

## Epideictic Rhetoric

### In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 1-4

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In his article “Beiträge zur paulinischen Rhetorik”<sup>1</sup>, dating from 1897, J. Weiß offers a detailed analysis of 1 Corinthians 1-4. This analysis is restricted to the formal, stylistic characteristics of this passage, but it does justify the conclusion that this is “ein Stück feinsten Schriftstellerei oder Beredsamkeit.” (210) Weiß convincingly shows that Paul's text is highly rhetorical in nature. Thereby he paves the way for closer inspection of the style, the argumentation and the rhetorical genre of 1 Cor. 1-4.

It is remarkable that this analysis of Paul's style by Weiß has been completely ignored in later research. Standard commentaries of the first epistle to the Corinthians do not give any attention to the special style of 1 Cor. 1-4.<sup>2</sup> It is still more remarkable that even authors, who have recently studied 1 Cor. 1-4 from the perspective of Greco-Roman rhetoric, pass by the rhetorical character of Paul's style in complete silence. Experts in Classical rhetoric, such as H.D. Betz<sup>3</sup>, S.M. Pogoloff<sup>4</sup>, D. Litfin<sup>5</sup> and B.W. Winter<sup>6</sup>, without so much as deigning to look

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<sup>1</sup> J. Weiß, “Beiträge zur paulinischen Rhetorik”, *Theologische Studien* (FS B. Weiß; ed. C.R. Gregory et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897) 165-247.

<sup>2</sup> This also holds for the recent commentary of A.C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> H.D. Betz, “The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology according to the Apostle Paul”, *L'Apôtre Paul. Personnalité, Style et Conception du Ministère* (BETL 73; ed. A. Vanhoye; Leuven: Leuven University Press – Peeters, 1986) 16-48, esp. 36-37.

<sup>4</sup> S.M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia. The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (SBL DS 134; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 275.

at Paul's style, unanimously conclude that in 1 Cor. 1-4 Paul, for theological reasons, rejects the use of rhetoric in Christian preaching. In Paul's view the dynamic of human persuasion and the dynamic of the proclamation of the Cross should be mutually exclusive. Paul defends his *modus operandi* as a preacher. His assignment is to proclaim the Cross simply without rhetorical means, for creating belief exclusively is the work of God's Spirit. In my view, a theological prejudice with regard to the nature of Christian preaching blinds these scholars to the highly rhetorical character of Paul's discourse. Weiß's analysis asks for a sequel. Therefore I intend to reopen the question as to the rhetorical character of 1 Cor. 1-4.

The present examination is founded on the disposition of the text, which I have proposed in a previous article.<sup>7</sup> There I argued that 1 Cor. 1:10-4:21 consists of four general reflections, each in a different, highly rhetorical style and followed by a practical conclusion formulated with much less rhetorical flourish. Reflections and conclusions are divided as follows: 1 Cor. 1:18-31 concluded by 2:1-5; 1 Cor. 2:6-16 concluded by 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 3:5-23 concluded by 4:1-5; 1 Cor. 4:6-13 concluded by 4:14-21.

Having examined the course of the argumentation in 1 Cor. 1:10-4:21 in a previous article, I focus my attention this time more in particular on the rhetorical character of the four general reflections. Two indications determine the direction of this investigation. Weiß clearly shows that each of these passages exhibits a distinct style, characterized in each case by an abundant use of rhetorical figures. A second striking fact is that in each of these passages Paul qualifies or disqualifies certain persons or groups of persons. In the first one the question is

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<sup>5</sup> D. Litfin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation. 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 190-201.244-252.

<sup>6</sup> B.W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 187.237-241.

<sup>7</sup> J.F.M. Smit, "“What is Apollos ? What is Paul ?” In Search for the Coherence of First Corinthians 1:10-4:21”,

raised: “Where is the wise ? Where the scholar ? Where the disputant of this age ?” (1:20).

The second one deals with the hidden wisdom which “God destined for our glory” (2:7). The third one begins with the question: “What is Apollos ? What is Paul ?” (3:5) Finally, in the fourth one again disqualifying questions are asked: “For who makes you different from anyone else ? What do you have that you did not receive ? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not ?” (4:7) From a rhetorical point of view these two phenomena point to the epideictic genre.<sup>8</sup> Consequently this genre forms the frame of reference of the present investigation.

The presentation of my findings is divided into the following parts. First, I give a succinct survey of the principal characteristics of the epideictic genre as set out in the various Greek and Latin handbooks of rhetoric. Next, in the light of this, a description follows of the particular rhetorical character of each of the four general sections mentioned, successively 1 Cor. 1:18-31; 2:6-16; 3:5-23; 4:6-13. This leads to a first conclusion. Then, attention is focused on a number of technical terms from rhetorical theory, which Paul seems to weave into his discourse, more in particular in 1 Cor. 3:5-4:13. Finally some conclusions round off my findings.

## I. The Characteristics of Epideictic Rhetoric

In order to analyse four important parts of 1 Cor. 1-4 I shall use the standard form of epideictic rhetoric as elaborated in the handbooks from Greco-Roman Antiquity. In view of

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<sup>8</sup> In her study *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation. An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (HUT 28; Tübingen: Mohr, 1991) M.M. Mitchell has a section on “Epideictic Elements in 1:18-4:21” (213-225). To my knowledge she is the only one to notice a connection between this passage and epideictic rhetoric. She takes this approach: “It is fascinating to see how Paul’s censure of the Corinthian church here proceeds along the lines which Quintilian recommended for praising or blaming a city.” (215) This approach is rather infelicitous and leads to a forced and artificial interpretation.

this I shall now, first of all, give an overview of the main characteristics by which this rhetorical genre is distinguished from both other genres.<sup>9</sup>

a. Subject, objective, place.

