A CONSIDERATION OF THE FUNCTION OF ROM 1:8–15 IN LIGHT OF GRECO-ROMAN RHETORIC

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In spite of the immense amount of scholarly discussion, why Paul wrote Romans remains a perplexing issue. Part of the difficulty arises from determining how Paul introduces the purpose of the letter.[1] C. K. Barrett's exegesis of Rom 1:8–15 illustrates the problem:

> Paul wishes to visit Rome, even though it was not a church of his own founding and it was his custom not to build on foundations laid by others (xv.20). Reasons of a sort for this unusual proceeding are given in vv. 11ff., 15, but the basic reason does not appear till xv.24: Paul is (or hopes to be) on his way to Spain, and for this new field of missionary activity Rome will prove an indispensable base.
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> The reason is sound enough; but Paul's plans are sufficiently anomalous to make him embarrassed, and his embarrassment appears in the loose and inaccurate construction of the next verses.[2]

According to Barrett's exegesis, Rom 1:8–15 has no real interpretive significance for understanding the letter. Paul simply composed this text in a clumsy fashion to the point of becoming embarrassed.[3]

The purpose of this study is to reexamine the problem by considering the rhetorical function of Rom 1:8–15. The analysis seeks to demonstrate how this text, as a well-crafted rhetorical unit, introduces the basic purpose of the argument. Although it is admittedly difficult to target a single reason for Romans, I propose that Rom 1:8–15 commences Paul's rhetoric of mutuality, which encompasses the various facets of the letter's purpose. Furthermore I argue that the occasion of Romans was primarily precipitated by the immediate situation of the audience.[4] As its conceptual framework the study adopts the methodology of rhetorical criticism outlined by George Kennedy.[5] The analysis proceeds in five stages: (1) determination of

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[1] A. J. M. Wedderburn cites the letter's introduction as one of the chief factors in establishing the purpose of Romans (*The Reasons For Romans* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, reprint 1991] 5).

[2] C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper, 1957) 24–25.

[3] E. Käsemann's exegesis reflects a similar interpretation (*Commentary on Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 18–19).

[4] Here I am arguing against J. Jervell's view that the primary purpose of Romans was to prepare for Paul's Jerusalem collection ("The Letter to Jerusalem," *The Romans Debate* [rev. ed.; ed. K. P. Donfried; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991] 53–64).

[5] G. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984).

the rhetorical unit, (2) establishment of the rhetorical situation, (3) consideration of the rhetorical species, (4) analysis of the text's rhetorical composition and (5) reflection upon the unit's purpose. By employing Kennedy's methodology, I also provide an introduction to rhetorical criticism.[6]

I. DETERMINATION OF THE RHETORICAL UNIT

The analysis begins by identifying the rhetorical unit, similar to locating the pericope in form criticism. Kennedy advises that the chosen text must have "a discernible beginning and ending, connected by some action or argument."[7] In this stage the interpreter seeks to discover openings and closures (*inclusio*). Kennedy mentions that the rhetorical unit may include several chapters, a portion of a chapter, or at minimum five to six verses.[8]

Research has demonstrated that the Pauline epistles display various patterns of ancient rhetoric.[9] Thus it is feasible to see how the concepts of the rhetorical speech were applied in written composition. As Kennedy notes: "The structure of a Greco-Roman letter resembles a speech, framed by a salutation and complimentary closure."[10] In the examination of epistolary rhetoric, commencing with the prescript and postscript is especially helpful. Locating epistolary formulae along with grammatical and syntactical transitions also furnishes important clues for the interpreter. As the formal salutation, Rom 1:1–7 introduces the letter. The conventional thanksgiving formula then appears in v. 8, signaling a transition in the argument. Then follows a number of statements that attempt to establish a rhetorical bridge between Paul and his audience (1:9–14). By drawing an inference from the preceding comment, v. 15 concludes the unit.[11] The action Paul seeks to initiate with his audience is one of mutual encouragement. The manner in which he accomplishes this is explored in the later stages of the study. For the moment it is sufficient to observe that Rom 1:8–15 encompasses a rhetorical unit with a beginning (v. 8), middle (vv. 9–14) and ending (v. 15).[12]

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[6] For a detailed application of Kennedy's methodology consult D. Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter* (SBLDS 104; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988). See also *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy* (ed. D. Watson; JSNTSup 50; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991).

