differently in the church than they were in Israel (Ezra 9-10, though we should note that these mixed marriages probably resulted from the salvation of one member of an unsaved couple, while those in Ezra resulted from a believer entering into marriage with an unbeliever).*

*Paul gives instruction for two cases. In each, he presents first a command, then an explanation.*

- a. If the unbelieving partner wishes to remain, 7:12-14.
  - i. 7:12,13. The believer, whether husband or wife, is not to initiate a separation.

## ii. 7:14, Explanation.

*The OT forbids mixed marriages (Dt 7:3,4; 23:3-8; I K 11:1-13; Neh 9:30; 13:23-30; Ezra 9,10) on two motives: they mix the holy (= separate) people with the unholy (cf. Ezra 9:2), and they endanger the spiritual welfare of the children. Paul's explanation deals with each of these issues, and seems to presume an acquaintance on the part of the Corinthians with the OT teaching.*

(a) The unbelieving mate is sanctified by the believer, thus dealing with the holiness problem.

(b) The children will not be ostracized from the people of God, as they would have been under the OT law.

## b. If the unbelieving partner wishes to depart, 7:15-16.

i. 7:15a. Command: Let them depart.

ii. 7:15b-16. Explanation.

(a) "Not under bondage." The Greek verb is δουλώ "to enslave," distinct from the verb δέω "to bind" which is used in 7:39; Rom 7:1-3. The believer is under no obligation to serve the desires of the departed mate, in regard, for instance, to the duties of 7:2-5. But neither are they free to remarry. The "bondage" has ceased, but the marriage "bond," a distinct thing, remains.

(b) "called us to peace." As in 7:11, if the opportunity for a reconciliation arises, we are to take it.

(c) 7:16. We must remember that God may use the believer to bring the unbeliever to himself.

c. Comment: This section assumes that marriages contracted before salvation remain in effect after. There is no evidence in the NT that people felt their marriages annulled by salvation and so remarried. Implications:

i. Marriage is an institution for unbelievers as well as believers.

ii. Divorce and remarriage while the first mate lives constitutes bigamy, regardless of the relative chronology of the divorce, the remarriage, and the point of salvation.

## III. The Nature of the Temporal State, 7:18-24.

*Two illustrations develop the point that our temporal state is amoral. Each is developed with the same three points.*

A. The illustration of circumcision, 7:18-20.

1. 7:18. The presence or absence of the physical sign is nothing in itself. (Acts 16:1-3 shows that even the

prohibition here of circumcision is pragmatic rather than moral.)

2. 7:19. What matters is not the sign itself, but obedience to God's law (which under the old order it signified).
  3. 7:20. "Let every man abide wherein he was called."
- B. The illustration of slavery, 7:21-24.
1. 7:21. The presence or absence of servitude is nothing in itself (though again, a change is allowed for temporal, pragmatic reasons).
  2. 7:22-23. What matters is our spiritual status as free from sin and slaves of God.
  3. 7:24. "Let every man, wherein he is called, . . . abide."

Block 3  
"Now Concerning Virgins"  
7:25-40

*See diagram, overleaf, for the overall chiasmic structure of this section. The exposition will proceed from the ends toward the middle.*

I. Should believers seek to change their marital state? 7:25-28a, 36-40.

- A. Paul's "judgment," 7:25b, 40b. Paul thus introduces new revelation, without clear precedent in the Lord's earthly teaching.
- B. Ideals and options, 7:26-28a, 36-40a.

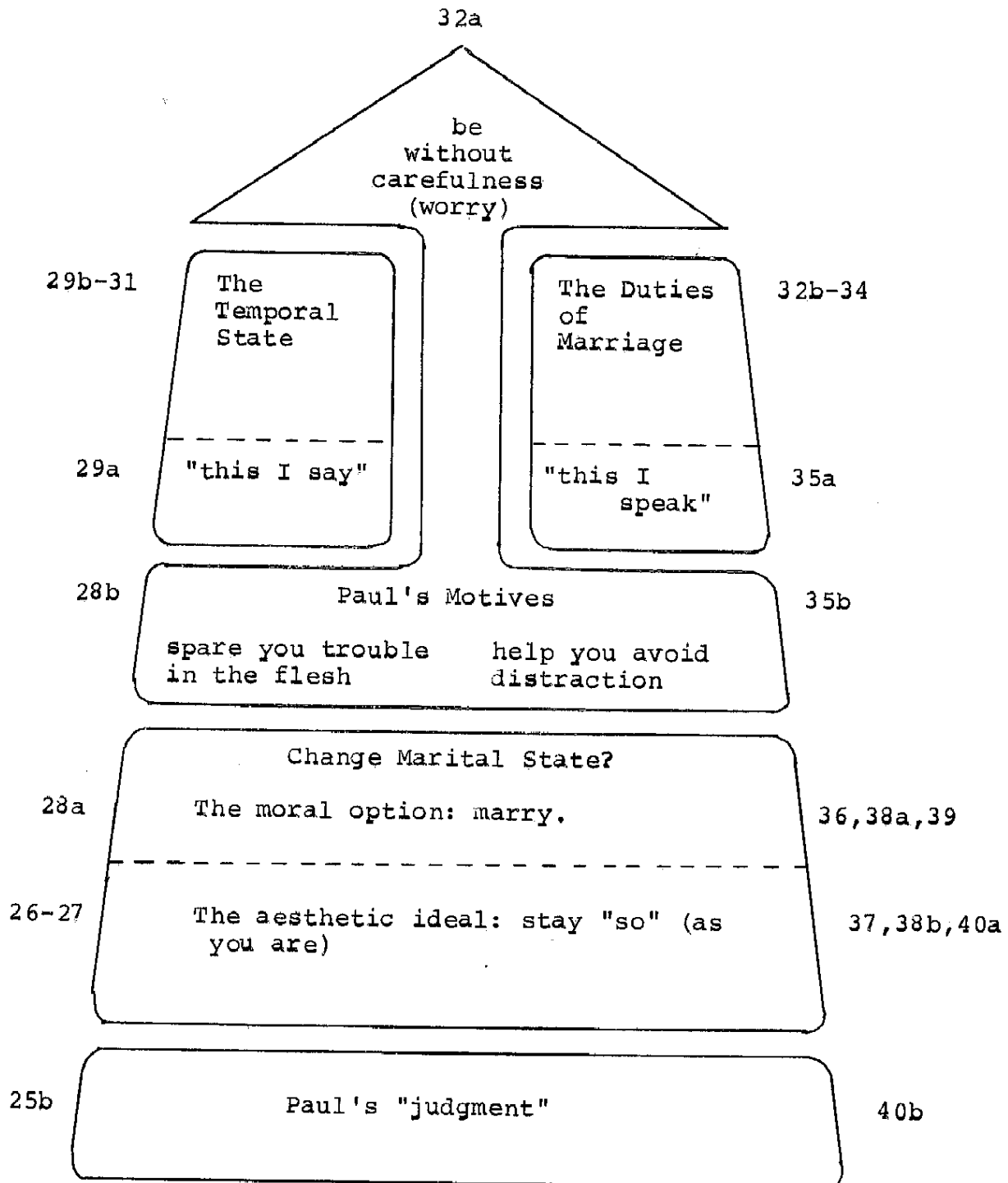
*7:26-28a makes a single shift from the aesthetic ideal of singleness to the morally acceptable option of marriage. This is tripled to produce the alternation of 7:36-40a.*

1. 7:26-28a.
  - a. 7:26,27. The ideal: stay as you are, and in particular, single. The verb  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\lambda\acute{\omicron}\omega$  "I suppose" is used elsewhere in the NT in Mt 5:17; 10:34; 20:10; Lk 2:44; 3:23; Acts 7:25; 8:20; 14:19; 16:13,27; 17:29; 21:29; I Tim 6:5. Invariably, it introduces a supposition which turns out to be wrong, or at best highly doubtful. It introduces doubtful assertions. Here, it severely qualifies the approval which Paul might otherwise be understood to be offering the celibates.
  - b. 7:28a. The moral option: there is no sin in marrying.

THE CHIASTIC STRUCTURE

of

I COR 7:25-40



## 2. 7:36-40a.

The ideal/option is not only tripled, but reversed in order to highlight the chiasmic structure of the passage.

Are the instructions in 7:36-38 to the groom or the father of the bride? The verb  $\gamma\alpha\upsilon\lambda\acute{\iota}\omega$  is applied to the father ("give in marriage") in the second century A.D. But it is not known before the NT, so we do not have any examples, independent of this passage, to judge its meaning here. Morphologically, the verb means, "to cause to marry." The father does do this in giving his daughter in marriage. But the groom also does it, in pursuing his courtship to fulfillment. Elsewhere throughout chapter 7, the decisions regarding marriage and celibacy lie with the parties to the union, not with their parents or others. So it seems simplest to retain that sense here, and understand the passage of the groom rather than the father of the bride.

## a. 7:36-37, first cycle.

## i. 7:36, the moral option of marriage.

*Three conditions indicate that this option should be taken.*

- (a) A suspicion of unbecoming conduct. "Think" =  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\lambda\acute{\iota}\omega$ , the verb of doubtful assertion used in 7:26 ("I suppose").
- (b) "If one pass the peak." The verb marks no gender; "flower" is simply "peak," and may refer to feelings. One is in danger of being overwhelmed by affection and swept into sinful conduct.
- (c) "Need so require." This seems to summarize the preceding two.

