

THE INTEGRITY OF 2 CORINTHIANS FROM A LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE:
IS THERE A TEXT IN THESE MEANINGS?

by

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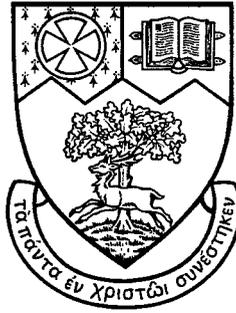
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ABSTRACT

“The Integrity of 2 Corinthians from a Linguistic Perspective: Is There a Text in These Meanings?”

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After surveying previous language-related claims about the integrity of 2 Corinthians, this study develops a definition of “text” using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). According to SFL, a text is the structured realization of a context of situation involving: (1) a particular *activity* together with its concomitant interpersonal *roles and relations*; (2) a particular *sphere* of human experience; and (3) a particular *mode* of conveying information. Moreover, because each of these contextual parameters correlates with specific linguistic systems, a general linguistic analysis can be used to assess whether or not an apparent text does or does not encode a plausible context.

Employing an analysis of progressive moves to explore *what is being done* and an analysis of semantic domains to explore *what is being talked about* (as well as some additional analyses of conjunctive relations, identity chains, and cohesive harmony), the present study proposes that the body of 2 Corinthians consists of five segments wherein leadership is enacted within the sphere of the Christian church. First, after expressing a positive disposition towards its readers, 2 Corinthians addresses Paul and Timothy’s controversial behaviour, especially Paul’s handling of Corinthian immorality (1:3–2:13).

Second, it teaches the Corinthians how to respond when people criticize the Pauline mission (2:14–5:21). Third, it appeals for communal purity while also acknowledging some recent progress in this area (6:1–7:16). Fourth, it reports an unexpected development in Macedonia and explains the task to which its bearers have been appointed (8:1–9:15). Fifth, it warns that discipline will be enacted upon Paul and Timothy’s arrival if the Corinthians do not continue to maintain the purity of their congregation, and it attempts to shut down distracting leadership debates by denigrating the worldly leadership standards that are operative in those debates (10:1–13:10).

Inasmuch as that these behaviours can be plausibly regarded as the sequential stages of a single, unfolding context of situation, this study concludes that 2 Corinthians is a single letter. Moreover, a number of exploratory suggestions are made with regard to the interpretive and historical implications of reading 2 Corinthians in light of this overarching context of situation.

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INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on 2 Corinthians, Kreitzer writes:

It is commonly remarked that in 2 Corinthians Paul is at his most self-revealing. This is true enough, but paradoxically 2 Corinthians is also the place where Paul is at his most enigmatic. To attempt an interpretation of the letter is to enter a hermeneutical minefield; a host of interlocking problems face the reader from the outset and it is difficult to find any place where a single step may be safely taken.¹

Among the many interlocking problems that face the reader of 2 Corinthians, two are especially relevant to the present study. The first has to do with *text*; the second has to do with *context*.

It has been almost two hundred and fifty years since Johann Solomo Semler first argued that 2 Corinthians is not a single text but rather a collection of texts, and yet scholars continue to debate the literary integrity 2 Corinthians.² A detailed investigation of this discussion by Bieringer describes four prominent partition theories: the Semler-Windisch hypothesis, the Hausrath-Kennedy hypothesis, the Weiss-Bultmann hypothesis, and the Bornkamm-Schmithals hypothesis.³ These partition theories have held such an

¹ Kreitzer, *Second Corinthians*, 7.

² Semler, *Paraphrasis*. Thrall provides the key quotations and discusses their significance (*Second Epistle*, 1:3–4).