[7] Kennedy, *Rhetorical* 34.

[8] Ibid.

[9] For a helpful summary consult J.-N. Aletti, "La dispositio rhetorique dans les epitres pauliniens: Proposition de methode," *NTS* 38 (1992) 385–401.

[10] Kennedy, *Rhetorical* 141.

[11] For this usage of *houtōs* see BAGD 597. For those who treat 1:8–15 as one discrete unit cf. Barrett, *Epistle* 23–27; Käsemann, *Commentary* 16–21; W. Sanday and A. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1895) 18–22; J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word, 1988) 26–36.

[12] In his discussion of the rhetorical unit (*Änderung eines Ganzen*) H. Lausberg distinguishes two types: "das zirkulare Ganze" and "das lineare Ganze." In regard to the latter he states that "im Richtungsverlauf unterscheidet drei Teile (*tria loca*): Angang (*caput, initium, archē*), Mitte (*medium, meson*), Ende (*finis, imum, telos*)" (*Elemente der Literarischen Rhetorik* [10th ed.; München: Max Hueber, 1990] secs. 55–56).

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

Since the primary objective of rhetorical criticism is to understand the intended persuasion of the text, the interpreter must establish the overall context of the argument.[13] This step involves a consideration of the rhetorical situation of the unit, similar to probing the *Sitz im Leben* in form criticism.[14] As defined by Lloyd Bitzer, the rhetorical situation entails

> a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed, if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain modification of the exigence.[15]

In rhetorical argumentation the author first attempted to establish a receptive position with his audience. Aristotle describes this kind of artistic proof as *ēthos*.[16] Kennedy explains that "ethos is something entirely internal to speech, but in practice the authority which the speaker brings to the occasion is an important factor, and this is especially true in the New Testament."[17] In Paul's situation with his audience, the demonstration of his *ēthos* was crucial. For this reason he prefaces his argument by legitimizing his apostleship and gospel before his audience (1:1–7). In addition Paul diplomatically states that he had never personally visited the Roman congregation (1:11–12). Only later (15:22–32) does Paul reveal his desire to gain the future support of his audience. Commentators have been puzzled concerning why Paul does not mention this in the introduction of the letter.[18] In actuality he does (in 1:8–15), but only through *insinuatio*—a rhetorical convention that introduces the general subject in an indirect manner. Oftentimes *insinuatio* was a rhetorical figure that often conditioned the content of the exordium.[19] Rhetorical analysis thus explains why Paul only introduces his purpose in a general fashion (see esp. 1:11–12). Not until the conclusion (15:14–16:27) does he attempt to persuade the audience to participate more specifically within the argument. Paul's intent, therefore, was to establish a mutual relationship between himself and the audience. He commences the argument by underscoring their ties within the covenant (1:1–7) and by expressing his commitment to their well-being (1:8–15).

Among the persons involved in the rhetorical situation Kennedy estimates that "the most important are often those who make up the audience."[20] In the

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[13] The discussion here basically follows the reconstruction I offer in "A Rhetorical Analysis of Rom 1:1-5:21 with Attention Given to the Rhetorical Function of 5:1-21," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 19 (1992) 258–260. Cf. J. S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 1–47.

[14] Kennedy, *Rhetorical* 34.

[15] L. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968) 4–6, quoted by Kennedy, *Rhetorical* 33–34.

[16] Aristotle *Ars. rhet.* 1.2.3.

[17] Kennedy, *Rhetorical* 15.