## ii. 7:37, the aesthetic ideal of celibacy.

*Four conditions indicate that this option should be taken.*

- (a) "stands steadfast in his heart." This is truly his desire.
- (b) "having no necessity" or compulsion. His choice must be freely made, without compulsion (e.g. from zealous celibate associates).
- (c) "has power over his own will"--better, "wishes,"  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta\mu\alpha$ , not  $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\eta$  or  $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha$ , which would rather emphasize the will. Similar force to (a) above.
- (d) "hath so decreed in his heart." Here the will comes in.

## b. 7:38. Second cycle. Serves essentially as a summary of the first.

## c. 7:39-40a. The third cycle.

*Unlike the first two cycles, which dealt mostly with virgins, this cycle looks at the widow.*

## i. 7:39. The moral option.

(a) While the husband lives, the wife is bound ( $\delta\epsilon\omega$ ) to him, Rom. 7:1-3, even though by I Cor 7:15 she may not be under bondage ( $\delta\sigma\upsilon\lambda\delta\omega$ ) to him.

(b) If the husband dies,

(i) She may remarry,

(ii) But it must be a believer.

## ii. 7:40a, the aesthetic ideal: remain single.

## II. Temporal concerns and marital duties, 7:28b-35.

*As the diagram on page 20 suggests, this section is unified by Paul's statement of his motives before, after, and in the middle. The two paragraphs containing his message both state, "This I say" or "This I speak," and repeat the arguments of 7:1-5 and 7:18-24 for remaining in the marital state in which one is.*

## A. Paul's motives, 7:28b, 32a, 35b.

*The first two motives have different perspectives. The third summarizes all the relevant perspectives.*

1. 7:28b. To spare trouble in the flesh. The perspective is self-ward. The curse in Genesis (pain of childbirth for the woman; work for food for the man) falls heavier on the married than on the single.
2. 7:32a. Be without carefulness (= worry, anxiety). The following paragraph shows that this worry may be toward the Lord or toward other people. In either case, it is undesirable.
3. 7:35b.
  - a. Not to snare them. Paul refuses to order either universal celibacy or universal marriage. To some, his arguments seem a snare whichever way they turn.
  - b. But for three reasons:
    - i. "for your own profit"--the self-ward perspective.
    - ii. "for that which is comely"--our relation with other people.
    - iii. "attend upon the Lord"--God-ward.

## B. Paul's message, 7:29-31, 32b-35a.

## 1. The Nature of the Temporal State, 7:29-31.

*7:29a, 31b refer to the transitoriness of the present order, and form an inclusio about the center section, which presents five contrasts which will vanish under the new order.*

## a. 7:29a, 31b, the inclusio.

i. 7:29a. "The time is short," literally "wrapped up," like Ananias in Acts 5:6, or like the sails of a ship in a storm. Time does not flow relentlessly. Cf. Rev 10:6.

ii. 7:31b. The outward appearance passes away. Rev 21:1; II Pet 3:10-13.

iii. Illustration: Paul seems to be depicting the present order as a stage play, in which time and space are not eternal absolutes, but can be varied and molded by the playwright to suit his purposes. On a larger scale, the time and setting of our present lives are just as transitory, existing only for God's purposes and subject to termination when he is through with them.

## b. 7:30-31a. Certain features of life are "part of the play," but without eternal consequence and thus amoral.

i. List of five amoral things, among which is marriage. In 7:31, "abusing" is not necessarily negative. We might rather render, "They that use this world [will be] as [though they were] not using it to the full."

ii. NB: Some actions DO have consequences off-stage, and ARE moral. If we disobey the instructions of the playwright, we shall have to answer to him at the door.

## 2. The Duties of Marriage and Singleness, 7:32b-35a.

## a. The overall structure:

	Single	Married
Man	7:32b	7:33
Woman	7:34a	7:34b

## b. Both married and single have their worries:

i. Married: duties to the mate, cf. 7:2-5.

ii. Single: concern over serving the Lord, how to stay "holy in body and spirit" in the face of temptation. Lk 10:38-42 suggests that it is as wrong to be worried about serving the Lord as about anything else. We should be "without worry," period. Phil 4:6.

## Block 4

"Now concerning things offered unto idols"  
8:1-11:1

*This block is a chiasm, ABA'. A (chapters 8 and 9) and A' (10:14-11:1) are alternations, of two and three panels respectively, matching Paul's EXHORTATION to the Corinthians with his personal EXAMPLE. The center section B (10:1-13) derives the principles which Paul is urging in the outer members from Israel's experiences in the wilderness.*

I. First Exhortation/Example Section, 8-9.

*The first panel is literal; the second, figurative, picturing the Christian life as an athletic contest. In each panel, the first half emphasizes the pronoun "you," while the second emphasizes "I".*

A. Exhortation and Example on personal rights, 8:1-9:23.

*8:1-13 and 9:1-23 differ in subject matter. The first concerns eating meat offered to idols; the second, the right of the apostle to be paid for his ministry. Another difference is that second person pronouns predominate in 8:1-13, while the first person singular "I" occurs only in 8:13 and chapter 9. The occurrence in 8:13 is a link to chapter 9, anticipating it and thus serving as a transition into it.*

1. Exhortation to surrender personal rights, 8:1-13.

*Both 8:1 and 8:4 state, "Concerning [ . . . ] things offered unto idols, we know . . . ." After the first such introduction, we have an exposition of knowledge and love in two panels, but with no mention of food. After the second introduction, this theory of knowledge and love is applied to the question of food.*

a. The Theory of Knowledge and Love, 8:1-3.

i. 8:1. They differ in direction.

(a) Knowledge "puffs up" [the SELF].

(b) Love "edifies" [OTHERS].

ii. 8:2-3. They differ in accuracy.

(a) 8:2. Knowledge deceives. It is easy to have too high an estimate of one's knowledge.

(b) 8:3. Love confirms. We can never overestimate God's love for us.

b. Application of Knowledge and Love, 8:4-13.

*8:4-6, 8 differ from 8:7, 9-13 in two ways. First, the pronouns are different. At first, Paul groups himself with all the Corinthians as "us." Later, he divides them into "you" and "they/he," and stands apart himself as "I." Second,*



*in both 8:4-6 and 8:8, Paul's statements imply that believers are free in the matter of eating. But 8:7,9-13 instructs them to restrict this freedom.*

*Using capital letters for the larger blocks of material and lower case for the isolated verses, 8:4-13 thus follows the pattern AbaB, where the "b" and "a" are balanced linked key-words serving to tie together the larger sections.*

i. 8:4-6,8. The viewpoint of knowledge (toward self).

(a) 8:4. The fact: an idol is nothing.

(b) 8:5-6. The reasoning:

(i) 8:5. The pagan view, with many equally potent gods, might countenance an idol as meaningful.

(ii) 8:6. But the Christian view, that God made all things (including the idol), deprives it of special significance.

(c) 8:8. A further consequence of God as Creator of all: cf. I Tim 4:4-5. We are free to take (or leave!) meat.

ii. 8:7,9-12. The viewpoint of love (toward others).

*Paul three times mentions the conscience (συμείνησις) of the weaker Christian as affected by a bolder believer's conduct. The word means, first, consciousness (i.e. of God), and then, the moral sensitivity which results from this awareness that God is cognizant of one's thoughts and deeds.*

(a) 8:7. The conscience can be defiled. As one who formerly worshipped idols joins again in idolatrous feasts, the consciousness of the false god under which he once lived pushes in and threatens to replace the consciousness of the true God which should now dominate his thoughts. The emphasis here is on the passive contamination of the believer.

(b) 8:9-11. The conscience can be strengthened (i.e. to sin actively).

(c) 8:12. The conscience can be wounded. Now the bolder brother is depicted as maliciously wronging the less mature believer.

iii. 8:13. Transition to chapter 9.

(a) Suggests the appropriate course of action for the specific question of meat offered to idols.

(b) By the use of the first personal pronoun "I," anticipates Paul's personal example in chapter 9.

2. Example of surrendering personal rights, 9:1-23.

*Paragraphs are marked by shifts in the number of the first personal pronoun, from singular (9:1-2) to plural (9:3-14) and back to singular (9:15-23), giving an overall chiastic pattern ("I"- "we"- "I").*

a. Paul's position, 9:1-2.

- i. An apostle. This is the first in rank of the spiritual gifts, 12:28.
- ii. Free, not only politically (Acts 22:28), but also spiritually (Rom 8:2), and thus at liberty to enjoy his privileges.
- iii. One who has seen the Lord. He could match the claims of the haughtiest party at Corinth. See note at Block 1, I A 1 a on 1:12; 3:4.
- iv. Has borne fruit, which serves to attest his authenticity, cf. Matt 7:15-20.

b. The privileges which result from this position, 9:3-14.

i. Stated, 9:3-6.

- (a) 9:4. To expect the assemblies to feed them.
- (b) 9:5. To expect the assemblies to support their wives on their journies, as well. (Emphasis on "lead about." Their right is not just to be married, but to take their wives with them.)
- (c) 9:6. To be free from secular employment.

ii. Defended, 9:7-14.

