

Paul's Use of Maxims:

a working paper by
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“I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description [pornography]; and perhaps I could never succeed intelligibly in doing so. But I know it when I see it...”

Mr. Justice Potter Stewart, concurring opinion, Supreme Court decision, *Jacobellis v. Ohio*. October term, 1963.

“The definition of a proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking...”

Archer Taylor, *The Proverb*, page 3.

General Introduction

The genesis of this paper can be traced to two circumstances in the life of its author. The earlier occurred in the early 1970's during discussions concerning the work of the Seminar on Paul of the Society of Biblical Literature. Nils Dahl, chair of the Seminar remarked that work needed to be done on gnomic sayings in Paul.¹ I allowed as how that was something I could be interested in doing, and then promptly trailed off into other things. The later took place over time as I read the work of Hock, O'Neill, Mack, and Robbins on chreia elaboration.

In particular my review of Mack and Robbins' work in *Patterns of Persuasion*² suggested to me that Paul might have used elaboration patterns as part of his argumentative strategy and the way to discover that was to look at his use of maxims. I was struck by their contention that in Hellenistic rhetoric there had occurred a domestication of chreia tradition as represented in the Cynic tradition and that the same kind of domestication could be demonstrated in the tradition of the sayings of Jesus, caused in part by emerging Christian paideia. Looking at Pauline traditions with that contention in mind, I became convinced of two things. In the first place the basis Paul created for mimesis was not the Jesus tradition or even mainly in Hellenistic *Umwelt*, but was to be found in salvation history and the experience of the churches and apostles. That is important because it implies that models, and particularly models of character and wisdom, were being defined in response to the exigence of the experience of the mission and message of the early church.

1 Betz makes the same general observation in the Galatians commentary.

2 The published review appeared in *Rhetorica*, IX/2 (Spring, 1991): 179–85

That leads to the second, namely, that while sources for commonplaces and wisdom sayings he used were found in the Greco-Roman world, these commonplaces and maxims are more importantly a product of an emerging paideia that models that world in light of the salvation historical experiences of both apostle and people. It appears that Paul felt free to make use of secular sayings, Jewish traditions, and Christian phenomena from which to draw figures to support his arguments. For me the relevance of this insight, however mundane it might appear, is to recognize the fact that Greco-Roman paideia did not offer the breadth of resource needed to make his arguments and that he therefore created a new paideia relevant to the task, based on the authority of his gospel. If we could describe the parameters and general contents of that paideia, we might gain insight into the processes of social formation of the Pauline churches.

However, before we can come anywhere close to that description, we must look at argumentative figures in Paul. And because the maxim is multi-functional in argumentation, it seems to be a good place to begin.

The Problem of Definition

The first problem one faces when trying to describe Paul's use of maxims is just what exactly is the reference of the term "maxim." What is the maxim? Richard Lanham lists six terms that are synonyms for maxim: proverb, paroemia, gnome, sententia, aphorism, and adage. [Lanham, 1969: 64] A survey of those adds "apothegm" to the list.

Lanham's definitions for these are virtually identical.

1. Maxim: A short pithy statement of a general truth.
2. Gnome: (ditto)
3. Apothegm: (ditto)
4. Sententia: (ditto)
5. Adage: (lists the synonyms)
6. Aphorism: (no definition, but includes a description of its use as an argumentative figure)
7. Proverb: (to the above definition adds, "... one that condenses into a memorable form a common statement.")
8. Paroemia: (includes reference to the synonyms plus a reference to that feature of this type that came to be called a "Wellerism," a kind of proverbial statement that is followed by an action that explains the statement; for

example, “I punish my son with good words, said the preacher, and threw the Bible at his head!”)

It is in his discussion of “Proverb” that Lanham illustrates the problem of definition. His statement bears citing at length.

Each of the [terms] above is often used as a synonym for one of more of the others. They may carry certain weights of authority to certain audiences (a *sententia* may be more weighty than an aphorism) but no firm distinctions have gained a real hold. A distinction between proverbs and adages as the wisdom of a group of [people], and apothegms, maxims and sentences, as the wisdom of one [person], has been advanced.... The resemblance of a proverb to a commonplace or topos is clear enough. The proverb is a commonplace at a further remove of generality.... The most difficult thing for a modern reader to remember is that the proverb...has been for most of formal rhetoric’s history a means of proof rather than a substantiating ornament.³

It is fairly widely acknowledged that maxims as wisdom sayings that have the potential to become proverbs. Carlston puts it this way, “Essentially, maxims are sententious sayings, usually in striking or memorable form, about some aspect of human experience, while proverbs are maxims that have gained wide currency.” [Carlston, 1980: 88] Notice that he did not say that proverbs have somehow been generated by a group. Both maxims and proverbs have their origins in individual expression. Maxims, however, owe their creation to some rhetorical situation while proverbs become such by their ability to be adapted to a rhetorical situation. When a maxim is recognized as having this ability, it becomes a proverb.⁴

If, to create a metaphor, a proverb is a mature maxim, what is an aphorism? It is an adolescent proverb. That is, it is a proverb that contains the voice of the individual but whose content reflects collective wisdom and the authority of the “ancients.”

To put all this differently, it appears that the terms found in rhetoric can be described as various species of one genus. The common characteristics they share are brevity; striking or attractive formulation that causes them to be memorable; commentary on human situations or actions that is recognized as insightful or truthful. They take on particular meaning in context and, therefore, it may be possible to identify some species of sententious statements by how they are used.