[18] See e.g. Barrett, *Epistle* 25; Käsemann, *Commentary* 18–21.

[19] Cicero *Inv.* 1.15.20. For Cicero's treatment of this rhetorical figure and its use in the exordium see J. Martin, *Antike Rhetorik: Technik und Methode* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 2.3; München: C. H. Beck, 1974) 25.

interpretation of Romans, recent discussion has emphasized the importance of Paul's treatment of "the strong" and "the weak" in 14:1–15:7.[21] Since Paul's rhetoric in the exordium was primarily directed to a Gentile audience (1:6, 13, 14–15) we can identify "the weak" as Jewish-Christians who, among other things, were scrupulously adhering to dietary regulations (14:1–5). Apparently, strained Jewish-Gentile relations existed within the Christian community at Rome that resulted in unacceptance and intolerance.[22] In fact Paul's rhetoric throughout his argument conveys that boasting had erupted on both sides of the issue.[23]

Evidence suggests that the Jewish Christians, once removed from Rome by the edict of Claudius, eventually returned after Nero's accession around AD 54.[24] Upon their return they soon discovered that the character of the Christian community had radically altered. It is plausible to assume that the community reflected a much more Gentile character. The Gentiles' position forced the returning Jewish Christians to embrace their covenantal nomistic traditions with even more rigor.[25] Paul addresses these issues at some length in the parenesis of the argument.[26] In its entirety the situation at Rome evidently created distrust and disunity. Paul's purpose was to squelch the divisiveness that persisted on both the Jewish and Gentile fronts.[27] His rhetoric of mutuality attempted to address the various divisions among his audience. He developed his argument on the basis of the revelation of God's faithfulness as demonstrated in the gospel.[28] That is why Paul could proclaim unemphatically, "I am not ashamed of the gospel" (Rom 1:16a).

According to this reconstruction, Paul's rhetoric attempted to modify the rhetorical exigence by (1) clarifying and reinforcing the mutual responsibilities of the community, (2) restraining the social divisiveness that had erupted within the community and (3) gaining the support of his audience. In my judgment, viewing the rhetorical situation in this manner offers a coherent reading of Romans. The study next examines the rhetorical species of Rom 1:8–15.

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[20] Kennedy, *Rhetorical* 35.

[21] See J. Crafton, "Paul's Rhetorical Vision and the Purpose of Romans: Toward a New Understanding," *NovT* 32 (1990) 317–339; N. Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism* (JSNTSup 45; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990) 52–59.

[22] Cf. esp. Rom 15:1–2.

[23] Cf. Rom 2:1, 17; 3:1, 9, 27–31; 4:2, 9; 5:1–11; 6:3; 11:17–24; 12:3; etc.

[24] Tacitus *Annals* 15.44; Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4; Pliny *Letters* 10.97; Acts 18:2.

[25] Such a response is understandable since Jewish solidarity (a notion also important for Paul) became a great socioreligious expression, fleshed out through synagogue attendance and law observance, especially those laws related to Sabbath, food and circumcision. In this context Paul's rhetoric became even more forceful. For further discussion see E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66 CE* (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity, 1992) 256–257.

[26] Paul's final summation of the matter is given in Rom 15:7–13.

[27] For a similar treatment cf. Elliott, *Rhetoric* 43–67.

[28] Paul introduces this notion in Rom 1:16–17, later developed in the *propositio* of 3:21–31. For further discussion see Reid, "Rhetorical" 263–272; Aletti, "Dispositio" 385–401.