³ Bieringer, “Teilungshypothesen.” For additional historical discussion, see also Betz, 2

important place in the study of 2 Corinthians that in a 1992 article Betz took the bold step of alleging that “few scholars continue to defend the unity of 2 Corinthians.”⁴ Betz may have been correct at the time he was writing (although one might wish to dispute this), but his claim is no longer defensible today. Several recent publications have challenged the so-called consensus view,⁵ and a number of recent commentators have chosen to interpret the canonical letter as a single text.⁶ The literary integrity debate, therefore, remains a live one.

In a second arena, interpreters of 2 Corinthians continue to struggle with a small set of tantalizingly vague historical references, attempting to assemble them into a viable reconstruction of the historical setting(s) that stand behind Paul’s letter(s) to Corinth. Is Paul alluding to an otherwise unattested visit in 2:1, 12:14, and 13:1? What was contained in the letter to which Paul refers in 2:4, and do we possess it? Who is being forgiven in 2:5–13? Who are the wrongdoing and wronged parties mentioned in 7:12? Who are the false apostles mentioned in chs. 10–13? Although all of Paul’s letters prompt these sorts of questions, it is fair to say that none of Paul’s other writings enmesh the interpreter in so many interrelated issues, where any answer given to one question subtly affects all the other questions. If the historical setting of 2 Corinthians is a jigsaw puzzle,

Corinthians 8 and 9, 3–36.

⁴ Betz, “Corinthians.”

⁵ E.g. Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*; Danker, “Paul’s Debt”; DeSilva, “Ultimate Reality”; Bieringer, “Plädoyer”; Hester Amador, “Unity”; Hester Amador, “Revisiting 2 Corinthians”; Hall, *Unity*; Long, *Ancient Rhetoric*; Vegge, *Reconciliation*.

⁶ E.g. Barnett, Belleville, Danker, Garland, Hafemann, Harris, Lambrecht, Keener, Matera, McCant, Scott, Stegman, and Witherington.

then Pauline scholars are in disagreement as regards the shape of each piece—to say nothing of the image into which they should be assembled. The setting of 2 Corinthians remains one of the most enigmatic historical topics in Pauline studies.

In important ways, these two scholarly discussions of text and context are intertwined. On the one hand, although the claim that 2 Corinthians lacks literary integrity is sometimes advanced with reference to specific textual qualities, it is much more commonly grounded on the belief that the text cannot be made to fit within a single historical setting. Indeed, after discussing various considerations that must be factored into decisions about literary integrity, Becker observes that “[t]he decisive criterion of incoherence is given when it is necessary to posit ‘different situations’ underlying a letter.”⁷ On the other hand, decisions concerning the textuality of 2 Corinthians play a fundamental role in historical reconstructions of Paul’s life and ministry to the extent that they affect how the literary evidence may be arranged chronologically. For instance, if 2 Cor 10–13 is deemed independent of 2 Cor 1–9, it becomes possible to develop a historical account in which the situation underlying the former precedes the situation underlying the latter—a possibility that is *not* available when the canonical epistle is handled as a single letter. As Kreitzer observes in the passage above, interpreters of 2 Corinthians must confront a host of interrelated issues. And interpretive decisions made with reference to the text of 2 Corinthians draw upon and/or implicate other decisions concerning the context of 2 Corinthians.

⁷ Becker, *Letter Hermeneutics*, 2.

This study attempts to bring some clarity to this complexity by employing a linguistic framework that theorizes both the notion of context and the relationship that exists between texts and contexts. This framework, known as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), recognizes that a socio-semiotic situation is encoded within the language of every text because human beings make texts as a means of interacting in culturally meaningful ways. To the extent that these situations follow predictable patterns while nevertheless remaining unique, they can be described as specific instances of more general, institutionalized situation types. Moreover, to the extent that similar structures and similar meanings will be found in all of the texts associated with a given situation type, it is possible to predict the meanings that are likely to occur in a given situation, and also to predict the situation that is activating the meanings of a given text. What does this mean as regards the analysis of 2 Corinthians? It means that if Paul's language constitutes a single text, it will implicate a single socio-semiotic situation that can be identified as an instance of some situation type, whereas if it is not a single text (or if it is an incoherent piece of writing), it will implicate multiple socio-semiotic situations (or a single incoherent situation).⁸