Finally, it appears that terms can be grouped along a continuum, on the principle that some are more clearly synonymous than others. It seems, using Lanham’s terms, that *apothegm*, *gnome*, and maxim are close relatives. Next to them comes adage, and then aphorism, followed

3 That last statement may be a bit of an exaggeration as we will see below when we describe Quintilian’s teaching on maxims.

4 Cf. Archer Taylor, *The Proverb*, p. 3 and Stevenson, p. V.

by proverb. Despite some comments by Lanham, *sententia* seems to have an umbrella-like quality to it, for it can be adjectival as well as synonymous with maxim or proverb. However, it also seems to be used to refer to “reflections,” or what I take to be a kind of moral essay or elaboration exercise.⁵ *Paroemia* is a sub-specie of maxim that seems to be related to the mixed *chreia*.

With this overview completed, it is time to turn to the definition of maxim as found in the handbooks and elementary exercises.

The Classical Rhetorical Definition

In the various examples of the *progymnasmata* maxims (*γνώμη*) are among the first four of the exercises, following myth (fable), tale and *χρεία* or *chreia*. Hermogenes (II century CE) defines it as, “a summary saying, in a statement of general application, dissuading from something or persuading towards something, or showing the nature of each.” [Baldwin, 19; 27] Types of maxims include true, plausible, simple, compound, hyperbolic, and each can be elaborated on the model of the *chreia*.

Aphthonius (IV/V century CE) defines a maxim as a concise statement that persuades or dissuades. (Both Hermogenes and Aphthonius use ἀποτρέπω and προτρέπω.) He lists eight types: hortatory, dissuasive, declarative, simple, compound, convincing, real and hyperbolic. He distinguishes a maxim from a *chreia* in two ways: a *chreia* can be active, and it is the pronouncement of an individual.⁶

It appears that both authors have been influenced by the handbooks’ emphasis on maxims as an argumentative figure, or as functioning in argumentation.

Aristotle (II.xxi.2) says that a maxim is a general statement dealing with the “objects of human action, and with what should be chosen or avoided in reference to them” When the “why” and the “wherefore” of a maxim are added, it becomes an enthymeme, or rhetorical syllogism.

In Aristotle the emphasis is on practical conduct. However, a statement like, “John Brown was an extremist,” is not a maxim because it is the particular case of practical conduct, while, “Extremism in the defense of authenticity in no virtue,” [Carlston, 1980: 103] is a maxim because it is a general statement dissuading from a kind of human action.

5 “Reflections” is the word that Butler, the translator of Quintilian, settles on to render *sententia* in XII.X.48, and elsewhere when the reference is not clearly to maxims or proverbs.

6 My quick perusal of Theon turned up no exercise on maxims.

Because maxims draw upon universal experience and reflect deductive logic, their “truth” is apparent as soon as they are spoken. The maxim appeals in a general sense to opinions the audience may already hold. And, if the speaker is older, therefore presumably more experienced, its apparent truth is less likely to be challenged. [II.xxi.9, 15]

The general effect of the use of maxims is to make the speech more ethical (ἠθικεύς). That is, when a speaker uses maxims, he declares his moral preferences; the good character of the speaker is demonstrated by his use of edifying maxims. [II.xxi.16]

The author of *ad Herennium* defines a maxim as, “a saying drawn from life that shows concisely either what happens or what ought to happen in life.” [IV.xvii.24] He (?) implies the four-fold classification for maxims drawn up by Aristotle.⁷ His classification is simple; with a reason; double; double with a reason.

He also stresses the general, apparent nature of the maxim (*rem certam ex vita*), which elicits positive response or assent. [IV.xvii.25] However, he cautions against overuse of maxims in argumentation in order that focus remain on the argument and not on precepts for living.

The last point implies an interesting shift in the understanding of maxims. While it is true that for Aristotle maxims dealt with practical conduct, by nature they were associated with logic and not just ethics. For the author of *ad Herennium*, the argumentative function of maxims is indirect, derivative, or declarative: they show what is ought ought to be (*quid sit* and *quid esse oporteat*). The idea of the maxim is shading off into that of aphorism or proverb, and their presence suggests an emphasis not just on the character of the speaker, but perhaps more importantly on the concern of the speech.

In Book I.ix.3, Quintilian mentions *sententia* as one of the elementary exercises that a student should undertake. He says that *sententia* are general while *ethologia* have to do with a person. However, he compares *chria* to *sententia* so he is obviously not limiting the figure exclusively to sayings about things. In II.xi.3, II.xii.7, VII.1.44, and XII.ix.3, he implies that *sententiae* are mainly ornaments and cannot be substituted for solid argumentation. He derides speakers who resort to the use of “daring or obscure” *sententiae* instead of making a case by use of existing legal precedents and other materials. He seem to consider the use of a *sententia* a poor substitute for careful preparation, but he admits that *sententiae* can bring a striking close to an

⁷ Aristotle, II.xxi.3–5: 1. without epilogue: (a) well-known; (b) clear as soon as spoken; (2) with epilogue: (a) part of an enthymeme; (b) enthymematic in character.

argumentative period [VIII.v.13–14] and that, used cautiously and with relevance, can produce decisive effects.