*This section is an alternation of two panels. Each panel moves from human experience through the teaching of Scripture to a conclusion. Paul cannot cite experience without Scripture, for that would be unbiblical. He will not cite Scripture without experience, lest he be impractical.*

*The two panels move from general (the right of any workman to a salary) to specific (the right of evangelists to be supported).*

(a) First panel (general). 9:7-11.

*The three parts of the panel are joined together by hinges at 9:8 (moving from experience to Scripture) and 9:9b,10a ("Doth God...our sakes?"; moving from Scripture to conclusion).*

- (i) 9:7. Human experience, in three examples: the soldier, the farmer, and the herder.

(ii) 9:9. Scripture: Deut 25:4, the law of threshing oxen.

(iii) 9:10-11. Conclusion.

(b) Second panel (specific). 9:12-14.

(i) 9:12a. Human experience: the conduct of other apostles with the Corinthians.

[9:12b is a link anticipating the restrictions which Paul will take on in 9:15-23. His argument in favor of support is becoming so strong that he must remind his readers that he is erecting it only to emphasize the even stronger principles which lead him to reject its consequences in his own ministry.]

(ii) 9:13. Scripture. Portions of many of the sacrifices at tabernacle and temple belonged to the priests.

(iii) 9:14. Conclusion. Note that it applies to "those who preach the gospel," the "evangelist" of Eph 4:11, there distinguished from the "pastor and teacher." Paul is arguing for the support of itinerant church planters, not of resident elders/overseers/pastors, whom he commands elsewhere to earn their own livings (Acts 20:33-35).

c. The responsibilities which result from this position, 9:15-23 ("I").

*Paul begins this section (9:15-18) with frequent references to preaching the gospel. In 9:19-22, there is no explicit reference to the gospel. The first half discusses his rejection of a salary; the second, his general self-denial for the sake of ministry. The first half may echo "Am I not an apostle?" of 9:1, and the second, beginning "For though I be free," may recall "Am I not free?"*

i. 9:15-18. Paul's specific self-denial (in the matter of a salary).

*We outline below some evidence of chiastic structure in this paragraph. The overall idea is that reflected in Lk 17:7-10. Paul's service to the Lord is not a favor for which he expects payment, but is already payment against the debt which he owes the Lord for his salvation.*

(a) 9:15a, 18c. Paul does not "use" (15a χρῶμαι, "use," 18c κατὰχρῶμαι "abuse, use to the full") the right to salary which he has defended in 9:7-14.

(b) 9:15b, 18b. He makes the gospel free of charge.

- (c) 9:15c,18a. This free gospel is itself his "glorying" (15c) and "reward" (18a).
- (d) 9:16a,17b. The mere fact of preaching is no merit, because he is under "necessity" (16a), a divine "dispensation" (17b).
- (e) 9:16b,17a. It is expected that he will preach. This in itself merits neither reward nor penalty. The exceptional cases are:
  - (i) 9:16b. If he does not preach at all, he will suffer for it.
  - (ii) 9:17a. If he preaches willingly (in this context, without the added motivation of a salary), he will be rewarded, 9:18a.

ii. 9:19-22. Paul's general practice of self-denial.

*9:19,22b form an inclusio setting off this section. They also furnish an outline, a general principle, which he applies to four specific cases in the interior of the inclusio.*

- (a) 9:19,22b. The inclusio: general principle. Note the similarity between the lines:

"I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain...  
I am made all things to all men, that I might save..."

- (b) 9:20-22a. Specific applications.

*The first three groups to which Paul applies this general principle were no doubt recognized as legitimate targets of evangelism, requiring self-sacrifice. The fourth group, the "weak," is the group within the church whose needs had been neglected by the boldness of the "stronger" believers. Paul argues that if one will endure self-privation to bring someone into the fold, one certainly ought to deny oneself if needed to establish the new Christian.*

- (i) 9:20a. The Jews.
- (ii) 9:20b. Those "under the law"--perhaps proselytes to Judaism.
- (iii) 9:21. The Gentiles. (Note the qualification--in adapting to others, the evangelist must not violate the law of God under which he himself lives.)
- (iv) 9:22a. The weak.

- iii. 9:23. Paul's overall purpose in this self-denial, specific and general. It is the way that one who truly is a believer in and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ ought to live. Cf. Heb. 3:6,14. One who lives always for self rather than others has reason to question whether one truly is a partaker in the gospel.

#### B. Exhortation and Example in metaphor, 9:24-27.

*Paul illustrates the need for discipline and self-denial with the metaphor of athletic competition, once again moving from "you" to "I." In both cases, he points out both the prize for which one contends, and the process necessary to obtain it. This section is thus an alternation in two panels. Between the two, 9:25a states the principle which applies both to the Corinthians and to Paul. The panels of the alternation thus stand chiasmatically about this central, focal element.*

- 1. Exhortation, 9:24. ("You")
  - a. 9:24a, the prize.
  - b. 9:24b, the process--run, in order to obtain.
- 2. The general principle, 9:25a. Temperance in all things.
- 3. Example, 9:25b-27. ("I")
  - a. 9:25b, the prize: an incorruptible crown.
  - b. 9:26-27, the process--disciplined training.

#### II. Comparison with Israel in the Wilderness, 10:1-13.

*The section has three paragraphs. The first presents episodes from Israel's wilderness experiences (10:1-5). The second (10:6-11), marked off by an internal inclusio (10:6,11), exhorts the present generation ("you," "we," in contrast with the "them" of the first paragraph) on the basis of this history. The conclusion (10:12-13), set off from the second paragraph by the inclusio, is also marked by the introductory "wherefore".*

##### A. The Old Testament Example, 10:1-5.

*Paul moves from the frequently repeated "all" of 10:1-4 to "many" in 10:5, inviting us to consider an unnamed third category, the "few" who make the difference between these two groups.*

- 1. The common experience of "all," 10:1-4.

*Paul fits Israel's experience into the pattern of the Christian sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, to*

*emphasize that their condition is analogous to that of a believer enjoying the full privileges of membership in the visible church. The failures outlined in the next section are not those of the unevangelized, but of people who gave every outward appearance of being in fellowship with God.*

a. Their "baptism," 10:1-2.

- i. The event: crossing the Red Sea. They were shut in by the sea on either hand the the cloud above, as the believer is surrounded by the baptismal waters.
- ii. The person: Moses, who is frequently cited as anticipating and illustrating the ministry of Christ, into whom believers are now baptized: Deut 18:15; Jn 1:17; Heb 3:1-6.

b. Their "Lord's Supper," 10:3-4.

- i. The bread, 10:3. Manna, which Christ had already used as illustrative of his flesh, Jn 6:31-35.
- ii. The drink, 10:4. Water from the rock, which Paul explicitly identifies with Christ, thus completing the analogy with the Lord's Supper.

2. The evaluation of "most," 10:5.

- a. God's reaction. He was not "well pleased with" (εὐδοκέω ἐν) them. This is a very high standard, affirmed in the NT only of Christ (Matt 3:17; 17:5; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22; denied of men here and Heb 10:38).
- b. The consequences of not being "well pleasing" to God. They were destroyed in the wilderness.

3. The implied "few." In fact, they were only two. Of the generation that left Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb (Num 11:30) did not perish in the wilderness.

B. The Application to Corinth, 10:6-11.

1. Inclusio, 10:6a,11. General.

- a. Both brackets: these events were "examples" (τύποι, "types"). (NB: "Types" in the NT are always examples for conduct, never simply for doctrine.)
- b. The second bracket emphasizes "the end of the ages." For similar exhortations to godliness based on the lateness of the hour, cf. I Pet 4:7; II Pet 3:11,12.

2. Specific examples, 10:6b-10.

*Paul lists five details of sin, but only three punishments.*

*The first three details of sin all occur in a single OT story about the wilderness wanderings. The first punishment fits this story, too. So it seems reasonable to analyze the section as an alternation of three panels, each panel giving first the offense and second the punishment, with the offense tripled in the first panel.*

a. 10:6b-8, The Apostasy at Baal-Peor (Num 25:1-9).

i. 10:6b-8a, the sin.

(a) 10:6b, lust.

(b) 10:7, idolatry.

(c) 10:8a, fornication.

ii. 10:8b, the punishment.

b. 10:9, The Serpents (Num 21:4-6).

i. 10:9a, the sin.

ii. 10:9b, the punishment.

c. 10:10, Murmuring (Num 16:41-42?).

i. 10:10a, the sin.

ii. 10:10b, the punishment.

C. Conclusion, 10:12-13.

*The two verses seem to address distinct audiences, and are supported by different segments of the Israelite population introduced in 10:1-5 by way of illustration.*

1. Warning to the overconfident, 10:12. Those who trifle with spiritual disciplines (the "strong" believer of chapter 8) should remember the tragic end of the "many" of 10:5.
2. Encouragement to the timid, 10:13. Those who lack the spirit to resist temptation (the "weak" of chapter 8?) should remember that there were a "few" of the "all" who were not among the "many."