There are, obviously, a number of commonalities between the theoretical concepts developed by SFL and the presuppositions that have guided previous examinations of the integrity of 2 Corinthians, as well as previous attempts to reconstruct its historical setting(s). This is because the theoretical notions of SFL capture in very explicit terms the

⁸ The qualifications in parentheses are important because of those unity theories which argue for "unity in composition but not in content" (see Vegge, *Reconciliation*, 22–28), since these theories essentially argue that 2 Corinthians is (historically-speaking) a unified *document* but not (linguistically-speaking) a coherent *text*.

intuitively grasped principle that a coherent text hangs together as a more or less well-structured way of doing something. It needs to be underscored, however, that the socio-semiotic situation of a text cannot be naively equated with the historical setting of a text. Rather, the situation encoded in a text is a semiotic construct that is construed and enacted by the author(s) of a text in much the same way that the meanings in a text are construed and enacted. This is an important detail especially in the case of texts whose setting cannot be substantiated using other sources of information and in the case of monologic texts (such as a letter) where other persons are not given the opportunity to explicitly challenge the authorial viewpoint. Because the socio-semiotic situation(s) of 2 Corinthians, which has/have been brought into existence by Paul's creative effort, is/are the only direct source of information we possess with regard to the historical setting(s) underlying 2 Corinthians, we must maintain a careful distinction between the situation(s) that Paul has chosen to construe in 2 Corinthians and the more objective historical setting(s) that the historian reconstructs using 2 Corinthians together with all of the other lines of evidence available.⁹

So then, this study analyzes 2 Corinthians linguistically and then seeks to describe whatever semiotic situation(s) is/are construed by Paul's meanings, with the ultimate goal being to answer the question: Is there a single, coherent situation encoded within the

⁹ Commonalities exist between the present study and other recent studies that have attempted to demonstrate a coherent textual progression (or lack thereof) within 2 Corinthians by means of rhetorical criticism (see the survey of these works in O'Mahony, *Pauline Persuasion*, ch. 2). Regrettably, however, limitations of space have forced me to exclude from the present work those aspects of my analysis that engage rhetorical criticism most directly. It became apparent after many months of labour that my original vision for the present study was more than could be accomplished in the confines of a single dissertation. Here I am presenting my work on the situation of 2 Corinthians, which means that my work on the register and structure of 2 Corinthians will be mentioned only briefly and in passing.

language of 2 Corinthians? Following the present introduction, Chapter 1 will survey the linguistic evidence that has been cited to date as indicating either the unity or disunity of 2 Corinthians. Chapter 2 will then articulate the theoretical and descriptive categories that I have appropriated and adapted from SFL. The reading of 2 Corinthians that has resulted from my analysis is presented in Chapters 3–7,¹⁰ where I discuss the letter body of 2 Corinthians as well as the situation construed by its meanings.¹¹ Finally, Chapter 8 will synthesize the results of my reading and discuss the literary integrity and historical setting of 2 Corinthians. I will argue that 2 Corinthians does construe a single, coherent context of situation and that this situation fits within the historical life of Paul as we know it from his other writings and from other historical sources.

¹⁰ Although a major part of my research has been to produce a linguistic analysis of 2 Corinthians, I will only invoke the explicit details of that analysis where they have a more-or-less direct bearing on an interpretive point that is disputed and also relevant to the literary integrity debate. The goal of the present study is not, therefore, to present my linguistic analysis, but to present the new reading of 2 Corinthians that has emerged from my linguistic analysis.

¹¹ Rather than have a distinct chapter for each of the alleged fragments in 2 Corinthians, I have opted to begin a new chapter at each point where I have detected a significant shift in the canonical epistle (2:14; 6:1; 8:1; 10:1). To this list, I might also add 1:3 and 13:11, but due to the confines of the present study, I have chosen to ignore the letter's opening and closing.