Within rhetorical theory it is, since Aristotle, regular practice to distinguish three genres from each other and to give them a separate treatment.<sup>10</sup> The forensic speech (*gevno" dikanikovn*; *genus iudiciale*) pleads, in the sense of accusing and defending, for the legitimacy or illegitimacy of a committed act. The court-room is the appropriate place for this. The political speech (*gevno" sumbouleutikovn*; *genus deliberativum*) deliberates, in the sense of recommending or dissuading, upon the benefit or damage which a certain proposal brings with it. This genre is appropriate for the general assembly of the people. The ceremonial speech (*gevno" ejpideiktikovn*; *genus demonstrativum*) evaluates, in the sense of honoring or blaming, the positive or negative qualities of a certain person. The appropriate place for this genre is the theatre. In contradistinction to the two first-mentioned genres, in which the hearers fulfil the role of judges, in the epideictic genre they are spectators, to whom the

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<sup>9</sup> An overview of epideictic rhetoric is found in Th.C. Burgess, "Epideictic Literature", *University of Chicago Studies in Classical Philology* 3 (1902) 89-261 (repr. New York and London: Garland, 1987). This work is outdated, however, and overtaken by the new, excellent standard work of L. Pernot, *La Rhétorique de l'Éloge dans le Monde Gréco-Romain. Tome I: Histoire et Technique; Tome II: Les Valeurs* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité 137-138; Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1993). A very useful survey of Greek rhetorical terminology is R.D. Anderson, *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms. Connected to Methods of Argumentation, Figures and Tropes from Anaximenes to Quintilian* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 24; Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> The division in three genres is given among others by Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 1.3; *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, 1.1421b.9-15; *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.2.2; Cicero, *De inventione*, 1.5.7; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 3.4; Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 28.

speaker displays his ability.<sup>11</sup> The epideictic genre primarily deals with the qualification or disqualification of human beings but, on the analogy of this, it may be applied also to deities, cities, animals, plants and abstract themes.<sup>12</sup>

b. Style.

An important characteristic of epideictic rhetoric is a style with a very high degree of stylistic ornamentation (κόσμος; *ornatus*).<sup>13</sup> Conspicuous figures of style are frequently applied. In this respect the so-called Gorgian figures play a leading part.<sup>14</sup> These are stylistic devices which have been borrowed from poetry and which easily lend an artistic or artificial flavor to a speech. To these figures belong especially parallelism of parts of sentences or complete sentences (ἰσοκλών, παρίσῳσι"), antithesis as to form as well as to content (ἀντιθέσι"), correspondences in sound between words leading to assonance and alliteration (παρονομασία), and rhyme (ὁμοιοτέλευτον).

c. Standard repertoire.

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<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 1.3 cp. *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, 35.1440b.13-14; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 3.7.1.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 1.9.2; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 3.7.26-28. See Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 131-133.

<sup>13</sup> Cicero, *De partitione oratoria*, 72; *Orator*, 37-42.65.174-176.207-208; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 8.3.11-12. Pernot (*Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 333) gives this summary statement: "Dans tous ces textes, la style épideictique est conçu à l'imitation du style isocratique et défini par la recherche littéraire ainsi que par l'emploi des figures gorgianiques et de la période."

<sup>14</sup> See for these figures Cicero, *Orator*, 174-176; Demetrius, *On Style*, 1.22-29; *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, 26-28. Further Burgess, "Epideictic Literature", 102; Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 371-380; Anderson, *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms*, Endnote, 127-128.

The handbooks point out stereotypical sources (topoi) where the rhetor can find material to honor or to blame a certain person.<sup>15</sup> At this point they always distinguish between external circumstances, physical attributes and personal qualities of character. Under external circumstances come descent (eujgevneia), education (paideiva), wealth (plou'to"), kinds of power (dunavmei"), titles to fame (eujdoxiva, timhv), place of origin such as fatherland (patriv"), native city (povli"), people (e[qno"), citizenship (politeiva) and finally friendships (fivloi). To the physical attributes belong quickness (tavco"), strength (ijscuv"), beauty (kavlllo"), health (uJgiveia). Among the qualities of character the quartet wisdom (sofiva), justice (dikaiosuvnh), courage (ajndreiva) and temperance (swfrosuvnh) are regularly reckoned. This checklist often determines the sequence of an epideictic oration. Next to or in combination with such systematic approach often a chronological order is also chosen in which the actions during the different stages of life are followed.

In addition the topos of the proper name or surname deserves special mention.<sup>16</sup> By means of a quasi-etymological derivation a speaker may use somebody's name to praise or to criticize that person. Demosthenes, explained as 'the power of the people', is the standard example of this device.

#### d. Argumentation.

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<sup>15</sup> Examples of such lists of find-spots are found in Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 1.9; *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, 35; *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 3.6-8. A very ample discussion of the standard repertoire in Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 129-249.

<sup>16</sup> See for this topos Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 2.23.1400b.29; Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata*, 111; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.30-31; 6.3.55-56; Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 4.3. Also Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 233-235.

Each of the three rhetorical genres gives preference to a definite kind of argumentation. Aristotle already observes this.<sup>17</sup> The forensic plea employs in general the enthymeme. The political deliberation by preference adduces examples. The ceremonial oration mainly uses amplification. By this is understood enlarging (au[xhsi"; *amplificatio*) and reducing (tapeivnws"; *minutio*) certain elements in quantitative as well as in qualitative sense.<sup>18</sup> Two important forms of amplification deserve special notice.<sup>19</sup>

Amplification often consists in accumulating words, synonymous or not, sentences, comparisons. A specific form of such accumulation is the argumentative chain (ejpoikodovmhsi"; *kli'max*; *gradatio*). In this case the principal word of each clause is repeated in the next clause and the chain as a whole exhibits an ascending line.

Amplification is, next to this, often brought about by means of comparison (suvgkrisi"; *comparatio*). In such case the intended effect is reached by comparing the person concerned with someone who is taller, smaller or of the same height or else with someone who is the opposite of the one in view.

e. Types.

The paradoxical encomium (ejgkwvmion paravdoxon) is a traditional part of epideictic rhetoric. Such speech deals with a subject which apparently is bad and deserves censure, but in reality is good and worthy of praise. As examples an encomium on death and another one

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<sup>17</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 1.9.38-41.

<sup>18</sup> *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, 3; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 8.4. See also Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 675-680; Anderson, *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms*, s.v. au[xhsi", 26-29.

<sup>19</sup> See for this among others *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, 3. Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria*, 8.4.3.) distinguishes between four kinds of *amplificatio*: *incrementum*, *comparatio*, *ratiocinatio*, *congeries*.

on poverty are mentioned. Generally such speeches combine a playful character with a serious undertone. It is a popular type which is often put into practice.<sup>20</sup>

Rather late in the Classical rhetorical tradition, within the epideictic genre, four types are formally distinguished.<sup>21</sup> They are:

- Encomium on an acknowledged good, for instance a deity (ejgkwvmion e[vndoxon).
- Encomium on an acknowledged evil, such as the demons (ejgkwvmion a[doxon).
- Encomium on a person or matter which on the one side is praiseworthy and on the other side deserves blame (ejgkwvmion ajmfivdoxon).
- Encomium on a person or matter which is apparently bad or shameful, but in reality good and praiseworthy (ejgkwvmion paravdoxon).