III. Second Exhortation/Example Section, 10:14-11:1.

*Four panels alternate exhortation (marked by imperatives and pronouns, such as first person plural and second person, which include the readers) with Paul's personal example (marked by exclusive use of the first person singular). The fourth panel is much shorter and more general than the first three, and serves as a summary of the entire section.*

*The three detailed panels progress from setting forth a limited application (meats and idols) to a limited audience (the individual), to a general principle that benefits many people.*

## A. Detailed panels, 10:14-33.

1. How does the question of meat affect the individual?  
10:14-23.

## a. Exhortation, 10:14-22.

i. Command, 10:14. Flee from sin. Don't sit around to test 10:13. Compare 6:18; I Tim 6:11; II Tim 2:22, and contrast Jas 4:7; I Pet 5:8,9.

## ii. Argument, 10:15-22.

(a) Two examples of the significance of table fellowship, 10:16-18.

(i) 10:16-17, the Lord's Supper.

(ii) 10:18, cf. Exod 12:43-48, Israel's sacrificial system.

(b) Conclusion, 10:20: to eat a sacrifice is to participate in worshipping what it is sacrificed to.

(c) Application, 10:21-22. For a Christian to partake of an idolatrous feast is

(i) 10:21, incompatible with the Christian position;

(ii) 10:22, spiritually unsafe.

b. Example, 10:23. Compare 6:12. Paul recognizes interests higher than liberty.

## 2. How does the question of meat affect others? 10:24-30.

*Note the keyword "conscience".*

## a. Exhortation, 10:24-29a.

i. The principle, 10:24. Note that now a wider public is brought into view.

## ii. Application, 10:25-29a.

*Paul analyzes two cases. Each is marked by the phrase, "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." In this first case, this OT citation follows the discussion of the case, but in the second, it comes in the middle, giving the pattern of a folded chiasm (AB-ABA).*

(a) 10:25,26. The case of food purchased for private consumption: its origin does not matter.

(b) 10:27-29a. The case of food consumed in public.

(i) 10:27. If its origin is not discussed, you may partake.



- (ii) 10:28-29a. If you learn from those with you that it is a sacrifice, do not partake, for their sake.

b. Example, 10:29b-30.

*Paul explains his own abstention by noting two things that belong to him, that would be compromised by the response of others if he were to partake.*

- i. 10:29b. His liberty would be compromised by the judgment of others.
- ii. 10:30. His thanksgiving would be compromised by the blasphemy of others.

3. How does life in general affect others in general? 10:31-33.

*The Exhortation and Example sections form two panels of a chiasm, each claiming universal applicability and a universal audience for the principle of self-denial.*

a. Exhortation, 10:31-32.

- i. 10:31. The extent of the principle: all things.
- ii. 10:32. The "others" who enter into such a decision: all men.

b. Example, 10:33.

- i. 10:33a. "I please all"--audience.
- ii. 10:33b. "...in all"--extent of applicability.

B. Summary panel, 11:1.

1. Exhortation: "Be followers of me . . ."
2. Example: ". . . even as I also am of Christ."

Block 5  
"Now I praise you, brethren"  
11:2-34

*The contrast between "Now I praise you" (11:2) and "Now I praise you not" (11:17) suggests a division of the chapter into two parts. This division agrees with the distribution of subject matter in the chapter.*

*The first half of the chapter, dealing with the relation of God, Christ, man, and woman, recalls the discussion of marriage in chapter 7, while the details on the Lord's Supper in the second half of the chapter recall the question of idolatrous feasts studied in chapters 8-10. We suggest that having answered the Corinthians' specific questions about the subjects of man and*

woman (chapter 7) and religious feasts (chapters 8-10), he now adds some further thoughts of his own. Block 5 thus forms an alternation with blocks 2-3 and 4.

The first half of the chapter lacks the frequent references to the church "come together" that characterize the second half (11:17,18,20,33,34). We suggest that only the second half expressly addresses the question of Christian conduct in the assembled body. The first half is more general, and is not focussed on the church assembled. This allows a ready harmonization of 11:5,13 with the prohibition to women to speak in the assembly in 14:34,35.

Paul praises them in the first half of the chapter, but not in the second. This suggests that they were by and large in order on the matter of the relation between men and women, and that Paul's comments on this subject are occasioned by a problem with one or a few people that has not yet become widespread. In the matter of the Lord's Supper, though, there is common disorder.

#### I. Instructions concerning men and women, 11:2-16.

The passage is a chiasm. We will summarize corresponding elements together.

##### A. The authority behind Paul's teaching here. 11:2,16.

1. Stated positively, 11:2. The apostolic ordinances. (NB: "ordinance" here is "tradition," not "sacrament," and may govern Christian life out of as well as in assembly. Compare II Thes 3:6-8.)
2. Stated negatively, 11:16. Neither the churches nor the apostles sanction any other conduct. There is no precedent for those who would challenge this teaching.

##### B. Men and women in relation to God. 11:3-7,13-15.

These sections correspond in the reference to shame in 11:4-6,14; to glory in 11:7,15; and to speech and prayer in 11:4-5, 13, all of which are absent in the other sections. They differ in that the first is literal while the second is primarily figurative.

##### 1. The literal statement, 11:3-7.

A chain of authority from God (through Christ) to man and then to woman is presented in 11:3,7b, forming an *inclusio* about the practical implications drawn in 11:4-7a. These implications themselves move from man (11:4) to woman (11:5) to woman (11:6) and back to man (11:7a), giving the whole a chiasmatic structure.

##### a. The relative positions of man and woman, 11:3,7b.

- i. 11:3, the chain of authority. From greatest authority to least, the order is God, Christ, man, woman.
- ii. 11:7b, the chain of glory. Because man cannot look directly on God's unmediated glory (I Tim 6:16), his only view of that glory comes through creation. Man

is the crown of that glory, and woman in turn is the epitomy of man's glory, serving thus as the highest manifestation of glory in the natural creation.

b. The resulting conduct of man and woman, 11:4-7a.

i. 11:4-5, conduct as implied by the chain of headship.

*"Head" here refers to the bodily member; "his head" or "her head" refers to the next member up the chain of authority.*

*It is important to note that the modes of speech under discussion are modes of speech that relate man and God, whether prayer (from man to God) or prophecy (from God to man).*

(a) 11:4. Because man is the next step below the divine in the chain of authority, it is his appropriate role to speak to and for God, without mediation. It is thus inappropriate for him to cover his head and thereby imply that he cannot go directly to God. (NB: Man's approach to God is mediated by Christ, I Tim 2:5, in that Christ has reconciled man and God. But now that this reconciliation has been effected, man prays directly to the Father.)

(b) 11:5. On the other hand, the chain of command implies that woman should go through man in communication with God. This is in tension with the truth that as an independent member of the body of Christ, she has direct access to the Father. Her position as a believer is skewed with respect to her position as a woman. To neglect either position is an error. Thus she may speak directly to and for God, but only while wearing a symbol of her position in the chain.

ii. 11:6-7a, conduct as implied by the chain of glory.

*Here Paul appeals implicitly to the argument of 11:14-15, that long hair is a woman's glory but a man's shame.*

(a) 11:6. The glory of her hair illustrates how a woman's glory is enhanced by a covering.

(b) 11:7a. Conversely, the man's short hair implies that he ought not to be covered.

iii. The cultural nature of symbols. Much of the significance of the head covering with relation to the truths of headship and glory may originally have been specific to the local culture which Paul addressed. Because of this, it is sometimes argued

that we can retain the meaning without retaining a symbol which has lost its cultural context. Those who offer such an argument should consider that, consistently applied, it would also authorize the church to discontinue the practice of water baptism and the Lord's Supper, both of which are symbols which had their origin in cultural contexts now largely lost. We retain the sacraments, not because they still have the cultural meaning they once had, but because Scripture has given them a further and more permanent meaning, and commands believers to observe them. The same reasons urge us to follow Paul's injunctions about covering and uncovering today.

2. The figurative statement, 11:13-15.

*As 11:3-7 alluded to the illustration in 11:6,7a, so this section alludes to the interpretation in 11:13 before developing the illustration more fully.*

- a. 11:13. The implication: women should be covered (κατακάλυπτος) when praying. References to covering earlier in the chapter are all related to one or the other of the elements in this word.
- b. 11:14-15. The illustration:
  - i. 11:14. It is a shame for a man to have long hair,
  - ii. 11:15. But the woman's hair is given to her for a veil (περιβόλαιον, "that which is thrown about [the face]," used only here). The use of distinct vocabulary for the covering (which Paul enjoins) and the long hair (which the woman already has) shows the two to be distinct.

C. Men and women in relation to one another. 11:8-9,11-12.

*There is no reference here to speaking to or for God. The focus is on the relation between man and woman. Note that the corresponding elements give tightly balanced, reciprocal statements about man and woman.*

*According to Eph 5:23,25, headship implies both rule and responsibility. These verses seem to be giving reasons for man to exercise both functions toward woman.*

1. Why should man rule woman? 11:8-9.
  - a. 11:8, he is her source (Gen 2:21-22).
  - b. 11:9, he is her purpose, Gen 2:18.
  - c. Note that these reasons are drawn from man's pre-fall condition. Paul does not consider the relative position of man and woman to be a consequence of sin, and thus

liable to reversal by the cross. Rather, the orders of headship and glory between man and woman are characteristic of the edenic condition to which Christ is restoring his people.