CHAPTER 1: A SURVEY OF EARLIER STUDIES

This chapter will not occupy itself with a summary of hypotheses concerning the origins of 2 Corinthians, since this task has been performed by other scholars and there is little to be gained by repeating it.¹ Instead, in keeping with the focus of my method, what follows is a survey of language-related facts that have been invoked in previous discussions about the composition of 2 Corinthians, as well as a survey of generalizations that have been made with regard to the situation(s) that underlie(s) 2 Corinthians. From these surveys, it will be possible to see how interpreters move from the wording of 2 Corinthians to observations about its literary integrity, and to see how well interpreters are able to ground their observations about the situation(s) of 2 Corinthians in the explicit wording of the text. Observing such things is important because, as Barrett observes, “The field is one in which theories are more numerous than facts, and clear distinctions between the two are not always made.”²

¹ See, e.g., Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, ch. 1; Bieringer, “Ursprüngliche Einheit”; Bieringer, “Teilungshypothesen”; Vegge, *Reconciliation*, 7–34.

² Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 5.

1. Observations about the Language of 2 Corinthians

a. Vocabulary and Subject Matter

Since the most important of all the alleged partitions within 2 Corinthians is that between chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13, I will focus my initial attention on these two sections, before turning to other alleged fragments.

Bernard argues that there are a number of linguistic parallels between chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13 and that these parallels indicate that the sections are two parts of a single whole. He cites to this effect the phrase *ἑαυτὸν συνιστάνειν* as well as the terms *ὑπόστασις*, *ταπεινός*, *νόημα*, *ἀγρυπνία*, *προσαναπληροῦν*, *ἔτοιμος*, *δυνατεῖν*, *θαρρεῖν*, *πλεονεκτεῖν*, and *παρακαλεῖν*. Each of these items is used within both chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13. But more importantly, Bernard observes that they appear in the rest of Paul’s writings (or in some cases the rest of the New Testament) either not at all, or with a significantly lesser frequency, or with somewhat different senses.³ Thus there is language that is not only continuous across chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13 but also unique to these thirteen chapters (or at least disproportionately abundant relative to other writings). On this basis, Bernard insists that “on the whole, the linguistic facts powerfully support the traditional view, *viz.*, that the Second Epistle to the Corinthians is a single document.”⁴

³ Bernard, *Second Epistle*, 26–27.

⁴ Bernard, *Second Epistle*, 27.

Following Bernard's line of reasoning, Segalla argues in defence of the unity of 2 Corinthians by identifying fifteen items that are common to both chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13.⁵ He groups these under three headings. First, there are references to Paul's opponents. Thus the term *τις* appears in 3:1 and 10:2, and the phrase *[οἱ] πολλοί* appears in 2:17 and 11:18. Second, there are expressions that signal Paul's confidence in his addressees. Thus the words *θαρρέω* and *πεποίθησις* and the roots *καυχ-* and *περισσ-* occur in both chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13. Third, there is apologetic language. Here Segalla cites a number of roots, words, and phrases: *ἀλήθεια*, *ἀπολογία*, *διακον-*, *δοκιμ-*, *κατὰ σάρκα*, *κόπος*, *πλεονεκτέω*, *συνιστάνω*, and *φείδομαι*.

More recently, Barnett has argued that the interpreter of 2 Corinthians finds “distinctive vocabulary distributed throughout the letter.”⁶ For example, the phrase *ἡ διακονία τῆς δισαιοσύνης* occurs in 3:9 and the related phrase *διάκονοι δικαιοσύνης* occurs in 11:15, but “Paul nowhere else in his letters juxtaposes ‘ministry’/‘minister’ with ‘righteousness’.”⁷ Also, *πανουργία* appears together with *δολόω* in 4:2 and together with *δόλος* in 12:16, but similar associations occur nowhere else in Paul's writings. The verbs *παρακαλέω* and *δέομαι* are connected in 5:20 and 10:1–2, but nowhere else in Paul's writings. The “keyword” *συνίστημι* does not occur in a Pauline letter written prior to 2 Corinthians. The word *πεποίθησις* occurs in chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13 but nowhere else in Paul's writings, and the same can be said for the phrase *κατέναντι θεοῦ λαλοῦμεν*.