From the fact that this division is only mentioned at a rather late date it does not automatically follow that it was unknown before this time. In my view, the late date at which it is mentioned need not be an objection on principle against the use of this division as a heuristic pattern in identifying earlier speeches of this genre.

## II. Four Types of Epideictic Rhetoric in First Corinthians 1-4

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<sup>20</sup> Rhetorical handbooks from Classical Antiquity give little or no attention to this type of speech. There is sufficient evidence, however, to be certain that such speeches were very popular during the entire Greco-Roman period. See Burgess, "Epideictic Literature", 157-166; Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 19-20.532-546. A late example is Erasmus, MWRIAS EGKWMION. The introduction to this paradoxical encomium on folly contains a pun on the name of Thomas More (Moria) to whom the work is dedicated and also an enumeration of a long series of paradoxical encomia from Classical Antiquity.

<sup>21</sup> Menander Rhetor I.346.9-25. See the discussion of this passage in Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 536-541. Pernot (104) dates this work in the second half of the third century C.E., but keeps the possibility open that this division is of an earlier date and goes back to one of the predecessors of this author (538).

We now focus our attention on the four general reflections which Paul elaborates in 1 Cor. 1-4. We shall analyse these, one by one, with the help of the model of the epideictic genre as set out above. The aim of this analysis is to find a clear answer to the question as to whether these passages may be reckoned to epideictic rhetoric and if so, in what sense. In this analysis I shall stick closely to the prearranged checklist of the characteristics of this genre. In order not to lose sight of the line of thought completely I shall add, each time as last part, a remark on the function which the passage under discussion fulfils within the argument of 1 Cor. 1-4 as a whole.<sup>22</sup>

#### A. First Corinthians 1:18-31

##### a. Subject, objective.

In this passage a number of persons are evaluated.

In vv. 20-25 the crucified Christ is paramount, more in particular the different estimations which are attached to him. The seekers after signs and wisdom revile him as a scandal and a folly. Those who are called praise him as God's power and God's wisdom.

In vv. 26-29 the valuation of two groups of people is at stake. People without status are chosen by God. People possessing status are shamed (*kataiscuvnw*) by Him. Human beings cannot boast in themselves (*kaucavomai*) before God.

In the framing verses 18-19 and 30-31 it is made clear that in the end the wise are nowhere, their status is nullified, they have nothing to boast of. The foolish believers without status are in Christ Jesus, who is their wisdom and redemption, they boast in the Lord.

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<sup>22</sup> In my previous article "What is Apollos ? What is Paul" I give a thorough justification of my view of Paul's argumentation in 1 Cor. 1-4. In the description of the function of each passage, added as last part of the analysis, I summarize the principal conclusions of this article.

b. Style.

This passage contains a profusion of Gorgian figures of style. It almost completely consists of parallelisms, in which antitheses are dominant. The most prominent of these are vv. 18.22-24.25.27-28. Anaphora very often occurs; pou' (v. 20) and ouj polloiv (v. 26) are most conspicuous. Paronomasia can also be observed regularly; see among others sofiva in vv. 20-21. In the two quotations from Scripture this figure is further enhanced by alliteration, respectively by means of the letter sigma (s) in v. 19 and of kappa (k) in v. 31. With respect to this figure also the formula ta; mh; o[nta, i{vna ta; o[vnta (v. 28) is worth mentioning.

c. Repertoire.

The qualifications of scandal and folly versus power and wisdom, which are attributed to the crucified Christ, belong to the standard repertoire of epideictic rhetoric. This holds even more clearly for the qualification of the Corinthians as not wise, but foolish; not influential, but weak; not of noble birth, but of lowly and despised origin.

Moreover in vv. 18-19 by using the verb ajpovllumi twice, Paul makes an allusion to the name of Apollos. By means of a quasi-etymological connection he suggests that the followers of Apollos will perish.<sup>23</sup>

d. Argumentation.

Although some logical connectives occur<sup>24</sup>, reasoning does not figure prominently in this passage. Paul primarily proclaims what God has done.

- God makes the wise get lost (vv. 18-19).

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<sup>23</sup> For a justification of this pun on the name of Apollos see Smit, "What is Apollos ? What is Paul ?",

<sup>24</sup> These logical connectives are: gavv, ejpeidhv, o{ti, o{pw".

- God has made the wisdom of the world foolishness (v. 20).
- God has saved the believers by the folly of preaching (v. 21), which is the crucified Christ (vv. 22-25).
- God has chosen people without status to shame people with status (vv. 26-29).
- God has brought the believers in Christ Jesus (vv. 30-31).

These proclamations of God's acts are amplified one by one, in quantitative as well as in qualitative respect:

- Getting lost is elaborated by means of an authoritative quotation of Scripture (vv. 18-19).
- That God makes the wisdom of the world foolishness forms the culmination of a series of rhetorical questions, which are arranged in increasing length (v. 20).
- God's decision to save the believers is enlarged by placing it within his all-embracing wisdom (v. 21).
- The proclamation of the crucified Christ as God's power and God's wisdom forms the culmination of an extended preparatory period (vv. 22-24) and subsequently is once again underlined by the oxymoron of verse 25.
- God's election of people without status is impressively amplified. The three brief qualifications of verse 26 (anaphora, asyndeton, ellipsis) are amply elaborated in vv. 27-29 (anaphora, polysyndeton, redundant repetition). Also in this case the period forms a climax and ends in an oxymoron (v. 28).
- God's salvation in Jesus Christ is enlarged successively by means of a relative sentence, a threefold polysyndetic enumeration and an authoritative quotation of Scripture (vv. 30-31).

The predominant argument in this passage is the paradox. Notably in vv. 20-25 and 26-29 this figure occurs in almost every clause.

e. Type.

This passage shows all the characteristics of epideictic rhetoric. It also clearly belongs to a definite type of this genre. Paul plays a paradoxical game with appearance and reality. The crucified Christ, apparently the culmination-point of shame and folly, he praises as in reality God's power and God's wisdom. This turns all normal relations of social status upside down. Those who think to be wise, are in reality foolish before God. Those who are without power, not of noble birth and despised, are in fact chosen by God in Christ Jesus. This evidently is a paradoxical encomium (epideictic paradoxon).

f. Function.

In 1 Cor. 2:1-5 Paul brings up for discussion his former visit to Corinth. He admits in an exaggerated manner that at the time, his appearance, according to the generally received rhetorical norms, was far below the standard. The superior logic and the self-assurance of the successful rhetor were totally missing.<sup>25</sup> In the paradoxical encomium, however, he demonstrates that before God wholly different standards apply. For God chooses the folly of preaching and the things that are despised in the world. Paul's previous appearance did fully comply with these most high, divine norms. So the criticism, which the Corinthians level against this appearance as inferior in rhetorical respect, is null and void.

