

## The Supposed Election of Officers in 1 Cor 11.19: A Response to Richard Last

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**This article responds to a recent proposal by Richard Last that 1 Cor 11.19 speaks of the necessity of holding regular ‘elections’ (αἱρέσεις) for the appointment of church officers who would assist in the administration of the Lord’s Supper (11.17–34). In addition to exaggerating difficulties inherent in traditional explanations, Last’s proposal introduces a number of insurmountable discourse problems, rendering his interpretation more problematic than those he intends to replace. A traditional reading should be retained, in support of which further arguments are here added.**

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In a recent article in this journal, Richard Last argued that the Christ-group in Corinth contained a ‘flat hierarchy’ of temporary and rotating magistrates elected periodically by the church.<sup>1</sup> As the basis for his argument he proposed that 1 Cor 11.19 – a well-known interpretive crux – refers not to the ‘necessity of factions’ (‘there have to be factions (αἱρέσεις) among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine’, NRSV), but to the ‘election’ of officers whose duty it was to help in administration of the Lord’s Supper (11.17–34). Thus he proposes a new translation for 11.19: ‘There need to be *elections* (αἱρέσεις) among you in order that the approved ones become *persons of distinction* (φανεροί).’<sup>2</sup> Such a translation, he argues, ‘avoids all the problems associated with the older translations of αἱρέσεις as “factions”’.<sup>3</sup>

While I appreciate Last’s efforts to resolve the difficulties of this verse in a fresh way, I wish to draw attention to a number of problems involved in his

1 R. Last, ‘The Election of Officers in the Corinthian Christ-Group’, *NTS* 59 (2013) 365–81; citation at 368.

2 Last, ‘The Election of Officers’, 379 (emphasis added).

3 Last, ‘The Election of Officers’, 374.

argument.<sup>4</sup> I begin by assessing the problems he finds with traditional readings of the verse, which I shall argue are not as great as he makes them out to be. I then deal with the problems inherent in his own hypothesis.

### 1. Last's Problem with Traditional Readings

Prior to Last's proposal, interpreters widely agreed that 1 Cor 11.19 was about not 'elections' in the church, but 'divisions' in the eschaton (which we shall refer to as the 'traditional' reading). In the gospels, several sayings of Jesus link a rise in dissension with the eschaton (Matt 10.34-9 // Luke 12.51-3; 14.25-7; Matt 24.9-13 // Mark 13.13 // Luke 21.17-18). The same link is found in an otherwise unattested logion attributed to Jesus in Justin Martyr, which contains close verbal similarities with 1 Cor 11.18-19 (cf. *σχίσματα ... αἱρέσεις ... εἶναι*). Compare

**σχίσματα** ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχειν ... δεῖ γὰρ καὶ **αἱρέσεις** ἐν ὑμῖν **εἶναι**.  
there are **divisions** among you ... For it is necessary that **there be factions**  
among you.  
(1 Cor 11.18-19)

with

**ἔσονται σχίσματα καὶ αἱρέσεις.**  
Jesus said, 'There **shall be divisions** and **factions**.' (Justin, *Dial.* 35)

While Last does deal with these texts, his analysis is, to my mind, unduly dismissive of their relevance. Admittedly, the gospel texts do not share close verbal similarities with 1 Cor 11.18-19 (e.g., no *σχίσματα*, *αἵρεσις*, *δόκιμος*, *φανερὸς* in Matt 10.34-9 // Luke 12.51-3; etc.), but it is certainly worth pondering that their thematic affinities were close enough for Justin, when discussing divisions in the eschaton, to have mixed these very same texts together with the saying just cited.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, in Justin's reception of Jesus' teaching, *σχίσματα* and *αἱρέσεις* shared a close connection with the eschaton. Moreover, it cannot be said that Justin has here 'invented' a saying of Jesus in order to explain 1 Cor 11.19, for he gives no indication that Paul's Corinthian letter was close to mind, and

4 In passing, let it be said that I do not see why the holding of 'elections' (granting *αἱρέσεις*) to resolve problems of church disorder must indicate regular *terms* of office, still less a 'flat' system precluding the concentration of power into the hands of the social 'elite'. Could 11.19 not be read, with even greater warrant, as suggesting that elections were 'necessary' only in times of greater disorder? And what then would prevent that the next official 'selected' would be the next 'elite' in the pecking order? These questions, however, I pass over to address the more pressing concerns treated below.