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE RHETORICAL SPECIES

The rhetorical handbooks classify the rhetorical speech under three major species: judicial (*dikanikon*), deliberative (*symbouleutikon*) and epideictic (*epideiktikon*). The two criteria that determine the classification include the intent of the discourse and its relation to time.[29] The purpose of the judicial speech, employed in the courtroom setting, was to accuse and defend past actions. Deliberative rhetoric, reflected in political discussions, attempted to demonstrate which actions were most advantageous for the future. Its purpose was to offer advice and exhortation.[30] Epideictic rhetoric, characteristic of the funeral oration, issued praise or blame with the goal of undermining or increasing assent to certain values. In its ceremonial setting, epideictic rhetoric was primarily related to the present, although a future orientation sometimes existed.[31]

In determining the rhetorical species, Kennedy estimates that "any discourse may be classified as judicial, deliberative, epideictic and will have the rhetorical characteristics of its species."[32] In his judgment this step becomes crucial in understanding the rhetorical unit.[33] NT scholars, however, have experienced great difficulty in classifying the Pauline epistles according to the ancient classification. Consequently critics have scrutinized this aspect of rhetorical criticism more so than any other.[34]

In the debate concerning the species of Romans, scholars have described the epistle as an apologetic, deliberative, epideictic, or even parenetic letter.[35] Three factors contribute to this scholarly uncertainty. (1) The sheer length and hermeneutical complexity of a letter like Romans may suggest that a number of rhetorical intentions are present.[36] (2) The exact nature of Paul's rhetoric with its distinctively theological orientation has not yet been adequately described.[37] (3) The silence of the rhetorical handbooks concerning

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[29] Aristotle *Ars. rhet.* 1.3.3. Since Aristotle was the first to develop a systematic treatment of rhetoric, the ancient rhetors essentially follow his scheme. For a fuller treatment see Quintilian *Inst. orat.* 3.7.–10.5.

[30] For a primary example see Demosthenes *De Corona*.

[31] See e.g. the funeral speech of Pericles in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* 2.35. I owe this reference to F. W. Hughes (*Early Christian Rhetoric and 2 Thessalonians* [JSNT-Sup 30; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989] 31).

[32] Kennedy, *Rhetorical* 31.

[33] Ibid. 36.

[34] For some telling criticisms see T. Olbricht, "An Aristotelian Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Thessalonians," *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. D. Balch, E. Ferguson and W. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 225.

[35] For a summary of these positions consult Elliott, *Rhetoric* 60–67.

[36] This point is illustrated by G. W. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (JSNTSup 29; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989) 57–60. He argues that Galatians encompasses judicial and deliberative rhetoric (contra Betz). Cf. also A. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Dallas: Word, 1990) xxxv–xlvii, who asserts that Ephesians includes epideictic and deliberative traits.

[37] G. Kennedy addresses this issue, but his treatment of NT rhetoric is minimal (*Class-ical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* [Chapel Hill:

the function of parenesis compounds the difficulty of ascertaining the rhetorical species of the Pauline letters.[38]

As far as Kennedy's contribution to this matter is concerned, he does not really offer any specific guidelines in the introduction to his methodology.[39] With a letter of Romans' length, determining the rhetorical species of the smaller units could offer a starting point. Then the cumulative data from the entire analysis may reveal the predominance of one particular species.[40] For our discussion it is important to observe how Paul in Rom 1:1–7 stresses the audience's membership and status in the covenant. With no prior visit to the church at Rome, Paul had to establish some common ground with the audience.[41] He also sought to strengthen their disposition toward certain beliefs and values. In this regard Paul's rhetoric is both implicit and explicit. Romans 1:5, for example, exclaims that "we have received grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith" (*elabomen charin kai apostolēn eis hypakoēn pisteōs*).[42] Romans 1:6 addresses the audience as those "called by Jesus Christ" (*klētoi Iēsou Christou*). In 1:7 Paul then reinforces their disposition with the covenantal expressions "beloved by God" (*agapētois theou*) and "called saints" (*klētois hagiois*). Characteristic of a ceremonial oration, Paul praises his audience with the somewhat hyperbolic statement in v. 8: "Your faith is being proclaimed in all the world" (*hē pistis hymōn katangelletai en holō tō kosmō*). According to Aristotle, epideictic rhetoric encompassed speech that emphasized the greatness of the one being praised.[43] Here Paul seems to follow this rhetorical convention. Since he does not attempt to move the audience toward any particular action, Rom 1:8–15 seems to reflect epi-