2. Why should man care for woman? 11:11-12.

- a. 11:11. She, as well as he, is a member of the body of Christ, in which no one is truly independent of another. Further implications of this body concept will be drawn in chapter 12. Though in one sense woman is for the man, 11:9, in another, they are for each other.
- b. 11:12. Though woman came from man, 11:8, he is himself a creature of God, and in fact owes his life to a mother.

*Note the chiasmic arrangement of 11:8-9, 11-12, with 11:8, 12 both dealing with origins, and 11:9, 11 both dealing with purpose.*

D. The focal point of the chiasm, 11:10.

1. "to have power on the head."

- a. "the head," not "her head," thus referring to the bodily member.
- b. "to have power" is susceptible of two interpretations, which do not necessarily exclude one another.
  - i. "power" may stand for the symbol of power or authority, the covering which she wears as an indication of her position in the chains of headship and glory.
  - ii. "to have power on" elsewhere (Rev 11:6; 14:18; 20:6) means "to control." She ought to exercise control over her head by voluntarily covering it. (But note that this seems to be a peculiarly Johannine construction.)

2. "because of the angels." They monitor the children of God, and not just in assembly. Heb 1:14; I Cor 4:9; I Pet 1:12. Note from Job 1:8 that God is glorified before them by the obedient lives of his children. This should be a motive for obedience in general. Here it is applied to the specific instructions of this section.

II. Instructions concerning the Lord's Supper. 11:17-34.

*Several structural observations assist us in analyzing this section.*

*Though the verb "come together" occurs five times in the section, it only occurs twice in the indicative mood, in 11:17, 34, the first and last verses of the section. Thus it forms an inclusio about the whole.*

*"I praise you not" forms an inclusio about 11:17-22, and marks*

them as a unit. This unit describes the problem with which Paul is dealing.

*NOTE* "wherefore" occurs only in 11:27,33 in the section, and signals a two-part conclusion from 11:27-34. This section is marked by commands and by consequences of disobedience.

Once the initial (11:17-22) and final (11:27-34) sections have been isolated, the remainder (11:23-26) is seen to be a coherent report of the origin of the Lord's Supper and the implications of its practice in the church.

#### A. The Problem, 11:17-22.

Paul twice uses the participle of "come together," apparently in a temporal sense, "when you come together" (11:18,20). These introduce two statements of their problem, one more general and the other specific.

1. The general problem, 11:18-19, division in the church. Recall 1:10-13 and the entire first six chapters.
2. The specific problem, 11:20-22. Their self-centered, schismatic attitudes resulted in disorders at the Lord's Supper.
  - a. 11:21, they did not wait for each other.
  - b. 11:22, they should have cared for private needs in private, not by abusing the gatherings of the Lord's people.

#### B. A historical perspective, 11:23-26.

*The logical connection between this paragraph and the last seems to be that a proper appreciation of the meaning of the Supper would do much to correct the selfishness which they were showing there.*

1. When did the Lord institute the Supper, 11:23? "The same night in which he was betrayed," at a point when even those closest to him showed more concern for themselves than for him. Note the emphasis thus on his selflessness.
2. What did the Lord do? 11:24-25. We may single out two features of the elements which he instituted, without implying that these are the only or even the primary ones before Paul's mind at this point.
  - a. The OT knows of sacrificial meals, but the blood is strictly forbidden to the worshipper. Partaking of the blood (symbolically, in the cup) as well as the body reflects the complete participation of the believer in the sacrifice of Christ.
  - b. The two elements remind one of two "imputations" involved in salvation:
    - i. The blood is frequently mentioned elsewhere (e.g. Heb 9:14) as the agency of cleansing from sin, and brings

to mind the imputation of the believer's sin to Christ. "He [the Father] hath made him who knew no sin [Christ] to be sin for us," II Cor 5:21a.

- ii. The body of Christ is associated with the believer's sanctification, Heb 10:9,10. It was in the body that Christ manifested perfect submission and obedience to the Father's will, and thus demonstrated perfect righteousness, which is imputed to the believer: "...that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," II Cor 5:21b.

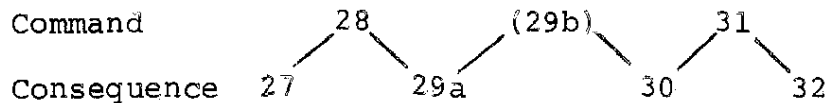
- 3. Why does the church celebrate the supper? 11:26, to "show" (καταγγέλλω, "preach" 9:14) the Lord's death. The Supper should have been proclaiming to all who witnessed it the selfless character of Christ. Instead, the Corinthians were proving themselves ignorant of this character.

### C. Practical Instructions, 11:27-34:

*The repetition of "wherefore" in 11:27,33 divides this section into two parts. The first deals with the inner attitude of the believer at the supper, and corresponds with the general problem in 11:18-19. The second specifies outward conduct that corrects the offenses of 11:20-22. Both sections emphasize commands and consequences of disobedience.*

- 1. Inner attitudes: our consciousness of the "body," 11:27-32.

- a. Note the alternation between command and consequence:



- b. Though 11:29b is not in the imperative, it does refer to a duty they were not fulfilling, and thereby incurring judgment. An analysis of the phrase "discerning the Lord's Body" suggests even closer ties with 11:28,31.

- i. "body"

- (a) There is no reference to the "blood." In every reference to the elements of the supper throughout 11:17-34, both elements are mentioned if either one is. "Body" is paired with "blood," "bread" with "cup," "eat" with "drink." Because "body" is here alone, it probably does not refer to the bread, or to the physical body symbolized by the bread.

- (b) We suggest that the reference is to the church as the body of Christ, a metaphor which Paul is about to develop extensively in chapter 12 (cf. 12:27).

- ii. "discern" (διακρίνω) is the same verb used in 11:31, "If we would judge ourselves," referring to self-

examination.

- iii. Synthesis. To "discern the Lord's body" is to know and examine the assembly with which one breaks bread. First, one must examine oneself (11:28), thus meeting the requirement of Matt 7:1-5 (especially 7:5) for examining others. But one must not look only at oneself, lest one fall into the self-centered ways of the Corinthians. Compare Paul's command to them to "judge" and "not eat" with the fornicator in chapter 5. 11:31, "we judge ourselves," is a summary, including both individual self-judgment and the reciprocal examination of the body by itself. The objective of both judgments is not degree of maturity, but whether or not one is in the body, i.e. a new creature in Christ. Compare II Cor 13:5; Rom. 14:1-3; 15:7.

2. Outer actions, 11:33-34.

a. Commands, 11:33-34a.

*These correspond one for one with the abuses mentioned in 11:20-22.*

- i. 11:33, tarry one for another, cf. 11:21.
- ii. 11:34a, satisfy private needs at home, cf. 11:22. Note the importance of caring for the physical needs of the body as part of dealing with spiritual problems. Compare I Tim 5:23; Heb 13:17 (where "soul" = "life," and indicates the elders' responsibility for the temporal as well as the spiritual needs of the body).
- b. Consequences, 11:34b. Judgment awaits those who continue to abuse the Lord's Supper.



Block 6  
 "Now Concerning Spiritual Ones"  
 12-14

*This block is a chiasm, aBcDcBa, where the upper case letters indicate extended portions of text (12:4-30; 13; 14:2-40), and the lower case letters indicate the introduction (12:1-3), transitions (12:31; 14:1) and conclusion (14:36-40), respectively. Note that the conclusion, while bearing clear parallels to the introduction, also has formal features which lead one to include it within the second 'B' section. The overall chiastic pattern is continued in 'D', which is itself a chiasm.*

I. Introduction and Conclusion, 12:1-3; 14:36-40.

*These paragraphs emphasize that spiritual gifts must be exercised in submission to the lordship of Christ. The correspondences between them are chiastically ordered.*

- A. 12:1a; 14:39b. The issue: "spiritual ones" (i.e. people) and the gifts (most notably tongues and prophecy) which they exercise.
- B. 12:1b; 14:39a The addressees: "brethren".
- C. 12:1c; 14:38. The danger of ignorance.
- D. 12:3; 14:36-37. Two tests of a person's spiritual condition.
  - 1. 12:3. The confession that Jesus is Lord shows whether a person is speaking by the Holy Spirit. (N.B. "Lord," κύριος, served in the Greek Old Testament that Paul and his readers used as a translation for the name of God. Thus this confession includes the concept that Jesus is God.)
  - 2. 14:36-37. The acknowledgment that Paul's instructions have divine authority shows whether a person is spiritual.

II. The Setting of the Gifts, 12:4-30; 14:2-40.

*These chapters emphasize that spiritual gifts are intended for function in the church, not (primarily) for individual profit. They resemble each other, and differ from 13, in their frequent reference to God and Christ, and in their dominant use of the pronouns "I" and "thou". The chapters are also similar in that both develop a metaphor for the relationship of Christians to one another. But the metaphor is different in each chapter. In 12, the believers form the body of Christ. In 14, they are an assembly, ἐκκλησία. Though this is the word usually translated "church" in the NT, it does not carry the sacred overtones that "church" does for us, but refers first of all to the public assembly that characterized Greek life.*

A. 12:4-30, The Gifts in the Body.

12:12-30 are an ABBA chiasm whose panels correspond as alternations. This regular structure establishes the major break in the chapter between verses 11 and 12. Thematically, the chapter offers two answers to the problem of maintaining unity in the exercise of diverse gifts. First, the gifts have a common source, God. Second, they have a common setting, the body.