5 Justin cites with this logion Matt 7.15; Matt 24.5 // Mark 13.6 // Luke 21.8; Matt 24.11.

certainly no indication that he has this specific text in view. Note also that Pseudo-Clementine *Homily* 16.21.4 has Jesus predicting ‘αἰρέσεις’ as well, citing this ‘saying’, again, with the gospel texts noted above. Were we to assume that Justin had made the saying up, we would have to assume either that Pseudo-Clement was dependent on Justin, or that, by coincidence, he was led through precisely the same, mistaken, train of thought.

Why then is Last dismissive of Justin’s logion? He states: ‘Justin records Jesus to have predicted σχίσματα and αἰρέσεις (*Dial.* 35.3), but αἰρέσεις is used by the apologist to mean heresies, which represents a later development of the word’s usage.’<sup>6</sup> With all respect to Last, I fail to see why a development in terminology-*reception* would mean that Justin’s logion is not based on the same logion as 1 Cor 11.18–19. Augustine (*Serm.* 51.11), in commenting on 1 Cor 11.19, also reads αἰρέσεις as ‘heresies’: by Last’s reasoning, would that mean that Augustine was not reading the same *verse* we are? It is only to be expected that a second-century Christian would interpret the terminology through the experience of his own time. Indeed, whether αἰρέσεις is understood as ‘factions’ or as ‘heresies’ is immaterial to the question of the saying’s *origin*. Of course, it is always possible that Justin has taken the spirit of *Jesus’* teaching from the gospels and inadvertently formulated it in terms of *Paul’s* remarks in 1 Cor 11.18–19 (indeed, nothing is too incredible for the scholarly imagination), but I see no reason why we should default to an imaginative, sceptical hypothesis over against Justin’s straightforward, and relatively early, attestation.<sup>7</sup> As it is, verbal evidence gives us ample warrant to suppose that Justin and 1 Cor 11.18–19 commonly preserve an authentic, if otherwise unattested, saying of Jesus, eschatological in orientation. Any further eschatological resonances in the context would only strengthen the case – a point to which we shall return momentarily.

For Last, however, the most difficult crux of 11.19 is the question of why Paul would suggest that αἰρέσεις are ‘necessary’ (δεῖ), when throughout the letter the problem of ‘factions’ is the very thing he has exercised himself trying to resolve (as Last puts it, ‘the dominant theory that Paul endorses “factions” does not work within the context’).<sup>8</sup> The objection is not without merit, and Last is not alone in recognising the tension. But I am afraid that Last’s framing of the issue here in terms of Paul’s ‘endorsement’ of factions starts us off immediately on the wrong foot (who has ever said that Paul was doing *that?*). In fact a number of plausible solutions to this problem lie ready to hand. If a genuine ‘eschatological resignation’ to the reality of divisions does not in itself provide a fully satisfying

6 Last, ‘The Election of Officers’, 370.

7 That the oral tradition continued into the second century is widely accepted among biblical scholars. Note, for example, that the saying recorded in Acts 20.35 is not otherwise attested in the New Testament.

8 Last, ‘The Election of Officers’, 374. On the problem of factions in the letter, he cites 1 Cor 1.11; 3.3; 4.19; 5.6; 6.1; and 14.33 (pp. 370–1).

answer,<sup>9</sup> it is at least worth asking how this tone might work in service of Paul's present rhetorical purposes. The extent to which ad hoc exigencies condition Paul's discursive strategies should not be underestimated. This is the same man who could appeal to 'nature' (φύσις) in a way that defies common sense, because it provided a premise acceptable to his philosophically minded audience (11.14), and the same man who repeatedly availed himself of Stoic arguments while confronting a church divided in large part because of Stoic influences.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, we find plentiful examples where he 'grants' the Corinthians their own self-designations, but only after having invested the designations with new meaning, or repeats his opponents' terminology entirely tongue in cheek: 'Not many of you were "wise", "powerful", and "of noble birth" at the time of your calling' (1.26); 'We speak wisdom among the "perfect"' (2.6); 'Are you already "rich", already "kings"? ... You are "prudent", ... "strong", ... "held in honor"' (4.8, 10); 'If someone sees you, with your "knowledge"' (8.10); or 'I speak as to "prudent" people' (10.15).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, if it is asked whether Paul's resignation to divisions here does not run directly at cross-purposes with what he has strongly opposed in the first four chapters of the letter (esp. 1.10–12), it should be noted that we find him veering about in precisely the same way regarding the Corinthians' status as 'wise men': after spending four chapters trying to convince them that there were *not* acting as wise men at all,<sup>12</sup> he presumes in 6.5 to ask them whether there is not some 'wise man' (σοφός) among them who is able to judge among his brothers, the introductory οὐκ indicating clearly that his question *now wants the answer 'Yes.'*<sup>13</sup> If Paul was able, for present purposes, and with some irony, to grant them the 'wisdom' they so esteemed, and which all interpreters agree was *the* main problem contributing to the church's