B. First Corinthians 2: 6-16

a. Subject, objective.

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<sup>25</sup> Compared to the picture of the rhetor as sketched by Quintilian in *Institutio oratoria* 12.5 Paul depicts himself as an anti-rhetor. This is rightly observed by L. Hartman, "Some Remarks on 1 Cor. 2:1-5", *SEÅ* 39 (1974) 109-120, esp. 117-118.

The subject of this entire passage are 'we', that is to say the preachers Paul and Apollos. The intention clearly is to place these 'we' upon a high pedestal. They speak God's hidden wisdom (vv. 6-9). To them God has revealed this wisdom by the Spirit (vv. 10-12). They are pneumatics who have the mind of Christ (vv. 13-16). 'We' are presented as speakers, whom God in person has inspired and to whom He has revealed his deepest secrets.

b. Style.

This passage consists of lengthy periods. These are marked by numerous, often redundant, repetitions of words in literal or varied form (paronomasiva) and also by further explanatory appositions. These devices lend a lofty, solemn character to this passage. An enumeration of the main repetitions and appositions demonstrates this.

vv. 6-9

Repetitions: sofivan, lalou'men; tou' aijw'no" touvtou, tw'n ajrcovntwn tou' aijw'no" touvtou; e[gnwken, e[gnwsan; ouj, oujdeiv"...ajllav; a{, oujk.

Appositions: oujde; tw'n ajrcovntwn tou' aijw'no" touvtou; tw'n katargoumevnwn; ejn musthrivw/, th;n ajpokekrummevnhn; h}n prowvrisen...h}n oujdei;" tw'n ajrcovntwn...

vv. 10-12

Repetitions: pneu'ma (6x); tou' qeou' (5x), ta; tou' qeou', to; ejk tou' qeou', ta; uJpo; tou' qeou'; ajnqrwvwpwn, tou' ajnqrwvpou; ej mh; to; pneu'ma.

Appositions: kai; ta; bavqh tou' qeou'; to; ejn aujtw'/.

vv. 13-16

Repetitions: a{ (cp. v. 9); lalou'men (cp. vv. 6.7); ejn didaktoi"; pneumatikov" (4x); sugkrivnw, ajnakrivnw; tiv" gavr (cp. v. 11); nou'n kurivou, nou'n cristou'; gnw'nai, e[gnw (cp. v. 8).

Appositions: pneumatikoi" pneumatika; sugkrivnonte"; kai; ouj duvnatai gnw'nai.

c. Repertoire.

The theme of ‘divine inspiration’ is typical of epideictic rhetoric. It belongs to this genre that speakers plead to be inspired by a deity regarding the form as well as the content of their oration.<sup>26</sup>

d. Argumentation.

This passage rests on three statements which are amplified at length. This elaboration is effected by further explaining some key-notions by means of distinctions. Most of these are clearly recognized by the construction *ouj...ajllav* (vv. 6-7.8-9.12.13).

In vv. 6-9 the statement: “Wisdom we do speak among adults”, is elaborated by distinguishing twice between the wisdom of this aeon and the wisdom of God (vv. 6-7.8-9).

In vv. 10-12 the statement: “To us God has revealed (his hidden wisdom) by the Spirit”, is elaborated by enlarging on the Spirit. First, the Spirit of God and the human spirit are distinguished from and compared to one another. Next, it is remarked that this Spirit is not the spirit of the cosmos, but the Spirit of God.

In vv. 13-16 the statement: “This (wisdom given by God) we do speak”, is further explained.

First, distinction is made between speaking with human learning and speaking with the learning of the Spirit. Next follows the distinction between a psychic person who has no understanding of spiritual things and a pneumatic person who has such understanding and who judges everything in a spiritual manner.

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<sup>26</sup> This theme is amply discussed by Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 625-635. His conclusion reads:

“L’inspiration divine est donc, en rhétorique, un trait spécifique à l’éloquence épideictique de l’époque impériale, à laquelle elle confère une dignité particulière. L’éloge a des liens privilégiés avec le sacré. Déjà revêtue d’une autorité sociale et politique, la parole épideictique acquiert désormais une autorité pneumatique.” (635)

In the three parts of this passage a similar dissociation is brought about.<sup>27</sup> Two levels are sharply distinguished from each other: the level of God's wisdom which is open to God's Spirit and the level of the wisdom of this aeon which is open to the human spirit. 'We', Paul and Apollos, are here lifted up from the level of human wisdom and understanding to that of divine wisdom and spiritual understanding.

e. Type.

The analysis of this passage clearly shows that it belongs to epideictic rhetoric and also that it represents a definite type of this genre. This passage deals with a subject which deserves the highest honor, namely the eternal, hidden wisdom of God. This glory reflects on 'us', Paul and Apollos, to whom God has revealed his deepest secrets by his Spirit and who, taught by this Spirit, speak about this in a spiritual manner. This is an exalted, honorable encomium (εἰς τὴν δόξαν).

f. Function.

After Paul has emphatically stated that he, just as Apollos, has been enabled to speak superior divine wisdom, in 1 Cor. 3:1-4 he brings up for discussion his previous appearance in Corinth again. It is not his fault that this was a poor performance. For he was quite capable of teaching them divine wisdom. The Corinthians themselves are to blame. As neophytes, as infants in Christ, they were not up to digest such spiritual teaching intended for mature believers only.

C. First Corinthians 3:5-23

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<sup>27</sup> For this notion of dissociation see C. Perelman – L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *Traité de l'Argumentation. La Nouvelle Rhétorique* (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, <sup>5</sup>1988) Chapitre IV: La Dissociation des Notions, 550-609.

a. Subject, objective.

This passage deals with the relations of Paul, Apollos and the Corinthians to one another and to God. Its intention is to determine the correct order between them on the basis of the status each of them is credited with.

In 3:5-8 the status of Paul and Apollos in relation to God is discussed. In comparison with God they both mean nothing.

In 3:10-15 the merits of Paul and Apollos are weighed against each other. For the time being Paul ranks higher than Apollos, although the final result of their work still has to be seen.

In 3:18-20 the status of the Corinthians in relation to God is discussed. In God's sight the wise Corinthians do not count for much. Their thoughts are futile (*mavtaioi*).

