

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

### PAUL'S APPARENT REVERSAL OF CONCERN FOR THE WEAK BROTHER IN 1 CORINTHIANS 10:29B-30: AN EXAMINATION OF THE TEXT IN LIGHT OF GRECO-ROMAN RHETORIC

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#### *Problem*

In 1 Cor 8:1–10:29a, Paul is consistently on the side of the brother with a weak conscience in regard to eating food offered to idols (8:11). However, he seems to reverse himself in 10:29b-30, suggesting that one should be able to eat anything regardless of its provenance or the effect such eating may have on others. What, then, should be made of the two questions asked in 10:29-30, which appear neither fitted to the *context* nor directly answered by what precedes and follows in the discussion of εἰδωλόθυστα in 8:1–11:1?

#### *Approach*

Scholars have employed various methodological interpretations in search of a contextual meaning of the two questions posed in 10:29b-30. However, these two questions have not been examined as a rhetorical argumentative device intended to resolve the problem of eating idol food discussed in 8:1–11:1. In order to understand the function of 10:29b-30 in Paul's argumentation, I have used the following method:

Following an introductory chapter, four broader issues where no consensus exists, and which impact the understanding of the questions posed in 10:29b-30, are discussed. For example, the view that Paul offered two different solutions to the question of eating food offered to idols, has led to a division of chapters 8 and 10 into two pericopes: 8:1-13 + 10:23-11:1, where it is argued that Paul allows the eating of idol food; and 10:1-22, where the same practice is denounced. Because Paul defends a position of *not* eating on account of the weak brother, this view is found inadequate upon a contextual examination of 10:29b-30.

Second, the examination of 10:29b-30 in the larger context of 8:1-10:22 (chap. 3) and the narrower context of 10:23–11:1 (chap. 4) suggests a unified, deliberative rhetorical argumentation that is characteristic of 1 Corinthians. Paul's deliberative style, which is similar to that of Greco-Roman rhetoric, reveals that the two questions in 10:29b-30 function in two ways: First, they are intended to *dissuade* the "strong" from setting a bad example for the "weak" by participation in idol feasts. Second, they help to *persuade* the strong to adopt Paul's own behavioral patterns rather than following their wrong use of knowledge (1 Cor 8), exercised in the name of authority or "rights" (1 Cor 9) and freedom (1 Cor 10). Thus, the two questions asked in the passage belong to one of three proofs (πίστεις) Paul uses to persuade the strong to consider the weak brother (vv. 29b-33) before his final appeal in 11:1.

#### *Conclusion*

My investigation of the function of the two rhetorical questions asked in 1 Cor 10:29b-30 reveals some of the problems in the interpretation of 1 Corinthians in general and in 8:1–11:1

in particular. However, Paul's use of the deliberative rhetorical device provides insights for resolving the problems in regard to the passage's meaning, helping to account for 10:29b-30 as Paul's means of disarming the strong in their wrong use of freedom and his reason for choosing not to eat idol food because of his concerns for the weak brother.