In his discussion of *sententia* in Book VIII, it seems that Quintilian is working with a somewhat broader definition of the concept than is found in Aristotle or *ad Herennium*. He places it in the context of general opinion derived from life experience or from the mind.⁸ [VIII.v.2] He attributes this understanding to its original use and then says that in more recent times *sententia* are “... striking reflections...introduced at the close of periods...” This use, in his opinion, had been carried to excess by his contemporaries.

The oldest form of *sententia* is the maxim. They can refer to things (“goodness of heart”) or people (“the prince who would know all...”). His classification follows that of Aristotle fairly closely: simple, double, with reason. He does not categorize maxims as figures of speech [IX.iii.98], but he seems to consider them figures of thought [IX.ii.107]. When used in an argument, maxims serve as ornaments that provide a kind of color marking off divisions of a speech.⁹ If there are too many of them, they draw attention away from the development of the argument because it is the nature of maxim to be discrete thoughts, requiring a new start after each one. Therefore, overuse of them produces a discontinuous style [VIII.v.27].

The most intriguing part of Quintilian’s discussion of *sententiae* comes in Book XII.x.48.

But with regard to those passages we give the name “reflections,” a form of ornament which was not employed by the ancients and, above all, not by the Greeks, although I do find it in Cicero, who can deny their usefulness, provided they are relevant to the case, are not too diffuse and contribute to our success? For they strike the mind and often produce a decisive effect by one single blow, while their brevity makes them cling to the memory, and the pleasure which they produce has the force of persuasion.

It would seem that Quintilian may be referring more to proverbs than maxims. That is, it is clearly not the case that the ancients made no use of maxims. He should have known that their use was recognized by Isocrates, as illustrated in the following:

And again, if we were to make a selection from the leading poets of their maxims, as we call them, into which they have put their best thought, men would show a similar attitude towards them also, for they would lend a readier ear to the cheapest comedy than to the creation of such finished art.¹⁰ [ad Nicocles: 44]

And, Quintilian obviously knew Aristotle’s discussion of maxims.

⁸ In *de Inventione*, II.xxii.68, Cicero uses *sententia* in the context of a discussion of a legal case to mean “opinion.”

⁹ Compare Demetrius, *On Style*, I.9 and II.110, who argues that a maxim must be brief and, although sometimes added to a point, doesn’t function like an ornament.

¹⁰ Isocrates goes on to suggest that maxims function to instruct in virtue and should be studied as part of the responsibility of leadership.

In light of this, it must be that he is referring here, as he does throughout his work, to the use of stock sentences and their elaboration, to reversion to a kind of declamation on folk wisdom that is useful only for show purposes. This is what he does not find in his authorities. Instead, he finds there evidence of the use of maxims as part of the argumentative strategy of the speaker in support of his case. Used in that way, *sententia* make a positive contribution to the effect of the speech.

In general, the ancient rhetorical theorists focused on the function of maxims and gave only the barest outline of their conventional content. Functional definitions are incomplete because readily identify that characteristic of maxims having to do with their discrete nature or their ability to be isolated from context. That has led some to seek a definition based more on form.

An Attempt at a Formal Definition of Maxim

The folklorist and ethnographer, Alan Dundes, has argued that a proverb may best be defined in structural terms.¹¹ He acknowledges the importance of the function of a proverb but suggests that some gestures and narrative materials also “recommend a course of action” or otherwise comment on human action. [Dundes, 1975: 104] If we know what a proverb is, the typical claims of people when asked to define it, that information might come to us by means of structure.¹²

Proverbs can be non-oppositional (“Time flies,” or “Honesty is the best policy”). They are typically either literal or metaphorical. They can be described as equational in form: $A = B$, as in “Time is money.” This can also take the form cause = effect, as in “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” A transformation of this form produces an equation with two or more descriptive elements, such as, “A penny saved is a penny earned,” in which the first term or topic is repeated but the comment changes. This equation can use a coordinated term, “Live and Learn.” Alan Winton diagrams these as $A = B$, or A leads to B ($A \rightarrow B$). [Winton, 1990: 39]

11 Dundes argues that riddles and proverbs are closely related. They share “topic -- comment” constructions. They also share the fact that context determines their meaning. If the referent is known, it is a proverb; unknown, a riddle. [Dundes, 1975: 108]

12 Alan Winton, in his study, *The Proverbs of Jesus*, uses the taxonomy developed by Dundes. I will make use of some of Winton’s shorthand formulations for types of proverbs.

Oppositional proverbs are a bit more complex in form. The most basic is simple negation, “Two wrongs don’t make a right.” That can be diagrammed as $A \neq B$, or A does not lead to B. From this model Dundes identifies two contrastive forms.¹³

“Antithetical contradiction” is summed up as, “if you have A, you cannot have B.” Consider, for example, Jesus’ saying on serving two masters.¹⁴ “Causal contradiction” occurs when “... normal effects or consequences are denied,” for example, “you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.” In other words, A cannot produce B, or in Winton’s notation, $A \infty B$. Additional forms of the causal contradiction can be represented by the formulas: A, but B; $A < B$ (A is less than B), A is greater than B; Better A than B. [Winton, 1990: 42]

Another element needs to be added to this taxonomy. Features of the non-oppositional and oppositional structures mix. Proverbs may have two or three parallel elements, all of which are equational (“she who is A, is B”) but model a contrast between statements. (We will see this in the maxim in 2 Cor. 9:6.) Or, in a single statement the equation may be framed in a contrast, “The one who would be first must be last.” In other words, certain proverbs fit on a continuum between non-oppositional and oppositional types.