In 3:21-23 as a result of the preceding discussion (w{ste) the mutual order is defined. Paul and Apollos are inferior to the Corinthians, but they in their turn are inferior again to Christ and God.

b. Style.

Typical of this passage are three metaphors, which are developed in an allegorical manner, namely agriculture, house building and the temple. Characteristic also is that in this passage, at all levels, a tripartite form is employed<sup>28</sup> which usually shows an ascending line. The following series confirms this.

- This section consists of an accumulation of three metaphors: agriculture, house building and the temple (3:5-17). Each of these is elaborated in a tripartite sequence.

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<sup>28</sup> In 1 Cor. 13 Paul uses a similar rhythm, see J. Smit, "The Genre of 1 Corinthians 13 in the Light of Classical Rhetoric", *NovT* 33 (1991) 193-216, esp. 204-205.

- Agriculture is elaborated in the triplet: to plant, to water and to make grow. This triplet itself is repeated three times (3:5-8).
- The next, connecting, verse consists of an accumulation of three metaphors: fellow workers, field, building. Anaphora and asyndeton enhance the impact of this accumulation (3:9).
- Building is elaborated in the triplet: laying of the foundation, building on it and testing of the result. This sequence is repeated twice (3:10.11-15). The building materials are also arranged in two series of three (3:12).
- The next connection consists of a threefold elaboration of the metaphor of the temple of God (3:16-17).
- The conclusion is a climax consisting of three steps: all things are yours, you are of Christ, Christ is of God. The elaboration of 'all' is a polysyndetic enumeration of three times three elements (3:21b-23).

c. Repertoire.

In 3:5-8 Paul, Apollos and God are evaluated on the basis of their achievements, respectively planting, watering and making grow.

In 3:10-15 Paul and Apollos are evaluated first on the basis of the nature of their work: laying the foundation and building on it. Next the result of their work, more in particular the permanence of it, functions as the criterion they are evaluated by.

In 3:18-20 the Corinthians are evaluated on the basis of their wisdom. Theirs is would-be wisdom, which in God's sight is folly and means nothing.

d. Argumentation.

Accumulation (ejpoikodovmhsi", kli'max, gradatio), one of the standard forms of amplification (au[xhsi"), plays an important part in this passage. In 3:21-23 this figure is applied exactly in the approved manner. The connections in v. 9 and 16-17 offer somewhat less strict executions of the same figure. Finally, the other tripartite forms, which have been identified in the paragraph on style, may also be considered as applications of this figure in a more loose manner.

Next to this, comparison (suvgkrisi"), the second standard form of amplification, also holds an important place in this passage. In 3:5-8 two unimportant actors, Paul and Apollos, and an important one, God, are compared to each other within the same category of agriculture. In 3:10-15 comparison is made between two more or less equally important actors, Paul and Apollos, within the category of building.

e. Type.

The climax in vv. 21-23 forms the conclusion of this entire passage, in which the status of the different actors is defined. The result is a ranking, in which the Corinthians hold the middle position. On the one side they are superior to Paul and Apollos, but on the other side they are inferior to Christ and God.

Besides, Paul himself also holds a middle position. Compared to God he is on one line with Apollos and means nothing. In the mutual comparison with his colleague he, who has planted and laid the foundation, clearly ranks above Apollos, who has only watered the plants and built on the foundation which was already there.

In the end the Corinthians are credited with an ambivalent position. Their position is higher and more honorable than the one of Paul and Apollos, but lower and less honorable than the one of Christ and God. So this is an ambivalent encomium (ejgkwvmion ajmfivdoxon).

f. Function.

The appearance of Apollos, who arrived in the city after Paul, has led the Corinthians to estimate Paul's preceding appearance as inferior in quality. The ranking, set up in 3:5-23, is intended to correct this view. On the basis of this order, Paul denies the Corinthians the right to judge him. The Corinthians, themselves inferior to Christ and God, have no right whatsoever to pronounce judgement on Paul and Apollos, who are in the service of Christ and God. By right this judgement only belongs to Christ and God at the time appointed by them (4:1-5).

D. First Corinthians 4:6-13

a. Subject, objective.

This passage deals with the relation of 'you', the Corinthians, to 'us', the apostles. The intention clearly is to ridicule the swollen pride (v. 6) and the overestimation of themselves (v. 7), which the Corinthians display in their estimation of the apostles from whom they have received everything. Paul's remark that he does not write this to shame the Corinthians (v. 14) betrays that his words may be taken in that sense and suggests that such intention does play a part.

b. Style.

This passage is marked by a high degree of Gorgian figures of style. A brief inventory of the most conspicuous ones demonstrates this.

- v. 7: parallelism with anaphora; accumulation (climax) of three rhetorical questions.
- v. 8: parallelism with anaphora; paronomasia (basileuvw); accumulation (climax); hyperbole.

- v. 9: homoiototon (-ou"; -oi"); hyperbole; merism.
- v. 10: threefold parallelism with anaphora and ellipsis of the verb; each of the three parts forms an antithesis; homoiototon (-oi).
- vv. 11-12a: polysyndetic enumeration of six verbs in the first person plural; paronomasia (a[cri th" a[rti).
- vv. 12b-13a: threefold, asyndetic parallelism; each part consists of a participle and a verb in the first person plural, which form an antithesis; homoiototon (-menoi; -oumen).
- v. 13b: paronomasia (perikaqavmata; perivyhma); alliteration (p); hyperbole.

c. Repertoire.

The Corinthians and the apostles are estimated by criteria current in epideictic rhetoric:

- v. 7: The question as to whether fame has been gained on account of someone's own merit or not is a typically epideictic consideration.
- v. 8: Wealth and the highest most honorable social position, that of kingship.
- v. 9: The lowest and most dishonorable social position, that of criminals condemned to death.
- v. 10: The normal epideictic qualifications of foolish and wise; weak and strong; honored and dishonored.
- vv. 11-13: Estimation on account of achievements: six activities which typify the apostles as an infamous and poor lot. Then three humiliating qualifications follow: cursed, persecuted, slandered. This series ends with the lowest point of shame, that of being estimated by everybody as scum and refuse.

d. Argumentation

The dominant form of argumentation in this passage is the comparison (suvgkrisi") between 'you', the Corinthians, and 'we', the apostles who are their opposite. In the introduction and elaboration of this comparison accumulation (ejpoikodovmhsi") also plays a part.

- v. 7: An accumulation by way of introduction.
- v. 8: Beginning of the comparison: you, rich and honored. An accumulation.
- v. 9: We, in opposition to you, without honor and despised. A kind of accumulation.
- v. 10: You, praiseworthy, against we, despicable.
- vv. 11-13: We, in opposition to you<sup>29</sup>, poor and despised. A kind of accumulation.