University of North Carolina, 1980] 125–129). In addition J. R. Levison raises some serious questions about Kennedy's understanding of early Christian rhetoric ("Did the Spirit Inspire Rhetoric? An Exploration of George Kennedy's Definition of Early Christian Rhetoric," *Persuasive Artistry* [ed. Watson] 25–40). Cf. also M. R. Cosby, who states that the "application of research in 'orality' to the study of rhetoric in the Pauline letters remains in its infancy" ("Paul's Persuasive Language in Romans 5," *Persuasive* 208).

[38] Even before the tool of rhetorical criticism, the function of parenesis has been a vexing problem for Pauline interpreters. See H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 253–255.

[39] As an introduction to rhetorical criticism, the brevity and simplicity of Kennedy's presentation is especially instructive for the beginning student. His specifications, however, for determining the rhetorical species are much too brief (see *Rhetorical* 36–37).

[40] I owe this suggestion to J. Kirby. To my knowledge no one has undertaken such a thoroughgoing analysis of the rhetorical species of Romans. Herein lies part of the problem. For the approach and methodology I am advocating, M. M. Mitchell heads us in the right direction (*Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* [Westminster/John Knox: Louisville, 1991]).

[41] Kennedy agrees that a major aspect of the rhetorical problem was the audience's lack of personal knowledge of Paul (*Rhetorical* 152).

[42] Or as the RSV translates: "We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith." For a substantive treatment of this Pauline notion see D. B. Garlington, "*The Obedience of Faith*": *A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context* (WUNT 38; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991) 233–254; cf. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* 24–25.

[43] Aristotle *Ars. rhet.* 1.33. Translation taken from G. Kennedy, *Aristotle on Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University, 1991).

deictic rhetoric, centering upon the praise of the audience. Even Paul's explanation of his allegiance toward them can be taken as a form of praise.

Epideictic traits also seem to surface in the parenesis of Romans. As mentioned earlier, Paul at places focuses upon the strong and weak parties of the audience. In epideictic rhetoric, ethical admonitions function to establish the legitimacy of certain codes and attitudes over others. By issuing praise and blame, Paul invites the hearers to participate within the argument.[44] With this orientation Kennedy concludes that Rom 12:1−15:13 is epideictic since it is largely concerned with belief and attitude.[45] The evidence therefore gives weight to the probability that Rom 1:8−15 is epideictic.[46]

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT'S RHETORICAL COMPOSITION

In analyzing the composition of the rhetorical unit the interpreter examines its subdivisions, their persuasive effect, and how they function together to meet the rhetorical situation. This is accomplished through a line-by-line analysis of the argument, keeping in mind its assumptions, the topics of persuasion, its formal rhetorical features, and the various devices of style. As Kennedy explains: "This process will reveal how the raw material has been worked out or rhetorically amplified both in context and style."[47]

Since rhetorical criticism views the text as argumentative discourse, we must first explore the rhetorical function of Rom 1:8−15 in its larger context. In other words, what role does the unit play in the development of the argument? According to Aristotle the essential elements of the speech included the introduction, a statement of the argument, proof, and summary conclusion.[48] The exordium, as the introduction, prefaced the subject, acknowledged the situation, addressed the audience and established the *ēthos* of the speaker.[49] As Quintilian explains, the exordium prepared the audience to listen to the rest of the speech and to receive instruction.[50] Romans 1:1−15 represents Paul's adaptation of the exordium. Since the handbooks do not

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[44] E.g. Paul contrasts positive and negative traits in Rom 13:8−10: *Mēdeni mēden opheilete* [blame] *ei mē to allēlous agapān ho gar agapōn ton heteron nomon peplērōken* [praise] (v. 8). The same pattern exists in v. 9 with the string of negative commandments climaxed by the positive exhortation *agapēseis ton plēsion sou hōs seauton*. Verse 10 concludes the unit, repeating the epideictic traits of both blame (*hē agapē tǭ plēsion kakon ouk ergazetai*) and praise (*plērōma oun nomou hē agapē*).