At the end of his essay, Dundes says:

In summary then, the proverb appears to be a traditional propositional statement consisting of at least one descriptive element, a descriptive element consisting of a topic and a comment. This means that proverbs must have at least two words. Proverbs which contain a single descriptive element are non-oppositional. Proverbs with two or more descriptive elements may be either non-oppositional or oppositional. “Like father, like son,” would be an example of a multi-descriptive element proverb which was non-oppositional; “Man works from sun to sun but women’s work is never done” would be an example of a multi-descriptive proverb which is oppositional (man/woman; finite work/infinite or endless work). Non-oppositional multi-descriptive element proverbs emphasize identificational features, often in the form of an equation or series of equal terms; oppositional proverbs emphasize contrastive features often in the form of negation or a series of terms in complementary distribution. Some proverbs contain both identificational and contrastive terms. [115]

This, then, is his formal definition of a proverb. I believe, however, that it needs to be supplemented by consideration of context in order to get at questions of what effects maxims have.

¹³ Winton describes a third, “privational contradictive,” from an earlier article by Dundes. It does not appear in the essay with which I am working.

¹⁴ In illustrating this type, Dundes cites a Sumerian text that is an interesting analogy to this saying. “The poor man is better dead than alive: if he has bread, he has no salt; if he has salt he has no bread; if he has meat, he has no lamb; if he has a lamb, he has no meat.” [p. 111]

A “Socio-Rhetorical” Definition of Maxims¹⁵

Peter Seitel approaches the question of the meaning of a proverb from the point of view that considers proverbs to be a form of social metaphor, dependent on a social situation to give it full meaning.¹⁶ “This essay takes as its central question: Given that a person has a memory of a certain number of proverb texts, by application of what set of rules does he speak them in a culturally appropriate manner and by what criteria does he judge the correctness of another’s usage?” [Seitel, 1976: 126–27]

Seitel defines proverbs as short, traditional, “isolateable” statements, “... used to further some social end.”¹⁷ [127] He emphasizes the fact that proverbs violate rules of conversation by introducing subjects where they lack apparent connectedness. His illustration of this involves the proverb, “A stitch in time saves nine,” when referring to preventive maintenance of a car. He goes on to point out the occasional difficulty of recognizing unusual syntax or word order, characteristics of proverbs, if they have been translated.¹⁸ It is important to his analysis that a distinction be maintained between the “texts” of proverbs and their conversational use. It is, for him, important to acknowledge the insight embodied in the epigram to the Dundes/Arewa essay, “I know the proverbs but I don’t know how to apply them.”

When Seitel looked at the contexts in which proverbs were spoken,¹⁹ he found three related situations: the interactive situation, the proverb situation, and the context situation. The interactive situation includes speaker (X), hearer (‘), and their relationship; the proverb situation includes the relationship between the terms of the proverb (A and B), what Dundes categorized as A = B, etc.; and the context situation, the terms of the context (C and D) that is implied by the relationship of the proverb situation to the context situation. In other words, analogy is implied. The speaker says to the hearer that A is to B as C is to D.

The illustration he uses is a father’s statement to his son, “If one finger brought oil, it soiled the others.” The interactive situation carries with it the relationship of age, status, and kinship relations. The proverb situation is A (oily finger) leads to B (all fingers oily). The context situation is the effect of a person of bad reputation joining a group.

¹⁵ I am very hesitant about the modifier used here because “socio-rhetorical” may have already entered the canon and thus imply issues that I won’t touch upon. On the other hand, it seems to describe what Seitel’s view of proverbs includes.

¹⁶ Cp. Alan Dundes and E. Ojo Arewa, “Proverbs and the Ethnography of Speaking Folklore.”

¹⁷ It is not apparent from his argument that Seitel is aware of how close his definition of a proverb is to that of Aristotle for a maxim.

¹⁸ Cp. Betz’s observation on the Greek of 2 Cor 9:6, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, p. 102.

¹⁹ He analyzed novels in which proverbs of a certain ethnic group were used.

While most of the rest of his analysis at this point is only indirectly useful for our discussion, his brief description of strategy bears summarizing.

By strategy I mean...a plan for dealing with the situation which the proverb names...a conversational proverb use is an attempt to solve a situational problem the speaker perceives in a manner in which the speaker believes most suitable. [132–33]

Seitel describes in his ethnography what I understand in rhetorical terms as Invention.

The question remains, how is one to know or to recognize the relationship between A and B in the proverb situation and in terms of the context situation? In spite of the fact that metaphorical reasoning draws the parallels, how does drawing the analogy communicate? [Seitel, 1975: 138]

The key lies in the relationship of speaker to hearer. This relationship is culturally defined in terms of age; sex; kinship relations; and social, political and ritual relations. The characteristics of the relationship can define the way in which the terms found in the analogy are understood. These terms can also be defined in imaginary or naturalistic settings.

[T]he relationship of proverb terms consists, then, of the sum of the logical correspondences in the culturally defined features characteristic of the terms, just as the relationship between the participants in the interaction situation of the proverb consists of the sum of the culturally defined features characteristic of the participants. [139]

For our purposes we can think of Paul's use of "apostle" and "slave of Jesus Christ" as establishing the relationship with his audience and how these titles would define the analogies implied in his maxims.