9 A number of scholars understand Paul's words in terms of eschatological resignation: e.g. J. Moffatt, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938) 159; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971) 262; G. Fee, *1 Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 538; R. Collins, *1 Corinthians* (SP; Collegeville: Liturgical, 1999) 422, among others.

10 A point widely recognised in the commentaries. With 1.12/3.22–23, compare SVF 3.590; with 6.12a/10.23a (Diogenes Laertius 7.125; Dio, *Or.* 14.18) and 6.13a (Posidonius, fr. 184/Seneca, *Ep.* 92.10), compare 6.12b/10.23b, 13b (SVF 2.86; 3.86; 3.208; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.22.1; 1.28.5; 4.7.9; Cicero, *Fin.* 3.14); with 6.18b (SVF 3.501; 3.500; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.24.20), compare 6.18c (SVF 3.289) and 6.19c (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.20.1; 3.22.21, 34, 40–4; 4.1.66, 78, 87, 104, 158; 4.7.17, 31–2; *Ench.* 1.1; Seneca, *Ep.* 120.18–19). Compare also 6.7 with Musonius Rufus, *Diatr.* 3; compare 7.4 with Stobaeus, *Anth.* 4.67.24; Musonius Rufus, *Diatr.* 13a; Diogenes Laertius 7.87; compare 7.19 with Diogenes Laertius 10.124–5; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.4.27; 1.9.13; 3.8.2; 3.16.15; *Ench.* 1.5; 32.2; compare 12.12–30 with Hierocles/Stobaeus, *Anth.* 4.84.20; and 15.28 with SVF 2.596–632; Seneca, *Ep.* 9.16.

11 I reference language that is widely held among interpreters to be Corinthian in origin.

12 See σοφός in 1.19, 20, 25, 26, 27; 3.10; 3.18 (2x), 19, 20; and σοφία in 1.17, 20, 21; 2.1; and especially 3.19 ('wisdom of this world') and 2.5 ('wisdom of men').

13 For rhetorical questions introduced by οὐκ, see BDF, §427.2.

divisions,<sup>14</sup> why should he not also have been able to resign himself, again with some irony, to the problem to which that wisdom *led*, namely divisions? Undoubtedly, Paul's arguments were capable of shifting with his rhetorical purposes. Such as he was, it should come as no surprise if he momentarily shifted into his audience's own frame of mind in order to score a point. In this regard, I find it quite likely that we have here simply a further instance of Paul's penchant for 'redefinition': Paul turns the self-attribution of those high-status Corinthians as 'approved' (δόκιμοι) over on its head, agreeing that 'divisions' among them serve to mark out those who are 'distinguished', only *not* in the way they fancy. In effect: 'Well, I suppose divisions *are* necessary after all, for only then will it become evident who is *truly* "approved".'<sup>15</sup> It would seem to me to be entirely within his character for him to have spoken in such a way.

But still more serious problems present themselves. Semantically, Last's argument rests on the convergence of four terms in 11.18–19. Each of them, he thinks, is used with reference to the election of church officers, just as they were with reference to the election of Greek or Roman magistrates in contemporary associations: σχίσματα, referring to 'divisions' (v. 18); αἵρεσις (verb, αἰρέομαι), referring to the 'election' of officers (v. 19); δόκιμος (verb, δοκιμάζω), referring to the 'vetting' of elected officials (v. 19); and φανερός, meaning 'prestigious' or 'of distinction' (v. 19).

While Last is able to mine parallels to each of these in sources pertaining to Greco-Roman associations, as far as I can tell he does not locate a single text where any two of these terms appear together in the same context (that one 'becomes approved' is hardly significant, copulative that γίνομαι is).<sup>16</sup> One, moreover, looks in vain for further discussion of 'officers' or 'elections' in a letter that is supposedly addressed to a community embroiled in conflict that could ostensibly be resolved by electing said officials. We need not go far, however, to find striking thematic clustering, and with more abundant resonances in the letter, in proof that the context here is eschatological.