[45] Kennedy, *Rhetorical* 154.

[46] For those who view Romans as epideictic consult R. Jewett, "Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter," *Int* 36 (1982) 3−20; "Following the Argument of Romans," *Romans Debate* (ed. Donfried) 265−279; D. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987) 219−221; A. H. Synman, "Style and the Rhetorical Function of Romans 8.31-39," *NTS* 34 (1988) 218−231; Crafton, "Rhetorical."

[47] Kennedy, *Rhetorical* 37.

[48] Aristotle *Ars. rhet.* 3.13.1−4.

[49] Ibid. 3.14.1−11.

[50] Quintilian *Inst. orat.* 4.1.5. For further discussion see Martin, *Antike* 61−75; Lausberg, *Elemente* secs. 43.1; 69.

include the salutation as part of the speech we can characterize the prescript (vv. 1–7) as a quasi-exordium.[51]Romans 1:8–15, then, functions as the exordium to Paul's argument.[52]

A line-by-line analysis illustrates its rhetorical composition.

UNIT 1 (1:8):

Protōn men eucharistō tǭ theǭ mou
   dia Iēsou Christou
   peri pantōn hymōn
   hoti hē pistis hymōn katangelletai en holǭ tǭ kosmǭ

UNIT 2 (1:9–10):

martys gar mou estin ho theos
   hō latreuō
    en tǭ pneumati mou
    en tǭ euangeliǭ tou huiou autou
    hōs adialeiptōs mneian hymōn poioumai
     pantote epi tōn proseuchōn mou
     deomenos ei pōs ēdē pote euodōthēsomai
      en tǭ thelēmati tou theou
      elthein pros hymas

UNIT 3 (1:11–12):

epipothō gar idein hymas
   hina ti metadō charisma hymin pneumatikon
   eis to stērichthēnai hymas
   touto de estin symparaklēthēnai en hymin
    dia tēs en allēlois pisteōs
     hymōn te kai emou

UNIT 4 (1:13–15):

ou thelō de hymas agnoein adelphoi
   hoti pollakis proethemēn elthein pros hymas
   kai ekōluthēn achri tou deuro
   hina tina karpon skō kai en hymin
    kathōs kai en tois loipois ethnesin
Hellēsin te kai barbarois sophois te kai anoētois opheiletēs eimi houtōs to kat' eme prothymon kai hymin tois en Rōmǫ euangelisasthai

The table demonstrates that the text comprises four major subunits: unit 1 (v. 8), unit 2 (vv. 9–10), unit 3 (vv. 11–12) and unit 4 (vv. 13–15). A conjunction signals the rhetorical progression of each subunit (*gar* in units 2 and 3, *de* in unit 4). A preliminary comment or formula also introduces each section. Rhetorically these statements function as propositions in Rom 1:8–

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[51] This follows the suggestion and nomenclature of Watson, *Invention* 40–43.
[52] Cf. Dunn's comments on the structure and form of 1:8–15 (*Romans 1–8* 27).

15 to introduce Paul's rhetoric of mutuality. As one would expect, the unit reveals a high degree of repetition in both sound and thought.