This overview of three ways of understanding, using, and analyzing maxims provides the background for considering an example of a maxim in Paul.

Paul's Use of Maxims

When one takes up the task of understanding Paul's use of maxims, it is important to attend to matters of setting, form, and function and to resist the temptation either to identify the form to the exclusion of setting or move too quickly to a concept of "proverb" that classifies sententious sayings without regard to function. The other problem is one of identification of source. Given the fact that speakers can create maxims,²⁰ the question is whether or not Paul is using stock proverbs and, if so, from which tradition is he drawing them? Or, is he creating them

²⁰ Seneca says that once rhetorical education is complete, a speaker should be prepared to create his own maxims and not be dependent on using those he has memorized as a student. [Epistle 33. 5–9]

from his experiences in missionary work and the lessons he learned in that work in adapting his message to his audience? The likelihood is that, given the exigence, rhetorical situation, and argumentative situation, he is doing all of these. The only thing that is curious to me is that he doesn't seem to draw directly on any saying of Jesus for the creation of maxims.

Paul does not use *γνώμη* as a classification of sayings. He uses the word five times: 1 Cor. 1:10, 7:25 and 40; 2 Cor. 8:10, and Philemon 14, each time in the sense of "opinion." It is clear, however, that he uses maxims. Those that I consider to be drawn for the Greco-Roman *paideia* include: 1 Thess. 5:7; Gal. 2:6, 5:9, 6:2,7; 1 Cor. 5:6, 6:13, 8:1, 9:9, 24, 14:20, 15:32, 33; 2 Cor. 9:6,7; Romans 2:10, 4:4,15, 7:1,13:3,4,10. Among those derived primarily from Christian *paideia* I would include 1 Cor. 1:25, 3:19, 7:15, 8:8, 14:33, 40; Romans 8:24, 28, 31, 14:23. There are undoubtedly others; this list is conservative. It seeks to exclude sententious statements and clauses that do not appear to fit the most generous description of a maxim.

In the sections that follow I will analyze the use of a maxim found in 2 Cor 9:6. I will look at it as an argumentative figure, following Betz in identifying it as making up the proofs in the argument. Then I will analyze it using the models provided by Dundes and Seitel.

As we have seen, a maxim can function as an argumentative figure. [Brandt, 1970: 125; Corbett, 1965: 129] By the time of Quintilian it was often used to close off or provide a bridge between rhetorical units. It could also be used in amplification, as long as a string of them weren't formed. Because they were considered discrete thoughts, a list of any length was thought likely to be distracting from the task of amplification.

When one remembers the relationship of maxims to *chreia*, the identification of a particular argumentative function of maxims becomes possible. As Mack and Robbins have shown, *chreia* elaboration can function as parts of an argument or as "proofs." [Mack/Robbins, 1989: 51–57] It is this function that I want to illustrate using 2Cor. 9: 6–15.

It is outside of the purpose of this paper to discuss the different theories regarding the relationship of Chapter 9 to the rest of the Corinthian correspondence.²¹ For the moment suffice it to say that I find Betz's analysis of the chapter to be persuasive and thus assume that the letter fragment begins with verse 1. It also seems plausible that the original was addressed to the Christians in Achaia in general and not specifically to the Corinthians.

²¹ Betz, 2 Corinthians, provides a thorough discussion of the issues in a chapter entitled, "2 Corinthians 8 and 9 in the History of New Testament Scholarship," [3–36] and also in the last chapter. [141–44]

Betz uses a standard speech form to analyze the structure of the letter: *Exordium*, verses 1–2; *Narratio*, verses 3–5a; *Propositio*, verse 5b–c; *Probatio*, verses 6–14; *Peroratio*, verse 15. [pp. 88–90] He identifies the letter as advisory, and the genus of speech deliberative. My interest is not on the issues of the macro-analysis but on the rhetorical unit of vv. 6–15.

In the verses 1 and 2 Paul has reminded the Achaians by means of a figure, *praeteritio*, that they have long since indicated that they have already taken up the collection for the saints and by implication are ready to send it with delegates the moment the word comes that Paul is on his way to Jerusalem. The narration in verses 3 through 5a simply explains the evident. Assuming the “brethren” (verse 3) carried the letter, they are there to collect the gifts or attend to the details of gathering the pledges so that the promise made by the Achaians can be fulfilled willingly and without resentment.

It seems that Paul had some concern about the attitude the Achaians might have had towards the request now that it was time to fulfill it. Then again, he might have believed that it was possible for the group to be even more generous than their first pledge indicated. In any case, he takes up the issue of the quality of giving in the section Betz identifies as the proofs.

Betz calls verse 6 the thesis statement for the proofs. He argues that the sentence, “He who sows sparingly, sparingly will he reap”, is a “proverb drawn from the realm of agriculture.” [p. 102] This proverb is turned into a maxim by the addition of the sentence, “He who sows ἐπ' εὐλογίας, ἐπ' εὐλογίας will he reap.”

At this point, and in his identification of the pattern of proofs, Betz does not appear to recognize two developments. On the one hand, he does not pay enough heed to the structure of the maxim; and on the other, he does not consider the possibility that the pattern of the proofs is provided by an elaboration of the maxim.