14 To cite only a few examples from the last one hundred years of scholarship: e.g. A. T. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914) 15; F. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 42; J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (New York: Seabury, 1965) 76, 77; R. Funk, 'Word and Word in 1 Cor 2:6–16', *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) 277; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971) 275–6; G. Fee, *1 Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 64; S. M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (SBLDS 134; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992) 105; R. E. Ciampa and B. S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Pillar; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) 120, cf. 20–1; M. T. Finney, *Honour and Conflict in the Ancient World* (LNTS 460; London: T&T Clark, 2011) 80.

15 So also R. A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998) 159.

16 Last, 'The Election of Officers', 377.

1 Cor 11.18–19 states: *σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχειν ... δεῖ γὰρ καὶ αἰρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι, ἵνα [καὶ] οἱ δόκιμοι φανεροὶ γένωνται ἐν ὑμῖν*. As has long been recognised, two themes come together here: that of *divisions* and that of eschatological *testing*.

(1) With *σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν* and *αἰρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν* here, compare *σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν* again in 1.10, 11; and *ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις* in 3.3 ('rivalry and strife among you'). In this regard, we have a varied semantic cluster centred around 'dissension', including four different terms of similar meaning, each occurring with *ἐν ὑμῖν*:

*σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν* (11.18; 1.10, 11)  
*αἰρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν* (11.19)  
*ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος* (3.3)  
*[ἐν ὑμῖν] . . . ἔρις* (3.3)

(2) Whether *αἰρέσεις* ought to be interpreted within the same semantic field as *σχίσματα*, *ζῆλος* and *ἔρις*, however, depends in part on establishing an 'eschatological' meaning for *δόκιμος*. This connection Last does not allow, on the grounds that the verse 'is otherwise devoid of apocalyptic terminology'.<sup>17</sup> But he is quite mistaken about this. Not only does *δόκιμος* often carry eschatological meaning (Jas 1.12; as also *δοκιμάζω*, e.g. 1 Pet 1.7), but – as the literature hereto has not adverted attention to – so also does *φανερὸς* and its whole word group: *φαίνω* (Matt 24.27, 30), *φανερῶ* (1 Cor 4.5; 2 Cor 5.10; Col 3.4; 1 Pet 5.4; 1 John 2.28; cf. Mark 4.22), *φωτίζω* (1 Cor 4.5) and *ἐπιφάνεια* (2 Thess 2.8; 1 Tim 6.14; 2 Tim 4.1, 8; Titus 2.13). The clinching text comes in 1 Corinthians, 3.13, where *δόκιμος* and *φανερὸς* occur together, and indisputably in an eschatological context:

ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον      **φανερὸν** γενήσεται,      ἡ γὰρ ἡμέρα **δηλώσει**  
 ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον      ὁποῖόν ἐστιν      τὸ πῦρ [αὐτὸ] **δοκιμάσει**.

Note the clear use of synonymous parallelism, *δηλώσει* being matched with *δοκιμάσει*. One's work will thus be made '*manifest*' (*φανερὸν*), with day 'showing' (*δηλώσει*) it, in the same way that fire '*tests*' (*δοκιμάσει*) it.

Note, moreover, that the discourse in chapter 11 takes an explicit turn towards eschatology. Verse 26 states that the Lord's Supper ritual should be repeated 'until [Christ] comes' (*ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ*). Verses 28–32 then enjoin each person, before taking the elements, to 'test' themselves (*δοκιμάζέτω*, the verb equivalent of *δόκιμος*), lest they ultimately be 'condemned' (*κατακριθῶμεν*) along with the world in the final judgement. Last, by contrast, has no further 'elected officials' context to speak of here.

<sup>17</sup> Last, 'The Election of Officers', 377.

We can then summarise the semantic portion of the argument as follows. (1) 'Divisions among you' are frequently referenced in 1 Corinthians. (2) 'Divisions' in the relevant sayings of Jesus, both canonical and extra-canonical, are associated with the eschaton. (3) Terms both for 'testing', and for the becoming 'manifest' of that which is tested, frequently occur in eschatological contexts, and occur together elsewhere even in 1 Corinthians itself. In this light, it should come as no surprise that 'divisions' + 'among you' in 1 Cor 11.18–19 come together with another occurrence of 'testing' + being made 'manifest.' Given this evidence, I do not see what need we have of resorting to an argument that finds four terms used together in 1 Cor 11.18–19 but discretely in other ancient sources, as Last would have us do. So much for the semantic argument.