⁵ Segalla, “Coerenza,” 149–66 (as cited by Harris, *Second Epistle*, 49 n.115).

⁶ Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 19.

⁷ Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 19.

Finally, Barnett points to the repetition of vocabulary that is found in four passages in 2 Corinthians that deal with suffering. He writes: “‘Sufferings’ passages in themselves do not conclusively prove the unity of 2 Corinthians since there are similar passages in other Pauline letters. Vocabulary common to these passages, however, is evidence for the overarching unity of 2 Corinthians.”⁸ He cites seven words that are common to 6:4–10 and 11:23–12:10 and points out that four of these seven do not appear elsewhere in the Pauline canon.⁹

Unfortunately, none of these interpreters goes beyond the invocation of isolated words and phrases, nor do any of them demonstrate that the presence or absence of similar vocabulary counts as evidence of textual continuity. This is unfortunate because dissenting scholars have demonstrated that there are also vocabulary differences between chs. 1–9 and 10–13. In a work that is now almost a century old, Plummer draws attention to “the argument that there are more than 20 words, some of which are not common in the Pauline Epistles, which occur both in i.–ix. and x.–xiii., the inference being that both are parts of the same letter.”¹⁰ About this argument, Plummer writes:

An argument the other way, and at least as strong, may be drawn from similar facts. There are more than 30 words, not found elsewhere in the Pauline Epistles, which occur in x.–xiii. but not in i.–ix.; and more than 50 words, not found elsewhere in the Pauline Epistles, which occur in i.–ix. and not in x.–xiii. Moreover we have δόξα 19 times, παρακλησις 11 times, θλίψις 9 times, and χαρά

⁸ Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 20.

⁹ Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 20–21. See also Harris, who describes such vocabulary patterns as evidence for “close linguistic or thematic continuity between chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13” (*Second Epistle*, 49 n.115).

¹⁰ Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xxxiv.

4 or 5 times, in i.–ix., and none of them in x.–xiii.; also ἀσθένεια and ἀσθενέω each of them 6 times in x.–xiii., and neither of them in i.–ix.¹¹

Having turned the tables like this, however, Plummer has the good sense to point out the foolhardiness of the entire approach. In the immediately subsequent paragraph he writes that

Such statistics can prove very little as to whether the two parts formed one letter or not. For according to both theories the two parts were written by the same person, to the same persons, about the same subject, viz. the condition of the Corinthian Church, with a brief interval between the writing of the two parts, in the one case an interval of perhaps a few days, and in the other an interval of a few weeks. In either case there would be similarities as well as differences of expression.¹²

Along very similar lines, Stephenson says, “I would hazard the guess that you could divide any of Paul’s epistles into two parts and find the same phenomena.”¹³

Other scholars have undermined vocabulary arguments in a slightly different way by challenging the idea that vocabulary items can be used to identify thematic continuity. Kennedy, for instance, alleges that Paul uses terms derived from the *καυχ*- root in significantly different ways in chs. 1–9 and 10–13. In the former chapters, Kennedy claims, Paul uses the terms in a complimentary sense, whereas in the latter ones the terms are used with a decidedly apologetic or vindicative sense. And in the former chapters Paul is boasting about the Corinthians, whereas in the latter ones he is boasting about himself.¹⁴ Kennedy also says similar things about *θαρρεῖν*, *πεποιθήσις*, and *ὑπακοή*,

¹¹ Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xxxiv.

¹² Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xxxiv–xxxv.