As has been shown above, one typical pattern for proverbs is “A leads to B.” This is the structure of a “non-oppositional” proverb. When a double, or parallel, structure is present, a contrast can be established, that is, “A leads to B, the contrast to which is A leads to B.” The presence of this structure implies that both sentences are to be considered one unit and the argumentative point being made is one point expressed in contrast. In the case of this maxim, the point seems to be that the quality of sowing (φειδομένως, ἐπ' εὐλογίας) affects the outcome of the action.

While it may well be that Paul added the second line to the proverb, the fact is that in doing so he created a maxim designed to serve his argumentative purpose. It seems reasonable to

assume that Paul’s hearers would have recognized the commonplace associated with the first sentence. The non-oppositional, contrastive structure moves beyond the truism to place greater emphasis on the issue of quality, which is the point upon which Paul wanted to elaborate in the proofs.

It is possible to analyze verses 6–15 using the elaboration pattern found, with slight variation, in Hermogenes.²²

Verse 6b	Theme or thesis:	sows sparingly, sparingly reaps sows because of blessing, etc.
Verse 7a	Paraphrase:	Each one must do as s/he has made up her/his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion.
Verse 7b	Rationale:	God loves a cheerful giver
Verse 8	Contrast:	God provides so that you can provide.
Verse 9	Witness:	Psalm 112.9
Verse 10	Comparison:	He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources...
Verse 11–14	Example:	You will be enriched in every way for great generosity...
Verse 15	Epilogue	Thanks be to God...

There is no evidence of a dispute over the issue of what is expected of the Achaians. The question is the quality of their response. Their gifts should be given, following Betz, as “gifts of blessing and not greediness.” [Betz, 1985: 96]

But there are two other allusions suggested by the word *πλεονεξίαν*. One is the idea of exploitation. Louw and Nida point out that it is possible to translate *μὴ ὡς πλεονεξίαν* as, “not because someone is exploiting you.” [Louw/Nida, 1989: Vol I, 88.144] If that allusion is

²² This analysis contrasts with Betz as follows:

Verse 6 b	Thesis	(The same)
Verse 7	First Proof	Paraphrase and Rationale
Verse 8	Second Proof	Contrast
Verses 9–11	Third Proof	Witness, Comparison, etc.
Verse 12	Fourth Proof	Example (continued)
Verses 13–14	Fifth Proof	Example (continued)
Verse 15	<i>Peroratio</i>	Epilogue

combined with the notion of greediness, Paul may be arguing that that he recognizes the churches' willingness to give and his request for them to gather the money pledged was not exploitation.

The other allusion is found in a definition suggested by LSJ but not prominent in references in other lexicons. [LSJ: 1416] It is the concept of "arrogance." The narration tells us that the churches had been ready for a year and their eagerness provided a model for Paul to use in his promotion of the idea among the Macedonians. Perhaps Paul uses the word *πλεονεξίαν* in contrast to *εὐλογία* to remind the Achaians of the true source of the gift and not be too self-satisfied by their behavior.

These theses can be tested by analyzing the elaboration of the maxim.

The maxim focuses the general truth of the proverb. That focus is provided by the carry over of one of the terms Paul uses to describe the quality of giving in 5b, *εὐλογία*. It is also focused by context established by the complementary non-oppositional statements. The modifiers establish the proverb situation; the quality of human action is the center of attention and becomes the metaphor for analogy worked out in the elaboration. A leads to B is not just sow/reap, but contrastively "sparingly"/"as the result of blessing."²³ The syntax of the maxim also contributes to sharpen the focus.

The paraphrase in 7a restates the conditions of "sowing" and sets up the rationale, in 7b, "for God loves a cheerful giver." It is interesting that the rationale is itself a maxim, which invites no meaningful rejoinder!

The contrast is not self-evident, for it establishes a contrast not with the action of those who were faced with a request for a gift and turned it down, thus incurring the wrath of God, but with those of finite resources who are uncertain about the effects of giving some away, and God, whose love makes up the balance.

A citation of Psalm 112:9, serves as a reference to authority, which is this elaboration pattern serves as a bridge between the contrast and the comparison in verse 10. The comparison builds on the citation and explains by reference to common agricultural images of seed and sowing with the resultant production of bread the meaning of "scattered," *ἐσκόρπισεν*. It also implies the result of the Achaian's action if they "sow" the gifts they pledged.

23 I am using the causal sense of *ἐπί*.

Again, the example is not self-evident, but I believe it to be typical of Pauline argumentation. The situation of the collection -- its formulation, promotion, and implementation -- is unique. When can one find an example of a cheerful giver in this context or given this exigence? Only in those being addressed. They are, or should be, cheerful givers, ones who give on the basis the blessings they have already enjoyed, blessings that are part of salvation history. In fact, as the narrative has shown, they have already been examples to the people of Macedonia. Why not use them again as part of the proof of Paul's contention that Christian's should give ἐπ' εὐλογίας?

A benediction serves as the epilogue.

The elaboration pattern addresses the implications of the word *πλεονεξία*. Greed is offset by reference not only to God's response to openhandedness but also by reference to God's own gifts. Exploitation is offset by reference to the fact that God will make up the difference of what is given so that the giver should understand him- or herself to be a conduit for God's gift. That is, if anyone is to be exploited, it would have to be God! Arrogance is offset by reference to the fact that their giving is an act of service and obedience, as well as an expression of Christian fellowship. The pattern, therefore, explains what Paul means by giving as the result of blessings and functions rhetorically as the proof.