1. 12:4-11, The Source of the Gifts.

12:4-6 are united by their regular syntactical patterning, while 12:7,11 form an *inclusio* marking 12:7-11 as a unit. The first is a summary about gifts in general, while the second lists several particular gifts.

a. 12:4-6, three general views of gifts.

The three titles (gifts, ministries, operations) are not three different categories of gifts, but three characteristics of all gifts as they are viewed from the standpoint of each member of the trinity.

- i. 12:4. Gifts (lit. "grace gifts") emphasize our unworthiness, and are characteristic of the Spirit, the immediate giver of the gifts.
- ii. 12:5. Ministries emphasize the utility of the gifts and the need to exercise them in obedience to the Lord, who as ruler is named here.
- iii. 12:6. Workings emphasize the display of the Father's power through the gifts.

b. 12:7-11, some specific gifts.

- i. 12:7,11, the *inclusio*. The diverse gifts are given to different people by the same Spirit.
- ii. 12:8-10, the gifts.

Two different Greek words for "another" are used to enumerate the gifts in these verses. Most instances are the word indicating "another of the same kind." But "faith" in 12:9 and "tongues" in 12:10 are marked as "another of a different kind," suggesting that Paul is outlining three broad categories of gifts. These would progress from the most rational (teaching and preaching) to the least.

2. 12:12-30, The Setting of the Gifts.

This section has four paragraphs. The inner two form an alternation and develop the metaphor of the body. The outer

*two are also an alternation, and apply the body metaphor to believers in their union with one another and with Christ.*

- a. 12:14-19, 20-26. The metaphor of the body.
  - i. 12:14,20, the one body has many members.
  - ii. 12:15-16, 21. The members speak. Note two errors:
    - (a) 12:15-16. It is wrong to reject oneself because one lacks gifts that others have.
    - (b) 12:21. It is wrong to reject others because they lack certain gifts.
  - iii. 12:17-19, 22-26. The correction to the error is to recognize that "God has set/tempered." The members need one another.
- b. 12:12-13, 27-30. Application to believers.
  - i. 12:12,27. We are members in a body.
  - ii. 12:13a, 28a. The Spirit (God) has placed us into this body.
  - iii. 12:13b, 28b-30. The relation of differences to this unity.
    - (a) 12:13b. Social differences (Jew/gentile, bond/free) are overcome.
    - (b) 12:28b-30. Different gifts are necessary to implement this unity.

#### B. 14:2-40, The Gifts in the Assembly.

*Occurrences of "brethren" at 14:6, 20, and 26 suggest divisions at these points, leading to four paragraphs. Thematically, the first two argue on the basis of reason or logic that prophecy is superior to tongues, apparently countering a Corinthian emphasis on the more spectacular gift. The next paragraph, 14:20-25, argues against tongues from Old Testament scripture. Finally, 14:26-40 presents a group of imperatives ("Let . . .") growing from the logical and scriptural arguments which have been presented. This general pattern of reasoning from logic and Scripture to a conclusion appears also in 9:7-14. See pp 26-27 above. Inner structural features confirm the delimitation of paragraphs noted here, and will be developed below.*

## 1. 14:2-19, A Logical Critique of Tongues.

The division at 14:6, marked by the address to "brethren," parallels the distribution of personal pronouns. 14:2-5 use predominantly the third person ("he"), with "I" and "you" introduced in 14:5 by way of transition to 14:6-19, where "I/you/thee" (first and second persons) predominate. The two paragraphs thus delimited correspond as summary of conclusions and detailed argument.

## a. 14:2-5, summary of conclusions.

Paul contrasts tongues and prophecy by alternating from one to the other. The contrasts in the table below summarize how the two gifts differ, according to these verses.

	Tongues	Prophecy
Audience	God, self	the church
Function	prayer, self edification (but see below)	edification, exhortation, comfort
Prestige	less	greater (5)

## b. 14:6-19, detailed argument.

The predominant first and second person orientation of this section is broken only in 14:13, one of the rare imperatives before 14:26. We take 14:13 as Paul's conclusion, and recognize two different arguments leading to that conclusion in the paragraphs before and after it.

i. 14:13, conclusion: tongues must be accompanied by interpretation.

ii. 14:6-12, an argument from the nature of language.

Language is a transaction between a speaker and a hearer, both of whom bear certain responsibilities. Paul devotes 14:6-9 to the speaker and 14:10-12 to the hearer, giving in each case an illustration of language or communication, an application to himself ("I"), and a conclusion for his hearers ("you").

(a) 14:6-9, the responsibility of the speaker.

(i) 14:7-8. Illustration of communication: musical instruments, which must be played clearly.

(ii) 14:6, "I" must speak comprehensibly if the church is to profit.

(iii) 14:9, "you" should also speak "words easy to be understood."

(b) 14:10-12, the responsibility of the hearer.

(i) 14:10. Illustration: of the many kinds of human language, none lacks meaning.

(ii) 14:11, "I" must understand what is said if I am not to be a barbarian.

(iii) 14:12, "you" should keep this in mind, and prefer gifts that unite the church, rather than those that could make some believers barbarians to others.

iii. 14:14-19, an argument from the nature of man.

*The pronouns disclose a chiasmic structure, with "I" in the outer members and "thou" at the center.*

(a) 14:14-15, 18-19, "I". Paul's thought here seems to include these elements:

(i) Regenerate man includes both "spirit" (Rom 8:16; I Cor 2:11; channel of communication with God) and "mind" ("understanding"; organ of reason and of communication with man).

(ii) Tongues exercises only the spirit, not the mind.

(iii) Paul, especially in the context of the church assembled, decides that the mind cannot be thus excluded.

(b) 14:16-17, "thou." If the Corinthians exclude the mind, the assembly cannot function.

## 2. 14:20-25, A Scriptural Critique of Tongues.

*After an opening challenge, Paul cites Isa 28:10-13, and draws from it conclusions about the intended audience and effect of tongues, alternating these with his own observations about prophecy. For a fuller discussion, see my paper, "The Gift of Languages."*

a. 14:20, the challenge. To understand God's purpose for tongues requires maturity.

b. 14:21, the text, Isa 28:10-13.

*Paul's citation draws together phrases from throughout the text, without citing it in its entirety. We should probably conclude that he has the whole text in mind.*

## c. 14:22-25, the exposition.

- i. 14:22, the intended audience of tongues is unbelievers (Isa 28:12, those who rejected God's offer of rest, that is, first century Jews who rejected Jesus as messiah). Prophecy is the gift intended primarily for believers.
- ii. 14:23-25, the effect of tongues is to harden unbelievers in their rejection (cf. Isa 28:13), while prophecy brings unbelievers to salvation. Compare the effects of tongues and prophecy (Peter's sermon) on Pentecost, Acts 2.

## 3. 14:26-40, Instructions Governing Tongues and Prophecy.

*The shift from declarative in 14:26a to imperative in 14:26b-40 leads to a two-fold division of the section.*

## a. 14:26a, Description of the church's worship.

- i. Occasion: "when you come together." This is the verb used to describe the Lord's Supper in 11:17-34, and occurs elsewhere in Paul's epistles only at 14:23.
- ii. Their pattern: each brought an offering for the Lord. Compare the OT antecedent in Ex 23:15; 34:20; Deut 16:16,17.

## b. 14:26b-40, Prescriptions for the church's worship.

*Three sorts of commands make up this section. 14:26b and 40 are the most general, and form an inclusio. 14:27-35 gives specific restrictions to the general principle of open sharing outlined in 14:26a. 14:36-39 address, not conduct in church worship, but attitude toward Paul's instructions, and also serve as the closing bracket to the inclusio which marks the entire block of material in chapters 12-14.*

- i. 14:26b,40. General principles: the church's worship is to be conducted
  - (a) unto edifying--leading to the spiritual growth of believers;
  - (b) decently--in a decorous, dignified, becoming way;
  - (c) in order.
- ii. 14:27-35. Specific qualifications to 14:26a.

*Each of the three paragraphs in this section tells when the person in question may speak, and when the person may not. In the second and third paragraph, a reason is given*

*for the restriction. Probably, a similar explanation is omitted from the first paragraph because it concerns tongues, which were already discussed in detail earlier in the chapter. We will insert a summary of that discussion here to show the similarity between the paragraphs as we understand them. The reasons in each case depend on the metaphor of an assembly for describing the corporate life of believers.*

(a) 14:27-28, the Tongues speaker.

(i) 14:27. He may speak under two conditions:

((a)) Two and no more than three participate.

((b)) There is an interpreter.

(ii) 14:28. Silence is commanded if there is no interpreter.

(iii) The reason: an assembly must be able to understand its members.

(b) 14:29-33a, the Prophet.

(i) 14:29. Again, two conditions:

((a)) There is to be multiple participation, but this time there is no upper bound.

((b)) Others are to judge.