¹³ Stephenson, “Defence,” 90.

¹⁴ Kennedy, “Problem,” 342–44.

noting that these terms are used one way in chs. 1–9 and another way in chs. 10–13.¹⁵ Linguistically speaking, Kennedy is asserting that the mere repetition of lexical items does not establish continuity, since individual items can be used differently in different contexts. And he is asserting that, once Paul’s actual usage of the relevant items is taken into account, it becomes evident that there is discontinuity between chs. 1–9 and 10–13.

Responding to Kennedy’s argument, Young and Ford deny that the relevant *καυχ*-words are used with different senses. It is possible to boast appropriately or inappropriately, they suggest, and Paul may have alternative possibilities in mind at different points in his letter, but ultimately there is a single issue at stake in all instances of the *καυχ*-items: “the right kind of ‘glorying’, and the contrast between what usually goes on and what Paul claims for himself.”¹⁶ Harris takes a similar approach to Kennedy’s objection, observing that the instance of *καυχᾶσθαι* in 5:2 is apologetic while *καύχησις* in 11:10 and *καυχᾶσθαι* in 10:17 are complimentary and positive. Ultimately, he suggests, the two categories of usage advanced by Kennedy are not mutually exclusive.¹⁷ With regard to Paul’s use of *θαπρῶ*, Hughes observes that “the ‘confidence’ mentioned in 7:16 and 8:22 relates to two different subjects,” Paul and the unnamed brother. Moreover, “the ‘confidence’ of 10:1 and 2 is, as the context shows, a different kind of confidence from that of 7:16 and 8:22.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Kennedy, “Problem,” 359–60. See also Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xxxii; Collange, *Enigmes*, 8; Watson, “Painful Letter,” 327.

¹⁶ Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 13–14.

¹⁷ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 33.

¹⁸ Hughes, *Second Epistle*, xxvi.

It would appear, therefore, that competing hypotheses within the literary integrity debate are all appealing to similarities and differences in Paul's vocabulary and also to similarities and differences in the way that Paul uses certain words. Yet it has not been shown how the relevant lexical observations support the conclusions for which they allegedly serve as evidence. It is always possible to isolate individual words that are shared between parts of a text or that are distinct to the one part or another. Moreover, it is implausible from the outset to insist that an author cannot use a single vocabulary item in different ways within a single text. And so until someone employs a sound theoretical framework and a more careful method that moves beyond the extraction of the few vocabulary items that seem to indicate continuity or discontinuity, such appeals to vocabulary will remain inconclusive.

Alongside or intertwined with discussions of Paul's vocabulary, the literature on 2 Corinthians also contains a number of observations that have been made about specific "topics" or "themes" or "subjects" or "concerns" that characterize the canonical epistle. Harris asserts concerning 2 Corinthians that "the whole letter is concerned with Paul's visits to Corinth—actual visits, planned visits not carried out as planned, and an imminent visit."¹⁹ He grounds this assertion linguistically with the observation that eleven of the sixteen occurrences of ἔρχομαι in 2 Corinthians and all five occurrences of πάρεμι relate to Paul's visits to Corinth.²⁰ Although Harris does not clarify how the proportions he mentions are at all relevant, the fact that these Corinth-related instances of ἔρχομαι

¹⁹ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 44.

²⁰ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 44.

and *πάρεμι* appear in both chs. 1–9 (1:15, 16, 23; 2:1, 3; 9:3–5) and chs. 10–13 (10:2, 11; 11:9; 12:14, 20, 21; 13:1, 2 [2x], 10) does provide some observable evidence that “Paul’s visits to Corinth” is a subject taken up in both of these two traditional divisions.²¹ It must be noted, however, that citing a single topic in an *ad hoc* manner like this does little to address the matter of literary integrity, since appeals to isolated topical similarities and differences are just as problematic as appeals to isolated vocabulary similarities and differences. And so Paul Barnett and Victor Furnish are able to agree with one another that “Paul’s visits to Corinth” is a unifying topic in 2 Corinthians, while simultaneously pushing this conclusion in opposition directions by drawing different historical conclusions about the visit or visits in view.²²