As prescribed by the handbooks the exordium focuses on Paul's relationship with his audience. After expressing his thankfulness to God for the demonstration of their faith (v. 8) he gives the reason for the letter by (1) conveying his desire to visit Rome (vv. 9−10), (2) stressing the need for mutuality (vv. 11−12) and (3) relaying information about his previous attempts to visit Rome (vv. 13−15).[53] Paul's purpose in writing thus stems from the immediate needs of the audience. The expression of his obligation toward them is particularly forceful in v. 15. Paul thus concludes the exordium by defining his role within the rhetorical situation.[54]

Of particular importance for this study is Rom 1:11−12, which addressed the rhetorical exigence:[55] "For I long to see you in order that I might impart some spiritual gift to you so as to strengthen you: that *we may be mutually encouraged* by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (italics mine). Contextually, v. 11 explains the motivation for Paul's desire to visit Rome. Verse 12 further amplifies his intent.[56] Paul explains that his purpose in visiting was to impart a spiritual blessing for the strengthening of the community.[57] Thus Rom 1:12 cues the rhetorical exigence of mutuality.[58] Here Paul shifts his focus with the employment of the reciprocal expression *en allēlois*.[59] An additional genitival construction (*hymōn te kai emou*) in the emphatic position accentuates the appeal.[60] In sum, Paul intended to strengthen the audience's disposition toward particular values. Here the argumentative situation closes on two fronts: (1) the social problem of mutual intolerance within the community and (2) the relationship Paul sought to inaugurate with his audience.[61] Consequently Paul's rhetoric of mutuality attempted to particularize the obligations of his audience.

[53] A function of the exordium was to state the central issue of the case.

[54] *Houtōs* closes the argument and allows Paul to draw a final inference from his previous arguments in the exordium.

[55] Kennedy states that an exigence "is a situation under which an individual is called upon to make some response: the response made is conditioned by the situation or what follows from it" (*Rhetorical* 35).

[56] The explanatory function of *de* is signaled rhetorically by *touto estin*. Syntactically, v. 12 amplifies the infinitival purpose clause (*eis to stērichthēnai hymas*) in v. 11c. For a similar function of *de* consult BDF sec. 447.

[57] The above diagram reveals that *eis to stērichthēnai* is connected to *metadō*.

[58] More specifically the exhortative and collective meaning of *symparakaleō* furnishes the key for Paul's rhetoric. For its usage, see BAGD 779; LSJ 1680.

[59] *Allēlōn* strategically resurfaces in Rom 12:5, 10; 14:13, 19; 15:7, 14; 16:16 (cf. also 1:27; 2:15). This usage of the term gives further warrant for describing the argument within Romans as Paul's rhetoric of mutuality.

[60] Cf. Käsemann: "The mutual consolation of the brethren, from which he himself will profit, now appears to be his expectation. The pronouns *hymōn te kai emou*, which are rather superfluous alongside *en allēlois*, underscore this impression" (*Commentary* 19).

[61] The argumentative situation within the discourse is constructed by the speaker, while the rhetorical situation is produced by the exigence. Viewing them as two separate entities is suggested by Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca (*The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1969] 96). For the application of this distinction I am

This rhetorical analysis gives greater importance to Rom 1:12 for understanding the purpose of Romans than do previous exegeses. C. E. B. Cranfield, for example, gives limited discussion to this verse.[62] Ernst Käsemann simply juxtaposes its meaning as a contradiction to Paul's earlier claim in v. 5.[63] Both interpretations thus imply that 1:12 has little or no import for determining the purpose of Romans. But if we accept this study's proposal, v. 12 takes on new meaning in the interpretation of the letter: Romans 1:12 introduces Paul's rhetoric of mutuality, which encompasses the various facets of his purpose in writing.

Precedents for this notion of mutuality appear in both Jewish and Greek literature. Aristotle, for example, speaks of the importance of exerting "mutual influence" (*sympathēs*).[64] In his discussion of covenantal nomism E. P. Sanders explains that the Jewish doctrine of election furnished a theological expression "of the feeling of community that bound together the Jews of the ancient world."[65] Jewish literature emphasizes this covenantal notion in a variety of ways. For instance, Josephus describes a "mutual harmony" that existed among the members of the Jewish community.[66] In lieu of Paul's own Jewish background such ideas would have furnished the linguistic field for his rhetoric. At another level his convictions concerning the covenant provided the theological substructure to the argument within Romans.[67] From that substructure emerged Paul's rhetoric of mutuality, which attempted to modify the various dimensions of the rhetorical situation.