## 2. Problems with Last's Reading

So far we have seen that Last's treatment of 1 Cor 11.18–19 exaggerates the problems involved in traditional readings, problematising an eschatological interpretation when such a reading is in fact plainly suggested by the semantic context. Dealing yet a more serious blow to Last's argument, however, are its numerous 'discourse' problems, which do not enter in with a more traditional reading. I present three such problems.

The first is a problem of information flow, introduced by his translation of *φανερῶν* as 'persons of distinction'.<sup>18</sup>

Linguistic theorists distinguish between 'established' and 'non-established' clausal constituents, according to the constituents' cognitive availability within the discourse. *Established* information may be either assumed on the basis of generally accessible knowledge of reality, or supplied, explicitly or implicitly, from the preceding discourse content. Thus, established information provides the cognitive framework for the processing of new, or *non-established*, information, the communication of which is the goal of the discourse-unit. In each clause, newly asserted information is said to be the *focus*, and it is the focus, in turn, that serves as the *main point* of the clause.<sup>19</sup> In languages that are not overly constrained by word order, the intended focus may often be placed at the end of its clause or sentence to draw added attention to it. In some languages, such as English, the focus may also be highlighted by a change in voice inflection.

18 Last, 'The Election of Officers', 379. The extra-biblical references brought in at this point are said to show that the holding of a private office was a 'prestige symbol' and could 'provide social enhancement', which, I mention as an aside, seems in itself to run against the grain of Paul's message (e.g. 1.26).

19 For an application of the linguistic theory to biblical Greek, see S. E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010) 185–95.

Note, for instance, the difference between the following statements, each of which puts the focus in a different place, despite the fact that each is identical as to the letter:

Paul considered himself an apostle to the *Gentiles*.

Paul considered himself an *apostle* to the Gentiles.

*Paul* considered himself an apostle to the Gentiles.

The problem with Last's translation is that it entails a *reversal* of the discourse function of the constituents, so that φανερός becomes the *focus* of the clause, when the emphasis must in fact lie elsewhere. Last's translation, '[I]n order that the approved ones become *persons of distinction* (φανεροί)', in other words, locates the clause's punch in exactly the wrong place: indeed, does Paul (or Last) really want to say that 'becoming a person of distinction' is *the end* unto which (ἵνα) elections should take place?<sup>20</sup> Is that focus not widely off the point, or at best only quite indirectly relevant, if, according to Last's reconstruction, the purpose of elections is really to *restore order* to the community? By contrast, the flow of information occurs much more naturally, and the clause is able to retain its intended focus, it seems to me, only<sup>21</sup> when φανεροί is understood in its more usual sense of 'manifest': 'it is necessary that there be divisions, in order that there might come to light *those who are approved* (οἱ δόκιμοι)'.

The second, and perhaps most serious, problem with Last's view involves his interpretation of γάρ at the opening of v. 19. In this regard Last states: 'When Paul moves from σχίσματα in 11.18 to elections in 11.19 (see below) his line of thought remains entirely continuous.'<sup>22</sup> What Last means by 'continuous' is explained in a footnote: 'Here, on my reading, Paul argues that reports of factions at the common meal are believable in part because he does not regard the current leadership's competency highly.'<sup>23</sup> If I may paraphrase the proposed syntax, by this Last means: 'I believe the report *because* (γάρ) elections are necessary.' Such an

20 Certainly this is what Last intends, for he says, 'the notion that approved Corinthians would become "persons of distinction" after being elected matches ancient behavior suggestive that holding a private office could provide social enhancement if performed honorably' ('The Election of Officers', 379). In other words, unless I am mistaken, elections should take place for the *purpose* that these people might become persons of distinction.

21 That is, I do not see how Last's translation of φανεροί, if we keep the element of 'focus' in view, can be accommodated at all. Even if we were to shift the focus from φανεροί, where Last has it, to οἱ δόκιμοι ('in order that *those who are approved* [i.e. rather than certain other people] might become the persons of distinction in your community/your members of distinction'), conceptually, φάνεροι would then be given a level of definiteness that would seem to require the article, which we are obviously lacking here.