It seems to me, however, that the pattern accomplishes one other thing. It serves to make the meaning of the maxim clear in context. The interactive situation is clear. Paul the apostle is speaking to churches he helped to establish. The proverb situation of sowing and reaping in particularly qualitative actions is made analogous to the context situation. The use of the maxim and elaboration as proofs has its own cultural implications and rhetorically it functions to persuade to some activity. The elaboration sets out the "logical correspondences" [Seitel: 139] of the terms of the maxim, and the speech with its implied exigence and rhetorical situation illustrates the relationship between the participants in the interaction situation. Clearly the maxim takes meaning from its context and the elaboration communicates that meaning. If the Achaians sow ἐπ' εὐλογίας, they will fulfill the obligations of their relationship to Paul, their fellow Christians and God, and in doing so be even more generously blessed.

This example of the use of a maxim by Paul doesn't begin to do justice to the topic. While he uses an elaboration pattern here, and perhaps in 1 Corinthians 15:42-49, in other places he seems to use maxims as a separation between periods, as ornamentation, or in amplification. The only claim this paper makes is that a study of Paul's use of maxims helps throw light on

both his argumentative strategy and, with a lot more work, may help us understand the formation of Christian paideia.

Maxims in Paul

Listed below are statements from the undisputed letters of Paul that demonstrate some of the major characteristics of maxims. This collection is problematic at two levels at least! On the one hand, the definition of maxims is sufficiently loose to permit the inclusion of things that may be "maxim-like" and therefore not as readily recognizable as the classic examples of maxims.²⁴ I have tried to keep in mind that although maxims were commonplaces, a good speaker tried to modify them or create his/her own to fit the situation. On the other, Pauline statements that might be classified as maxims include words that imply theological contexts less universal in scope than the typical terms used in a maxim. I have tried to imagine such statements without their theological implications and decided that context provides the theological content.

The reference to type depends on the taxonomy of Dundes, as elaborated by Winton. It does not depend on classifications used in the handbooks by the theorists; in other words, the typology is formal and not based on content or style. Furthermore, I have not done enough analysis to provide a short-hand description of how the various maxims were used in the larger rhetorical units in which they are found. My intuitive guess is that most were premises in arguments, some used to bridge periods, and a few part of amplifications.

A few final words: (a) this list is more conservative than inclusive; (b) the typology needs to be elaborated; (c) the translations are usually mine and tend to mask the function of the maxims in the argumentative strategy of the contents in which they are found.

Column One: Text

Column Two: Translation

Column Three: Type

ΠΡΟΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΕΙΣ Α

5.7 οἱ γὰρ καθεύδοντες
νυκτὸς καθεύδουσιν, καὶ οἱ
μεθυσκόμενοι νυκτὸς
μεθύουσιν·

"Those who sleep do so at night,
and those who are drunk are so at
night."

Double element, non-
oppositional;
contrastive

ΠΡΟΣ ΓΑΛΑΤΑΣ

²⁴ See, for example, the comments by John Gross in the "Introduction" to *The Oxford Book of Aphorisms*, Oxford, 1983, pp. vii - x. His point that maxims and aphorisms share a subtle relationship is illustrated by the fact that Richard Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (Berkeley: UCal, 1968), lists "proverb", "apothegm", "aphorismus", "gnome", "sententia", "adage", and "paroemia" as cross references for "maxim".

2.6 πρόσωπον [ὁ] θεὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει	"God doesn't play favorites." ²⁵	Non-oppositional, descriptive
5.9 μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ.	"A little leaven ferments the whole batch of dough." ²⁶	Non-oppositional, causational
6.2 ²⁷ Ἄλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάζετε ... ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον φορτίον βαστάσει.	"Bear one another's burdens" "Each shall bear his/her own load."	(These two may have existed as non-oppositional, double element, contrastive.)
6.7 Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, θεὸς οὐ μυκτηρίζεται. ὁ γὰρ ἐὰν σπείρῃ ἄνθρωπος, τοῦτο καὶ θερίσει.	"God is not outwitted, for whatever a man sows, that also will he reap." ²⁸	Enthymematic, non-oppositional, positive causational

ΠΡΟΣ ΚΟΡΙΝΘΙΟΥΣ Α

5.6 ... μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ;	"A little leaven ferments the whole batch of dough."	Non-oppositional
6.13 τὰ βρώματα τῇ κοιλίᾳ καὶ ἡ κοιλία τοῖς βρώμασιν, ὁ δὲ θεὸς καὶ ταύτην καὶ ταῦτα καταργήσει.	"Food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for food."	Non-oppositional; variation on positive equivalence

²⁵ Compare Mal 1:8, where reference is to the reaction of rulers to receiving spoiled sacrificial offerings.

²⁶ Compare I Cor. 5:6

²⁷ Betz, *Galatians*, p. 291 - 306, argues that 5:25 - 6:7 is a series of "sententia," which he also calls "proverbs" and "maxims." I prefer to see some of these as sententious statements, lacking the formal features of maxims or proverbs. Besides, such a string of maxims would violate good rhetorical practice.

²⁸ Compare I Cor. 15:36, and II Cor. 9:6. Upon reflection I decided that this was an example of maxim as enthymeme, and thus adopted Bauer's suggestion for the translation of μυκτηρίζεται.