Besides, in this passage irony is also used as an argument. The rhetorical questions in v. 7 are revealing and intimate that the Corinthians have no reason whatsoever to boast in relation to the apostles. Therefore, the exaggerated, glorious position with which they are credited thereupon in v. 8, should be understood as ironic. The following correction in the sense of "I wish it would be true", excludes all doubt at this point. This apparently also holds for the very outstanding qualifications the Corinthians are credited with in v. 10.

e. Type.

This passage shows all the characteristics of epideictic rhetoric. More in particular it is an encomium on the apostles especially to the extent in which they are deprived of all honor, a dishonorable encomium (ejgkwvmion a[doxon) therefore. The purpose of this is to shame the Corinthians who presume to give a depreciatory opinion on the apostles and to have them adopt a less high tone.

f. Function.

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<sup>29</sup> Notice the contrast between 'already' (h[dh), which occurs twice in v. 8, and 'up until now'

(a[cri/e{w" a[rti) occurring twice in vv. 11.13.

In the dishonorable encomium Paul brings forward that the apostles, because of all the hardships they endure, have a right to the respect of the Corinthians who owe them everything. In vv. 14-21 he applies this general admonition destined for the Corinthians to his own person as an apostle. He again acts in particular against their depreciatory estimation of his first and up until this moment only visit to them. As an apostle who has begotten them by his preaching, he is entitled to their respect, just as a father should be respected by his children. Their depreciation of him is impertinent. They are like children who feel superior to their father. They should be ashamed.

#### E. Conclusion

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that the four passages from 1 Cor. 1-4 which have been studied belong to epideictic rhetoric and represent more in particular four types of this genre: the paradoxical encomium (epideictic paradoxon: 1 Cor. 1:18-31), the honorable encomium (epideictic epanoche: 1 Cor. 2:6-16), the ambivalent encomium (epideictic amphoterion: 1 Cor. 3:5-23) and the dishonorable encomium (epideictic anepithetikon: 1 Cor. 4:6-13). This cannot be mere coincidence. Therefore the conclusion is justified that Paul by means of this passage gives a deliberate proof of his rhetorical ability. This forms part of a rather complex persuasive strategy.

Paul has founded the community in Corinth, but Apollos, who appeared in the city at a later date, apparently has taken the prize. His impressive teaching has led the believers in Corinth to a depreciation of Paul's former preaching. Paul fights this depreciation by following three lines.

In 1 Cor. 1:10-4:21 Paul builds up an argumentation to justify his rather unimpressive performance. To that end, from the four encomia, evaluations of a more general character, he

draws four specific conclusions regarding his former preaching at Corinth: this is in accordance with the highest, divine norms (2:1-5); this has been consciously adapted to the starting-position of the Corinthians (3:1-4); the Corinthians do not have the right to judge Paul, because he is in the service of God (4:1-5); as founder of the community Paul is entitled to the respect of the Corinthians (4:14-21).

In the first two sections of his argument (1:17-2:5; 2:6-3:4) Paul focuses his attention primarily on the content of his preaching. In accordance with God's intention he desists from argumentative, rational wisdom, at least for beginners.<sup>30</sup> He is quite capable, however, to instruct more advanced believers in the higher, spiritual wisdom revealed by God.

Next to this, by means of the four encomia, Paul gives a brilliant proof of his rhetorical ability. He apparently intends to show that he has full command of the rules of the art. In the next part of this article we shall see that this forms the special point for attention of the last two sections of his discourse (3:5-4:5; 4:6-21).

### III. Rhetorical Metalanguage in First Corinthians 3:5-4:21

In 1 Cor. 3:5-4:21 a number of terms occur, which catch the eye because they are used in a somewhat unusual manner. Within Paul's discourse these terms have their normal, non-rhetorical meaning. At the same time they refer to technical terms of rhetoric, more in particular of epideictic eloquence. We now successively discuss these terms in order to bring this phenomenon to light and to ascertain the meaning of it.

#### a. *aujxavnw* (3:6.7)

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<sup>30</sup> For this interpretation of *oujk ejn sofiva/ lovgou* (1 Cor. 1:17) see Smit, "What is Apollos ? What is Paul ?",

In the active form the verb *aujxavnw* has a transitive meaning: to increase, to make grow (2 Cor. 9:10). In the passive form it has an intransitive meaning: to grow, to increase (2 Cor. 10:15); later this also holds for the active form (Luke 12:27; 13:19). The use of the active form of the verb without object in the sense of: to make grow, to give growth, like here in 1 Cor. 3:6.7, is very uncommon within the New Testament as well as outside of it.<sup>31</sup>

In the overview of the principal characteristics of epideictic rhetoric we already noticed that ‘enlargement, augmentation’ (*au[xhsi*) is the technique which is applied pre-eminently in this branch of rhetoric. The two main devices for amplification turned out to be accumulation (*ejpoikodovmhsi*) and comparison (*suvgkrisi*).<sup>32</sup> The preceding analyses of 1 Cor. 3:5-23 and 4:6-13 have shown that in these sections of Paul’s discourse the application of these two stylistic figures is woof and warp.

b. *ejpoikodomevw* (3:10.12.14)

The verb *ejpoikodomevw* means ‘to build on, to build up’ and as such occurs a number of times in the New Testament (1 Cor. 3:10 [2x].12.14; Eph. 2:20; Col. 2:7; Jud. 20). Here Paul uses it in opposition to ‘the laying of the foundation’.

In rhetorical jargon ‘accumulation’ (*ejpoikodovmhsi*) is the technical term for a figure of style in which statements are forged together by the repetition of key-words and form a kind of chain, more often even a climax with an ascending line.<sup>33</sup> In this case it is remarkable that such an accumulation immediately precedes the use of the verb

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<sup>31</sup> See W. Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur* (ed. K. Aland and B. Aland; Berlin-New York: W. de Gruyter, 1988) s.v. *aujxavnw*.

<sup>32</sup> See footnotes 17-19.

ejpoikodomevw: “we are God’s fellow workers, you are God’s field, God’s building.” (v. 9)<sup>34</sup>

Other clear instances of this device are found in 1 Cor. 3:16-17.21-23; 4:7.8.11-13. The analyses of 1 Cor. 3:5-23 and 4:6-13 have shown that in these sections Paul continuously applies this device of accumulation, be it in a less strict form.

c. Six materials (3:12)

The materials, which are enumerated in an asyndetical series, form a strange collection. Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw are not regularly used to erect an edifice.