22 Last, 'The Election of Officers', 373.

23 Last, 'The Election of Officers', 373 n. 27. On my reading, the γάρ *does* in fact ground μέρος τι πιστεύω in v. 18: 'this is easy to believe, *for* it is necessary that this would happen'; but this is not what Last has going on.



interpretation, however, clearly puts the cart before the horse. Specifically, it reverses the logical order of what is *grounded* and what is doing the *grounding*, for in fact elections would not be necessary *unless* Paul believed the report. Thus it should be *not*: ‘I believe the report *because* (γάρ) elections are necessary’ (Last’s explanation); *but*: ‘Elections are necessary *because* (γάρ) I believe the report’; which amounts to ‘I believe the report; *therefore* elections are necessary.’ Last, in other words, puts the grounds where there ought to be a *conclusion*. Unless the logic is strained beyond good sense, only by replacing γάρ with an inferential marker like οὖν or διὰ τοῦτο would the proposed reading hold: ‘I believe it in part; *therefore* (οὖν) [or *for this reason* (διὰ τοῦτο)] it is necessary that there be elections among you.’ This little γάρ, it seems, looms large.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, I cannot see how, on Last’s reading, οὖν offers us an entrée into the material in v. 20. Following his reading through, it become evident that οὖν, which signals a logical development of what precedes, is in fact impossible to connect with v. 19: on his reading, we should rather have expected a circumstantial νῦν,<sup>25</sup> a δέ, or perhaps another γάρ. He might, of course, have recourse in explaining the inference as a continuation, not of v. 19, but rather of v. 18. This is in fact how the conjunction must function if the verse is taken in a more traditional sense (i.e. ‘I hear that when you come together there are divisions among you ... *Accordingly* [οὖν], when you come together ...’). Yet, contrary to the traditional reading, where the *topic* remains *continuous* throughout vv. 18–20 (i.e. ‘divisions’) even if v. 19 poses somewhat of a *logical* parenthesis, on Last’s reading the break between vv. 18 and 20 would leave v. 19 a disruptive intrusion into the discourse – not what he wants given the troubling absence of contextual ties already noted.

All these problems, I maintain, disappear if we continue to understand v. 19 in eschatological terms, additional evidence for which has been provided here. Moreover, I have argued, on the basis of numerous similar examples found elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, that Paul is here deploying a strategy of ‘redefinition,’ granting the factious group their status as ‘distinguished’ people, but bending the meaning they give to the term *away* from reference to social status and towards forensic status in the eschaton. Quite possibly σχίσματα (‘divisions’) shifts to αἰρέσεις (‘factions’) for the sake of allusion to the dominical saying preserved by Justin and others; thus I place ‘factions’ in quotation marks in my own translation, provided below. The γάρ in v. 19 grounds μέρος τι πιστεύω, and the οὖν in v. 20 resumes συνερχομένων ὑμῶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀκούω σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχειν in v. 18 (thus οὖν, ‘*accordingly*’ = ‘with regard to the coming

24 It should be added here that, if Paul does provide a quotation in 11.19a, the lack of a citation formula is not unusual. Formulae are lacking also in 2.16; 10.26; 15.27, 32; and in three of four instances, the quotation is introduced, as here, by γάρ.

25 On the circumstantial νῦν (‘as it is’), see LSJ s.v. 1.A.4; cf. BDAG, 681.2.a.

together to the same place mentioned above'). I offer, then, the following translation of vv. 18–20 to illustrate what sense is made of these verses, and of the developmental markers involved, when construed in these terms:

<sup>18</sup>To begin with, I hear that when you come together to assembly, there are divisions among you, and I believe it in part – <sup>19</sup>indeed, it is quite natural that such divisions should exist, for it is necessary that there be 'factions' among you, in order that there might come to light those among you who are, as you say, 'approved' – <sup>20</sup>accordingly, when you come together to the same place, it is not to eat a '*Lord's*' Supper...

### 3. Conclusion

While Last offers us an innovative solution to a verse that has remained notoriously difficult, clearly it creates more problems than it solves. His newly proposed church-organisational structure consequently finds no support in 1 Cor 11.18–19. Rather, sufficient contextual evidence exists to establish an eschatological context for the occurrence of *σχίσματα* and *ἀιρέσεις* in these verses, whether Paul is speaking ironically, resignedly, 'rhetorically', or in the voice of Jesus. I see no reason to trade these traditional solutions for one with the insurmountable problems adverted to here. Detached semantically, discursively and thematically from its immediate context, the wider chapter and the letter as a whole, Last's interpretation makes 11.19, as it were, an island. Should Last prove successful in finding a more significant cluster of the relevant language in the kinds of election contexts he speaks of, still the greater problems remain. In sum, in light of the discourse structure, his explanation can account for v. 19, at best, only as an unsupported intrusion into the context, and at worst, only as a most incoherent development in Paul's train of thought.