Hughes argues that “the pervading *theme* of the epistle” is “strength through weakness.” “In this theme,” he writes, “is bound up the whole argument for the genuineness of Paul’s apostolic authority.... By this standard Paul stands vindicated before the Corinthians, and his adversaries stand condemned.”²³ In support of his claim that this “unitive” theme is able to bind together the entire epistle as it has come down to us, Hughes cites 1:5–6, 8ff.; 2:12ff; 3:5–6; 4:7ff., 16; 5:1, 18; 6:4ff.; 7:5–6; 10:17–18;

²¹ Along similar lines, Witherington observes that “Throughout 2 Corinthians Paul returns again and again to his travel plans” (*Conflict*, 340). To this effect, he cites 2 Cor 1:15ff.; chs. 7 and 8; 12:14; 13:1–2, 14.

²² Barnett observes that “throughout the letter Paul foreshadows his pending final visit,” and that “references to the future visit are found in all parts of the letter” (*Second Epistle*, 19). He cites to this effect 2:1, 3; 9:4; 10:2, 6; 11:9, 12:14, 20, 21; 13:1, 2, 10, suggesting that the distribution of these passages supports the unity hypothesis. Furnish, however, disagrees. “As a matter of fact,” he writes, “the prospect of an impending visit, which so pervades chaps. 10–13, is nowhere apparent in chaps. 1–9” (*II Corinthians*, 31).

²³ Hughes, *Second Epistle*, xxx–xxxii.

11:23ff.; 12:5, 9–10; 13:4.²⁴ Here we see an appeal to excerpts from 2 Corinthians rather than an explicit argument employing linguistic features. But even when scholars on the opposing side of the discussion are willing to grant Hughes' point about the theme of "strength through weakness," they are nevertheless able to draw different conclusions as regards literary integrity. For example, while Kruse concedes that the theme occurs in both chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13, he finds this somewhat irrelevant in light of the fact that the theme *functions* differently in the two divisions. In the former division, Kruse claims, the theme of strength through weakness is invoked to show that the power of God is present even in the midst of Paul's difficult and potentially humiliating apostolic experiences; in the latter division, it is exploited as a deliberate inversion of the criteria invoked by Paul's opponents.²⁵ As in the case of vocabulary items, therefore, the complete absence of a theoretical framework makes it possible for partition theorists to appeal to differences in the *usage* of a theme in the event that a common theme is alleged to indicate literary integrity.

A number of additional proposals are also worth noting, although none of them adopt an explicit framework that defines the notion of *theme* or *topic* or that relates such notions to literary integrity. Young and Ford assert that "the central theme" of Paul's letter is "*doxa*," which they understand to mean "both reputation and glory."²⁶ Specifically, they assert that the entire letter is about "the glory of God" and "the reputation of Paul."²⁷

²⁴ Hughes, *Second Epistle*, xxxi.

²⁵ Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 34–35.

²⁶ Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 12–13.

²⁷ Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 12.

They begin their case by directing attention to instances of the word δόξα in 2 Corinthians.²⁸ But they go on to observe that while “usage of the particular word *doxa* is largely to be found in 2 Cor. 3 and 4,” “that should not...mislead us into thinking that it is a mistake to treat this as the central theme [of the canonical 2 Cor].”²⁹ One must also consider related lexical items such as the verb καυχάομαι and its cognates, which occur throughout 2 Corinthians (1:12, 14; 5:12 [2x]; 7:4, 14; 8:24; 9:2, 3; 10:8, 13, 15, 16, 17 [2x]; 11:10, 12, 16, 17, 18 [2x], 30 [2x]; 12:1, 5 [2x], 6, 9).³⁰