Considering the test of fire to which the building is henceforth subjected (vv. 13-15) it is plausible that these six materials have been selected in view of combustibility. Also in this case the choice of, more in particular the first three materials remains strange. As to resistance against fire, gold, silver and precious stones are not the most obvious candidates.<sup>35</sup>

Within epideictic rhetoric much attention is given to an ornate style. At this point Gorgian figures play an important part. Gold, silver and precious stones may quite well refer to such brilliant stylistic devices, which are known as ‘ornamentation’ (kovsmo", *ornatus*).<sup>36</sup> As to the other three materials a similar case can be made. Wood, hay and straw have in common that they are dry. Because of this quality they are not only inflammable, but also

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<sup>33</sup> *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, 3.1426b.3; *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 4.25.34; Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 39.3; Demetrius, *On Style*, 5.270; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 9.3.54-57. See Anderson, *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms*, 57-58.

<sup>34</sup> J. Weiß (*Der erste Korintherbrief* [MeyerK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910, 2. Neudr. 1977] 78) calls the transition of v. 9 abrupt, meant to attract attention. .

<sup>35</sup> On this question of the building materials see the overview of G.D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 140-141; W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther I (1 Kor 1,1-6,11)* (EKKNT 7.1; Zürich: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991) 298-300.

<sup>36</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 3.7.2; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 8.3.1; 8.3.11-12.

refer to the plain style without ornamentation, which is known as ‘dry’ (xhrov", *aridus*).<sup>37</sup> The preceding analyses have shown that in the epideictic passages of 1 Cor. 1-4 Paul no less than four times chooses a different style, each with a high degree of ornamentation (kovsmo", *ornatus*).

d. e[paino" (4:5)

The manner in which Paul uses the word ‘praise’ (e[paino") here is as normal as can be, as can be seen for instance from Rom. 2:29. What does catch the eye is that in the preceding passage Paul has stated twice that each worker will receive ‘wages’ (misqov") from God (3:8.14). Therefore the question seems justified as to why he prefers ‘praise’ and not simply repeats ‘wages’ here.

In rhetorical jargon it is usual that ejgkwvmion refers more specifically to an encomium and that e[paino" has a less technical, more general meaning. Several theoreticians use both terms in the same technical sense of encomium.<sup>38</sup> Therefore it cannot be excluded that by using e[paino" Paul also refers to the genre of the epideictic encomium, which he applies four times in 1 Cor. 1-4.

e. metaschmativzw (4:6)

The verb metaschmativzw occurs several times in the letters of Paul. In the active form it has the meaning of ‘to change the form of a person or a thing’; in this case it is followed by an object (Phil. 3:21). In the middle it means ‘to change one’s form, to disguise oneself’; in this case the new form taken is usually indicated with eij" (2 Cor. 11:13.14.15). These instances do not present problems as to meaning. The case in question (1 Cor. 4:6), in which the active

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<sup>37</sup> Demetrius, *On Style*, 4.236-239; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 8.Pro.17.

<sup>38</sup> An ample discussion of both terms is given by Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 118-127.

form of the verb is combined with an object as well as with *eij*", is the more problematic for it.<sup>39</sup>

The entire verse 6 seems to refer to the preceding passage (3:4-4:5). Just as *tau'ta* in v. 14 obviously relates back to vv. 6-13, in the same manner *tau'ta* in v. 6 apparently refers back to 3:5-4:5. This also holds for the mention of 'myself and Apollos', because of the use of both these names in 3:4-6.22. "Being puffed up each on behalf of one and against another" also points in the same direction. The correspondence with the slogans of "the one who says: I am of Paul, and the other: I am of Apollos" in 3:4-5 is obvious. It is plausible, therefore, to relate the expression: "I have changed the form of" (*meteschmavtivsa*) also to the preceding passage (3:4-4:5). Characteristic of this passage is the use of metaphors, by which Paul and Apollos appear several times in another form: as planter and the one who gives water; as architect, founder and builder; as servants and administrators. In verse 6 Paul therefore seems to be saying: "These (metaphors) I have transferred to and, in this manner, changed the form of myself and Apollos." This leaves open the question as to why Paul prefers the less appropriate *metaschmativzw* to *metafevrw* (*methvnegka* *eij*) which expresses exactly what he presumably intends to say.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See B. Fiore, "Covert Allusion" in 1 Corinthians 1-4", *CBQ* 47 (1985) 85-102; J.T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel. An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* (SBL DS 99; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 119-122; D.R. Hall, "A Disguise for the Wise. METASCHMATISMOS in 1 Corinthians 4.6", *NTS* 40 (1994) 143-149; J.S. Vos, "Der METASCHMATISMOS in 1 Kor. 4,6", *ZNW* 86 (1995) 154-172; R.D. Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 18; Kampen: Kok, 1996) 222-225.

<sup>40</sup> I owe this suggestion to Vos, "Der METASCHMATISMOS in 1 Kor. 4,6", 172.

A well-known form of epideictic rhetoric is the so-called *eischmatismevno* "lovgo", the covert allusion.<sup>41</sup> In this form of speech stylistic devices are used to hide or to cover up what one really has to say. It is a technique to wrap up and to mitigate criticism, especially when this criticism is leveled at authorities with much prestige and power. Experts strongly suspect that by using *metaschmativzw* Paul also intends to refer to *lovgo* "eischmatismevno". In the preceding section Paul actually does make covert allusions, especially in 3:10-15. There, in comparison with himself, he degrades Apollos, but without mentioning his name. For the informed readers it is not difficult to guess to whom vague and general indications such as "someone else, anyone, each" (*a[l]lo*", *ti*", *e{kasto}*") refer. Criticism of Apollos, who is highly respected in Corinth, has to be covered up in general terms by way of precaution.<sup>42</sup> So, by the uncommon use of *metaschmativzw* in 4:6 Paul does seem to refer to the technique of *lovgo* "eischmatismevno" which he applies here.<sup>43</sup>

Paul's reference to *lovgo* "eischmatismevno" has an ironic sound. For hereby he suggests that the Corinthians are persons of high standing and great authority, who do not

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<sup>41</sup> See especially Demetrius, *On Style*, 5.287-298. Further W.C. Wright, *Philostratus and Eunapius. The Lives of the Sophists* (LCL 134; London: W. Heinemann; Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968) 570; D.M. Schenkeveld, *Studies in Demetrius on Style* (Amsterdam: A. Hakkert, 1964) 116-134; Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 717.722-723; Anderson, *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms*, 58-59.