V. REFLECTION UPON THE UNIT'S PURPOSE

As the final step in the analysis, Kennedy advises that the interpreter reconsider the unit's success "in meeting the rhetorical exigence and what its

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drawing from J. D. Hester ("Placing the Blame: The Presence of Epideictic in Galatians 1 and 2," *Persuasive* 282–285).

[62] C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1975) 1.80–81. In his exegesis of v. 12 Cranfield recognizes Paul's desire for a mutual *paraklēsis*, but he fails to grasp its interpretive significance.

[63] In his reading of the letter Käsemann assumes that the crucial problem was the integrity of Paul's apostolate. In my judgment he then interprets the argument incorrectly (*Epistle* 19–20).

[64] Aristotle *Phgn.* 808.19; cf. Epicurus *Ep. 1*.

[65] Sanders, *Judaism* 264.

[66] Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.170. Sanders explains that Josephus' discussion occurs in a list of virtues that reflect the Platonic school of thought with the exception that "harmony replaces wisdom" (*Judaism* 265).

[67] Cf. N. T. Wright: "Within all his [Paul's] letters, though particularly in Romans and Galatians, we discover a larger implicit narrative, which stands out clearly as the true referential sequence behind the poetic sequence demanded by the different rhetorical needs of the various letters. Like his own story, this larger narrative is the Jewish story, but with a subversive twist at every point. Paul presupposes this story even when he does not expound it directly, and it is arguable that we can only understand the more limited narrative worlds of the different letters if we locate them at their appropriate points within this overall story-world, and indeed within the symbolic universe that accompanies it" (*The New Testament and the People of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992] 405). Even though Wright is working from the categories of story and narrative, his emphasis upon the Jewishness of Paul's rhetoric stresses the approach and argument I am making.

implications may be for the speaker or audience."[68] This study has argued that Rom 1:8–15 plays an integral part in introducing the argument and rhetoric of Romans. While some commentators have attempted to explain this text as somewhat anomalous and even embarrassing, distantly removed from the situation of the letter, I have proposed that Rom 1:8–15 rhetorically cues the reason for which Romans was written.

Paul's rhetoric of mutuality emerged from his covenantal convictions. The rhetorical situation required a clarification of covenant status, obligations and belief. As he begins the conclusion to the letter, Paul offers a summation of his argument: "I have confidence about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another" (Rom 15:14). Paul's rhetoric within Romans, then, represents the extension of his gospel to the rhetorical situation.[69] This reading not only takes into account the recent reassessments of Pauline studies but also offers a fresh approach to the interpretation of Romans. What requires further examination is how Paul fleshes out his rhetoric within the entire argumentation.[70]

In closing, the application of Kennedy's methodology in this study suggests that rhetorical criticism offers a viable alternative to the historical-critical method. Because of its significant impact upon Pauline studies, scholars must continue to address the various hermeneutical issues that have arisen. Nevertheless, in spite of its possible deficiencies rhetorical criticism offers a holistic methodology by which the interpreter can examine the relationship between the speaker, the audience and the discourse—issues that other approaches to Romans in the past have not made entirely clear. With their emphasis on the final form of the Biblical text, evangelicals should find this method quite appealing. As a burgeoning discipline within NT studies, rhetorical criticism provides promising prospects indeed.

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[68] Kennedy, *Rhetorical* 38.

[69] This reading of Romans takes seriously J. C. Beker's assertion that the interpreter must critically reflect upon the nature of Paul's hermeneutic, what Beker describes as the dialectic of coherence and contingency in Paul's gospel (*The Triumph of God: The Essence of Paul's Thought* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990]).

[70] I plan to tackle this issue in a forthcoming study.