8.1 ἡ γνώσις φυσιοῖ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ.	"Knowledge makes one arrogant, but love edifies." ²⁹	Double maxim, non-oppositional; contrastive
9.7 9.9 ἐν γὰρ τῷ Μωϋσέως νόμῳ γέγραπται, Οὐ κημώσεις³⁰ βοῦν ἀλοῶντα. μὴ τῶν βοῶν μέλει τῷ θεῷ	"You shall not muzzle an ox used in threshing." ³¹	Non-oppositional
9.24 Οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι οἱ ἐν σταδίῳ τρέχοντες πάντες μὲν τρέχουσιν, εἷς δὲ λαμβάνει τὸ βραβεῖον; οὕτως τρέχετε ἵνα καταλάβητε.	"All the runners in the stadium compete, but only one receives the prize." ³²	Oppositional; A, but B
14.20 Ἀδελφοί, μὴ παιδία γίνεσθε ταῖς φρεσίν ἀλλὰ τῇ κακίᾳ νηπιάζετε, ταῖς δὲ φρεσίν τέλειοι γίνεσθε. ³³	"Be childlike with respect to evil, but mature with respect to the things of the mind."	Double element, non-oppositional; contrastive
15.32 εἰ νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται, Φάγωμεν καὶ πίωμεν, αὔριον γὰρ ἀποθνήσκομεν. ³⁴	"Let us eat and drink, for we die shortly."	Oppositional; A is better than B

29 This maxim and the one in II Cor 9:6, seem to fit the classification of "opposition" as catalogued by Quintilian, 8.5.5.

30 This is a *hapax* and is a synonym for φιμόω; it is a gnomic future.

31 It is interesting here that Paul takes a law (Deuteronomy 25: 4, οὐ φιμώσεις βοῦν ἀλοῶντα in the LXX) and makes it into a maxim by arguing in the elaboration that the reference is to any who work; thus the law is turned into a metaphor.

32 While impossible to say authoritatively, this maxim may derive from a topos of "competition." Note, comparatively, the allusion to athletes competing for a prize in a speech by one of the characters in Chariton's novel, Chaereas and Callirhoe, Book One, section two: "... ἐν τοῖς γυμνικοῖς ἀγῶσιν ἕνα δεῖ νικῆσαι τῶν ἀγωνισαμένων." (W. E. Blake, *Charitonis Aphrodisiensis* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1938], p. 4)

33 This contains two *hapax legomena*, νηπιάζω and φρήν.

34 See Conzelmann, I Corinthians, footnote 137, p. 278, for references to other maxims expressing approximately the same sentiment.

15.33 μὴ πλανᾶσθε· Φθείρουσιν ἡθὴ χρηστὰ ὀμιλῖαι κακαί. ³⁵	"Bad company ruins good morals."	Non-oppositional; A leads to B
15.36 ἄφρων, σὺ ὃ σπείρεις, οὐ ζῶποιοεῖται ἐὰν μὴ ἀποθάνῃ·	"What you sow does not sprout unless it dies."	Non-oppositional; re-stated for rhetorical effect.

ΠΡΟΣ ΚΟΡΙΝΘΙΟΥΣ Β

9.6 Τοῦτο δέ, ὃ σπείρων φειδομένως φειδομένως καὶ θερίσει, καὶ ὃ σπείρων ἐπ' εὐλογίαις ἐπ' εὐλογίαις καὶ θερίσει.	"He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and he who sows generously will reap generously." ³⁶	Double element, non-oppositional; contrastive
9.7 ἰλαρόν γὰρ δότην ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεός.	"God loves a cheerful giver."	Non-oppositional; positive equivalence

ΠΡΟΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΟΥΣ

2.11 οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν προσωποληψία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ.	"God is impartial."	Non-oppositional
4.4 τῷ δὲ ἐργαζομένῳ ὁ μισθὸς οὐ λογίζεται κατὰ χάριν ἀλλὰ κατὰ ὀφείλημα,	"Wages are not considered a gift to the laborer but an obligation."	Oppositional; Not A, but B

³⁵ Francis and Sampley, *Pauline Parallels*, p. 148, refer to Meander, *Thais*. The reference is obviously a missprint. It should read "Menander."

³⁶ This maxim seems to fit Quintilian's category [8.5.5] of comparison.

4.15 ὁ γὰρ νόμος ὀργὴν κατεργάζεται οὐδὲ οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος οὐδὲ παράβασις.	"Where there is no law there can be no violation of law."	Oppositional; Contradictive, A cannot lead to B
7.1 ὁ νόμος κυριεύει τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον ζῆ;	"The law governs a man throughout his life."	Non-oppositional
13.3 οἱ γὰρ ἄρχοντες οὐκ εἰσὶν φόβος τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἔργῳ ἀλλὰ τῷ κακῷ. θ	"Rulers are not a terror to good deeds but to evil ones."	Oppositional; A, not B
13.4 οὐ γὰρ εἰκὴ τὴν μάχαιραν φορεῖ·	"[A ruler] does not bear the sword ineffectively."	Non-oppositional
13.10 ἡ ἀγάπη τῷ πλησίον κακὸν οὐκ ἐργάζεται· πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη.	"Love doesn't do wrong to a neighbor." ³⁷	Oppositional, simple contradictive; A cannot lead to B

³⁷ Obviously this is a variation of the so-called "Golden Rule."