<sup>42</sup> So, to my mind, in this case the general formulation covers up the more particular purport. Most experts, on the contrary, are convinced that the example of Paul and Apollos covers up a more general message, destined for a number of schismatics who are not called by their names. In this sense Fiore, "Covert Allusion" in 1 Cor 1-4", 95-96; Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 199-121. It is my considered opinion, that the real discussion is all the time about the relationship between Paul and Apollos.

<sup>43</sup> Paul does give a hint, but no more than that. He does not in so many words reveal that he uses the device of covert allusion. Contra Fiore, "Covert Allusion" in 1 Cor 1-4", 95-96; Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 199-121.

tolerate direct criticism. The ironic remark: “without us you have already become kings” (v. 8) entirely fits in with this.<sup>44</sup>

f. *basileuvw* (4:8)

Paul disqualifies the Corinthians by means of three ironic exaggerations: “Already you have reached satiety, already you have become rich, without us you have reached the status of kings.” (4:8) It does not seem mere coincidence that he chooses here the position of the king (*basileuv*) as an example of high status.

In epideictic rhetoric the encomium on the king (*basiliko;* *lovgo*) plays a central part. This type of speech is the standard, the pre-eminent representative of the epideictic genre.<sup>45</sup> In this light it is plausible that Paul by mentioning the status of *basileuv* makes an allusion to the *basiliko;* *lovgo* here. In this manner he again refers to the epideictic genre, this time to the principal representative of it.

g. *qevatron* (4:9)

The word *qevatron* usually means the place where the spectators gather to see the spectacle (cp. Acts 19:29.31). Here it has the sense of *qevama*: spectacle. In this derived meaning *qevatron* is seldom used.<sup>46</sup>

The theater is the place where epideictic rhetoric belongs. The audience listening to an encomium, fulfils the role of a spectator (*qewrov*) who judges the show of the rhetor by his

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<sup>44</sup> With Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 120.

<sup>45</sup> Menander Rhetor, II.368-377. See also Burgess, “Epideictic Literature”, 127-138; Pernot, *Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 77-78.

<sup>46</sup> H. Liddell-R. Scott-H. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) s.v. *qevatron*; Bauer, *Wörterbuch*, s.v. *qevatron*.

competence.<sup>47</sup> By means of the word theater Paul refers to the proof of ability which in 1 Cor. 1-4 he gives to the Corinthians as a speaker. In four different types of epideictic rhetoric he demonstrates his mastery.

h. The series as a coherent whole.

Taken separately, with each of the discussed terms doubt is possible as to whether it actually has a technical connotation and does refer to the theory of rhetoric. In no single case the indications are unmistakable. The series as listed above draws its force from the fact that the terms form a coherent whole. Together they represent a characteristic description of epideictic rhetoric. This implies that by means of connotations Paul points out to the informed readers the rhetorical genre which he is following. At the same time he even calls by their technical names the devices which he actually applies. In this way to those Corinthians who are familiar with the metalanguage of rhetorical theory Paul gives to understand that he is a competent speaker in theory as well as in practice. By this feat he proves his mastery of the art.

#### IV Conclusions

This rhetorical analysis of 1 Cor. 1-4 leads to the following conclusions.

1/ In 1 Cor. 1-4 Paul develops a coherent argument in which he justifies his poor performance at Corinth. Four evaluations of a more general character result in four specific

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<sup>47</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 1.3.1-3. Pernot (*Rhétorique de l'Éloge*, 440) remarks: "Le théâtre étant par excellence le lieu de la parole publique, le mot *theatron* désigne par extension toute salle de conférence, l'*epideixis* et le public lui-même."

conclusions in which he contests and refutes the depreciatory estimation in which some Corinthians hold his first appearance among them.<sup>48</sup>

2/ The four more general evaluations belong to epideictic rhetoric and represent four different types of this genre: the paradoxical encomium (ejgkwvmion paravdoxon; 1 Cor. 1:18-31), the honorable encomium (ejgkwvmion e[ndoxon; 1 Cor. 2:6-16), the ambivalent encomium (ejgkwvmion ajmfivdoxon; 1 Cor. 3:5-23) and the dishonorable encomium (ejgkwvmion a[doxon; 1 Cor. 4:6-13).

3/ In the first two sections Paul primarily elucidates the content of his preaching. As to the fundamental preaching for beginners he deliberately renounces the use of the superior rationality of human wisdom (1:17-2:5). By the Spirit, however, God did reveal his secret wisdom to him and Paul is certainly able to teach the more advanced believers this wisdom (2:6-3:4).

4/ In the last two sections Paul comments more in particular on the form of his discourse and consequently on his ability as a speaker. In this passage (3:5-4:21) he executes a special feat. By using ambivalent terms reminiscent of rhetorical theory he points out to informed readers the epideictic genre which he follows and the devices belonging to this genre which he applies.

5/ Apollos, who appeared in Corinth after Paul, apparently has made a deep impression on the local believers as a speaker. For this reason their appreciation of Paul has sharply declined. In 1 Cor. 1:10-4:21 not only the argumentation, but definitely also the literary form is fully directed towards the restoration of this damage to Paul's image. He fervently demonstrates his command of the art of rhetoric in theory as well as in practice. In this section of his letter Paul deliberately presses epideictic rhetoric into the service of his ethos.

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<sup>48</sup> This conclusion I extensively argued in Smit, "What is Apollos ? What is Paul ?".

6/ If these conclusions are correct, the opinion that in 1 Cor. 1-4 Paul rejects on principle the use of rhetorical devices in Christian preaching is positively incorrect.<sup>49</sup> Rather the opposite is true. Paul gives a demonstration of his rhetorical ability and presents himself as a competent speaker to restore thereby his status and authority. This apparently is necessary in view of the acceptance of the instructions which he will issue in the subsequent parts of his extended letter. The fact that Paul recognizes this necessity and the way he reacts to it again give witness to his rhetorical competence.

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<sup>49</sup> Litfin (*St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation, 256-257*) states the following terms for recognizing the presence of Greco-Roman rhetoric in Paul's preaching: "Hence, to discover in Paul general features of communication which were discussed by the rhetoricians (e.g. the use of metaphor, rhetorical questions, antitheses, etc.) is by no means an automatic indication that the Apostle had embraced Greco-Roman rhetoric as such. To discern with any certainty an indebtedness to Greco-Roman rhetoric in Paul's preaching we would have to discover there what E. Norden called 'striking examples' of the more specific and stylized conventions which were characteristic of the trained orators of the day, such as Dio Chrysostom." I this article I hope to have met these terms.