(ii) 14:30. Silence is commanded if another has something to say.

(iii) 14:31-33a. The reasons are drawn from the principle of plurality: an assembly should reflect the views of more than one person.

((a)) 31, the floor is open to all.

((b)) 32, cannot plead, "the Spirit made me do it." Each participant is able and responsible to govern his own behavior.

((c)) 33, God is not pleased with clamor.

(c) 14:33b-35, the Woman.

(i) 14:35. She may speak at home.

(ii) 14:34a, 35b. She is to be silent in the church.

- (iii) 14:34b. Reason: an assembly should have well-defined lines of authority.
  - ((a)) Paul quotes Gen 3:16-17 to show that speaking is related to being in authority.
  - ((b)) Compare I Cor 11:3. Man, as the leader, is responsible to speak. In daily life, there will be times when a woman needs to go directly to God, or speak for him. The head covering provides for this. But when the church is gathered, with the men bringing offerings for their families, there is no such need.

iii. 14:36-39. The authority of Paul's instructions.

*See discussion on p 41.*

### III. Transitions from "Gifts" to "Love," 12:31; 14:1.

*These two verses are hinges, joining the outer discussion of gifts to the central chapter on love. In both, a reference to the gifts is nearest to the gift chapters, while a reference to "love" or the "more excellent way" is closest to the center. Thus these hinges continue the chiastic structure of the whole block. Both are commands.*

### IV. The Motive of the Gifts, 13.

*The chapter is an ABA chiasm. The outer paragraphs, marked by first personal pronouns (predominantly "I"), deal with love and gifts together, and show the relative importance of love. The central section outlines the intrinsic nature of love.*

#### A. 13:1-3, 8-13, the Importance of Love compared with Gift.

##### 1. 13:1-3. Gifts without love are worthless.

*There is a progression among the three categories of gifts here outlined. The division is marked by three "though..." / conclusion sections.*

- a. 13:1. Eloquent speech is no substitute for love.
- b. 13:2. Even the knowledge and faith necessary to back up speech are not.
- c. 13:3. Even when good deeds show that the faith is alive, there is no guarantee of love.

##### 2. 13:8-13. Love without Gifts will be heaven.

*This section is chiastic.*



- a. 13:8,13. Paul contrasts three gifts, which are temporary, with three permanent graces.
- b. 13:9-10, 12. Both parts contrast the partial present with the perfect future.
- c. 13:11 offers the illustration of growth from childhood to maturity, suggesting that not only tongues and prophecy but all of the gifts are accommodations to spiritual immaturity, and will not continue when we reach full growth.

B. 13:4-7, the Intrinsic Nature of Love.

*This section, coming at the center of a chiasm, is itself chiastic. The outer members are positive, describing what love does, while the very center is negative, outlining what it does not do.*

1. 13:4a, 7. What love does. Compare Matt 5:43-48. We test love by how it treats our enemies.
  - a. 13:4a. Love's response to people who do not love me.
  - b. 13:7. Love's response to their unkind actions.
2. 13:4b-6. What love does not do.

*The single positive statement, the last, is joined firmly to this section by its contrast with the next to last, but also serves as a transition to the outer, positive section.*

Block 7

"Now I declare unto you, brethren, the gospel."  
15:1-58

*The internal chiastic structure of 15:1-11, and an alternation whose two panels are 15:12-34 and 15:35-58, marks these as the three major divisions of the chapter. The subject is the resurrection, a subject on which the Corinthians have received some false teaching. Their indifference to this false teaching stands in contrast with their zeal for secondary gifts, and is equally in need of correction. If this block is thus related to the previous one, we have another instance of the kind of relation which we observed between blocks 2-3 and block 4, where Paul follows the answer to specific questions from the Corinthians with an exposition at his own initiative.*

## I. The Place of Resurrection in the Gospel. 15:1-11.

*This section has the structure AB C AB. That is, it is a three-member chiasm whose outer members form an alternation. The verbs in A and B outline the work of the Preacher and the Hearer of the gospel, respectively, while C outlines the Content of the gospel.*

## A. 15:1, 9-11a, the Preacher.

1. 15:9-10, he experienced the gospel himself.
2. 15:1b, 11a, he preached it to the Corinthians in the past.
3. 15:1a, he continues to declare it to them.

## B. 15:1c-2, 11b, the Hearer.

*15:1c-2 present five actions, arranged chiastically in time; from the past (outer members) through the present to an anticipation of the future state (at the center). The time involved is not the grammatical tense of the verbs, but when in the believer's experience the events described take place. 15:11b recalls only the past part of the hearer's activity.*

1. Past: "received" (15:1), "believed" (15:2,11b).

*For the notion of believing in vain, note 15:14,17, and compare Lk 8:13; Acts 8:12; 26:27.*

2. Present: "stand," "hold fast."
3. Future: "are being saved," anticipating a state not yet attained. The Greek tense emphasizes the continuous nature of the action.

## C. 15:3-8, the Content.

*Four "that" clauses present the contents of what Paul "delivered" to the Corinthians. The first and third are modified by "according to the scriptures," while the second and fourth, which do fulfill OT anticipations, are not. The reason is probably that the second and fourth are to be read as evidences supporting the two main points of the gospel. Compare Rom 4:25 for another summary of Paul's gospel. Note where Paul spends the bulk of his emphasis-- on the resurrection.*

1. 15:3-4a (1 1/2 verses); Christ died for our sins, as evidenced by his burial.
2. 15:4b-8, Christ rose, as evidenced by his appearances to many witnesses.

## II. The Fact of the Resurrection. 15:12-34.

*This section and the next have the same three-fold structure, with a summary of erroneous teaching followed by an extensive correction which leads to a closing admonition.*

- A. 15:12, the Error: "There is no resurrection." Perhaps this is the same error as that in II Tim 2:18, "the resurrection is past already." That is, the believer's co-resurrection with Christ, which is past, is the only resurrection, and there will be no bodily resurrection.

## B. 15:13-32, the Correction.

*This section is chiastic, ABA. The outer sections are conditional, and are both marked by the clause, "if the dead rise not" and its synonyms. They outline the consequences of denying the resurrection for Christian faith (15:13-19) and practice (15:29-32). The center section affirms without qualification, "But now is Christ risen.*

## 1. 15:13-19, 29-32, the Implications of no resurrection.

## a. 15:13-19, the implications for Christian faith.

*This paragraph is a folded chiasm. Four items are arranged chiastically in 15:13-15. Three of them are then presented in linear order in 15:16-18. Taken in sequence, these four items draw a series of conclusions from the claim that there is no resurrection.*

## Chiasm      Linear

i.	13a, 15c	16a	Denial of resurrection, as suggested by false teachers at Corinth.
ii.	13b, 15b	16b	Then one must conclude that Christ did not rise.
iii.	14a, 15a		But this makes the apostles, who preached the resurrection, liars.
iv.	14b	17, 18	Not only so, but it removes the assurance of salvation from the gospel.

## b. 15:29-32, the implications for Christian practice.

*Paul observes implications not only for his own life, but also for "them"--perhaps the perpetrators of the false teaching.*

- i. 15:29. "They"--why baptize for the dead? Note that, whatever "baptism for the dead" is, it is a practice of "them," not of Paul and his associates.

ii. 15:30-32. "We"--why suffer persecution?

2. 15:20-28, the Affirmation of resurrection.

*Paul develops his thought here as an exposition of the OT presentation of firstfruits as a metaphor for the resurrection of Christ.*

a. 15:20, the metaphor. Lev 23:5-11: Firstfruits were offered the Sunday after the Sabbath of the seven days after Passover--the day of Christ's resurrection.

b. 15:21-28, the exposition.

i. 15:21-22, firstfruits imply that there is more to come. Paul here probably has in mind, not only the resurrection of believers, but of all men, cf. Dan 12:2; Jn 5:28-29; Acts 24:15. "In Christ" in 15:22 is not the phrase commonly used to denote believers, but differs slightly, and probably means here, "by means of Christ."

ii. 15:23, firstfruits imply an order: Christ first, others after.

iii. 15:24-28, firstfruits were presented to God, just as Christ and his people shall be.

*This section is chiastically arranged about 15:26. Note that the death in view throughout this chapter is physical, not spiritual.*

(a) 15:24a, 28b. Christ will deliver all things to the Father.

(b) 15:24b, 28a. This requires that he come into control of all things.

(c) 15:25,27. The scriptures anticipate this:

(i) 15:25 quotes Ps 110:1, where Christ as Lord awaits the submission of all things.

(ii) 15:27 quotes Ps 8:6, where Christ as Man receives title to all things.

(d) 15:26 anticipates the final defeat of physical death. Cf. Rev 20:13,14.

C. 15:33-34, the Admonition. Watch out for those who hold such views. Beware that some [in the church] may not be believers.

## III. The Nature of the Resurrection. 15:35-58.

- A. 15:35, the Error: challenging the rationale of a bodily resurrection.

*Here, as in 15:12, the error is stated using a question. But here the questioner is the heretic, while there it was Paul.*

- B. 15:36-57, the Correction.

*15:50-57 use the first and second person, and thus stand apart from 15:36-49, which use the third person. The exceptions in 15:36-49 are the second person singular "thou" at the beginning, linking to the imaginary heretic of 15:35, and "we" in 15:49, which serves to effect a transition to 15:50-57.*

*As the change in pronouns suggests, the first section develops an abstract idea (the resurrection body is different from the pre-death body), while the second section applies this idea to Paul and his readers. Both sections emphasize that Christ is the cause of the resurrection.*

1. 15:36-49, The resurrection body is different from the body that dies.

*15:42a marks the first division in this section, between resurrection (named only in 15:42-49), and natural analogies with which it is compared (15:36-41) by the explicit "so also...."*

- a. 15:36-41, Examples from daily life.

*15:39-41 have internal unity, which sets them off from 15:36-38.*

- i. 15:36-38, The principle of divine action.

(a) 15:36-37. Man's part: he sows the grain.

(b) 15:38. God's part: he gives it a body as it pleases him.

*Resurrection is a supernatural work, a work of God. So it should not surprise anyone if it is puzzling from a rational point of view. Who could have foretold from the appearance of a seed the sort of plant it would become?*

- ii. 15:39-41, The principle that created things differ.

*15:40 is a hinge, joining the terrestrial bodies of 15:39 with the celestial bodies of 15:41.*

- (a) 15:39, terrestrial bodies differ from one another.  
(NB: They are characterized as "flesh.")
- (b) 15:41, celestial bodies differ from one another.  
(NB: They are characterized by "glory.")
- (c) 15:40 (the hinge). The terrestrial bodies differ from the celestial bodies.

*It is no criticism of resurrection to point out that the dead, corrupted body cannot rise. Wherever we look in creation, we see differences between the things God makes. It should not surprise us if the body he brings from the grave differs from that which went in.*

b. 15:42-49, The lesson drawn from the examples.

*15:42-44a itemize differences between a corpse and a raised body, in the regular syntactical frame, "It is sown...it is risen..." This pattern stops in 15:44b-49. The latter verses still describe differences, but this time they are between Adam and Christ.*

- i. 15:42-44a, the nature of the differences between a corpse and a raised body.
  - (a) 15:42b, corruption/incorruption.
  - (b) 15:43a, dishonor/glory. Cf. Gen 23:4,8, the natural desire to get a corpse out of view.
  - (c) 15:43b, weakness/power. Cf. Rom 1:4, where Christ's power as the Son of God is attested by the resurrection.
  - (d) 15:44a, natural (soulish)/spiritual. For these categories as the two extreme states of man, mediated by the carnal, see 2:14-3:4. In Paul's other exposition of these categories, Rom 7:5-8:39, the final expression of the spiritual man (chapter 8) is in the new body (8:14-30).
- ii. 15:44b-49, the cause of the differences.

*Compare here Rom 5:12-21. Both passages trace man's condition to his identity either with Adam or with Christ. There, standing with God is in view; here, physical status. This section is divided by the two contrasts between Adam and Christ which it draws. The two sections which result each have the same three parts, forming an alternation. Together, the two sections give an exposition of Gen 2:7, a different part of which is quoted in each. Compare the treatment of Hos 13:14 in 15:55-57.*

(a) 15:44b-46, the natural/spiritual contrast (cf. 15:44a).

(i) 15:45a quotes Gen 2:7b.

(ii) 15:45b contrasts this aspect of Adam with Christ.

(iii) 15:46. The order: Adam first, then Christ.

(b) 15:47-49, the earthly/heavenly contrast (cf. 15:39-41).

(i) 15:47a quotes Gen 2:7a.

(ii) 15:47b contrasts Adam and Christ.

(iii) 15:48-49. The order: Adam first, then Christ.

2. 15:50-57. We will experience this change.

*Each of the two paragraphs in this section is demarcated by its own inner structure and unity.*

a. 15:50-54. The extent of the change: the living as well as the dead will receive new bodies.

*This paragraph is a three-paneled alternation. Each panel presents two descriptions of those who will receive new bodies, one applying to the dead, and one to the living. The verbs used in the panels grow consecutively stronger. With the two categories of people who will change here, compare Jn 11:25-26 and I Thes 4:13-18.*

i. 15:50, the necessity of the change.

(a) The living are "flesh and blood," the dead are "corruption."

(b) The verb is "cannot."

ii. 15:51-52, the certainty of the change.

(a) The living are "we," the dead are "the dead."

(b) The verb is "shall be changed."

iii. 15:53-54, the meaning of the change (quoting Isa 25:8).

(a) The living are "mortal" (susceptible of death), the dead are "corruptible" (liable to corruption).

(b) The verb is "must."

b. 15:55-57, the source of the change.

*Paul freely quotes Hos 13:14, and then expounds each of two key terms from that text.*

i. 15:55, the text, Hos 13:14.

ii. 15:56, exposition of "sting." Death does have one--sin, working through the law. (Cf. Rom 7:7-13)

iii. 15:57, exposition of "victory." This belongs, not to death, but to us, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. 15:58, the Admonition.

*Two commands are followed by a motive.*

1. The commands:

a. "become steadfast, unmoveable." Implies that they were not this yet. Cf. Col 1:23; Eph 4:14. This is a doctrinal steadfastness, in this case concerning the resurrection.

b. "always abounding in the work of the Lord."

2. The motive: God will reward (notably, in resurrection).

*Three short sections in the last chapter bear the standard headings, "Now concerning..." (16:1-11, 12) and "Now I beseech you, brethren" (16:15-18). Not only the verses that follow (16:19-24, cf. II Cor 13:12-14), but also 16:13-14 (cf. II Cor 13:11) fit into the pattern of closings of Paul's letters. We suggest that the people named in the marked sections are presented as examples of the qualities to which the Corinthians are exhorted in 16:13-14, and that these marked sections thus really belong to the conclusion, rather than the body, of the letter. The sections on either side of 16:13-14 both concern three people (16:1-12--Paul, Timothy, Apollos; 16:15-18--Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus). In both cases, these people are traveling between Corinth and Ephesus (16:1-12 concern possible trips to Corinth, while the people named in 16:15-18 have arrived in Ephesus from Corinth). Because of the close unity among these sections, we treat them all as one block.*

Block 8  
Closing  
16:1-24

I. Exhortations, 16:1-18.

*As noted above, this section is an ABA chiasm, where A gives illustrations of the qualities named in B.*



## A. The Illustrations.

## 1. 16:1-11, "Now concerning the collection for the saints."

*The shift from Paul's plans to Timothy's divides the section into two paragraphs at 16:10.*

## a. 16:1-9, Paul.

i. 16:1-4, the offering and his role in it.

ii. 16:5-7, his purpose to minister among them for an extended period.

iii. 16:8-9, his present ministry in Ephesus.

## b. 16:10-11, Timothy.

## 2. 16:12, "Now concerning Apollos." Did he delay his visit because of the party spirit in Corinth?

## 3. 16:15-18, "I beseech you...." Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus.

## B. 16:13-14, the Qualities.

## II. Greetings, 16:19-20.

## A. 16:19-20a, from the believers at Ephesus.

## B. 16:20b, to the believers at Corinth.

## III. Paul's personal salutation, 16:21 (cf. Col 4:18a; II Thes 3:17).

## IV. Benediction, 16:22-24.

*The closing benediction is the most universal feature of Paul's letters, appearing in every one. But this one is unusual in including a curse ("negative benediction") and an invocation of Paul's own love as well as an invocation of Christ's grace.*

## A. 16:22, curse (negative benediction).

## B. 16:23, standard benediction.

## C. 16:24, Paul's own love.

## Synthesis

The entire book is an even-membered chiasm. The effect of such a structure is not to emphasize any particular element, but to unify and bind together all the parts.

The central pair of members are chapters 7-10 (including 11:1) and 11:2-34. These form an alternation, ABAB, where A is instruction concerning family life (7; 11:2-16) and B is instruction concerning church fellowship (8:1-11:1; 11:17-34). In the first panel of the alternation Paul is responding to Corinthian questions, as shown by the "now concerning..." openings. In the second panel, introduced by "Now I praise you, brethren," he is initiating discussion of some points of his own.

Moving out from the center, 1:10-6:20 and chapters 12-15 correspond in several ways.

1. Both emphasize the Holy Spirit, either as the one who enables the believer, or as descriptive of his character. Note that chapter 15 may be said to describe the spiritual body (15:44-46), and as such fulfills the expectation of 12:8-13.

2. Both are divided into two major parts, one of which concerns doctrine (1:10-4:13; 15), and the other, conduct (4:14-6:20; 12-14).

3. The doctrine in both cases is related to Paul's initial ministry in Corinth (2:1-5; 3:1-2; 15:1-11).

4. The conduct to which the Corinthians are exhorted on the basis of the doctrine is in each case one of the subjects taken up in the center two elements: fornication, relating to family life (4:14-6:20), and spiritual gifts, relating to church fellowship (12-14). (It is in this latter connection that the church meetings in both 11 and 14 are characterized with the verb "come together.")

We have characterized 1:10-6:20 and 12-15 as single corresponding units, because of the lack of a major section break between the two parts of 1-6. But we should note that the practical section of each lies toward the center, while the doctrinal section lies toward the outside, strengthening the overall chiastic effect.

The outermost members consist of the epistolary opening (1:1-9) and closing (16).