Long claims that 1:3–7 serves a special structural function within 2 Corinthians and that this is why it contains vocabulary that is distributed throughout the rest of the letter. Specifically, he cites θλίβω and its cognates (1:4 [2x], 6, 8; 2:4; 4:8, 17; 6:4; 7:4, 5; 8:2, 13), παρακαλέω and its cognates (1:3–5 [2x], 6 [3x], 7; 2:7, 8; 5:20; 6:1; 7:4, 6 [2x], 7 [2x], 13 [2x]; 8:4, 6, 17; 9:5; 10:1; 12:8, 18; 13:11), and περισσεύω and its cognates (1:5 [2x], 12; 2:4, 7; 3:9; 4:15; 7:4, 13, 15; 8:2 [2x], 7 [2x], 14 [2x]; 9:1, 8 [2x], 12; 10:8, 15; 11:23 [2x]; 12:15).³¹ What is more, Long suggests that 1:3–7 provides a lens through which Paul’s readers are to perceive God’s favorable view of Paul—a theme that Long finds in 1:9–10, 12, 18, 20, 21–22, 23; 2:14–17; 3:4–5; 4:2, 6–7; 5:1, 5, 11, 18–21; 6:1, 4, 7; 7:6; 8:5; 11:11, 31; 12:1–10.³²

²⁸ Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 12–13.

²⁹ Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 13.

³⁰ Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 13–14.

³¹ Long, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 151.

³² Long, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 150–51.

Olson observes an abundance of confidence language in 2 Corinthians. He cites to this effect the following terms and expressions: ἐλπίς, ἐλπίζω, θαρρέω, καυκάομαι, καύχημα, καύχησις, οὐκ ἐγκακέω, παρηρησία, the perfect tense-form of πείθω, πεποιθήσις, and ὑπόστασις, and in some instances οἶδα, ἔχω, πιστεύω, λογίζομαι, οὐκ αἰσχύνομαι, παρακαλῶ, and παράκλησις. According to Olson, “This concentration of terms for confidence is unequaled in the New Testament letters.”³³ The relevant terms are found in concentration at crucial points of the letter, including 1:12–14 (which Olson views as a thematic statement that outlines the purpose of the letter), 5:11ff. (which is alleged to be a major point of transition in Paul’s apology), and 13:6 (in Paul’s concluding admonition). They also occur in many introductory or transitional verses, including 1:15; 3:4, 12; 4:1, 7, 13–14, 16; 5:1, 6, 8, 11–12; 7:1, 4, 16; 8:24; 9:1–2; 10:1, 7, 17; 11:5, 16–17, 21b, 30; 12:1. “We must therefore conclude,” Olson asserts, “that confidence is a significant theme in 2 Corinthians, closely tied to Paul’s argumentation and, perhaps, to the historical situation and to Paul’s purpose in writing.”³⁴

Lastly, a number of scholars have made brief references to a theme involving Paul’s conduct *vis-à-vis* Corinth. Hall points out that there are clear signs throughout both chs. 1–7 and chs. 10–13 that there are tensions between Paul and his addressees. In fact, Paul is repeatedly forced to defend himself against the charge that he is mean, inconsistent, underhanded, or conniving. Hall writes: “His reply to this charge is that he and his colleagues have behaved with honesty and sincerity—a theme that runs like a

³³ Olson, “Confidence Expressions,” 1. As Olson notes, a number of commentators have noted this fact, including Heinrici, Windisch, Prümm, and Collange.

³⁴ Olson, “Confidence Expressions,” 5.

thread through all the main sections of 2 Corinthians (1.12; 2.17; 4.2; 8.20–21; 10.2–4; 12.16–17; 13.8).”³⁵ Similarly, Fitzgerald says of 2 Cor 1–7 that “Two themes which flow through the letter are thus the integrity of Paul and the mutuality between Paul and the Corinthians.”³⁶ And Garland observes that “The sincerity or uprightness of his apostolic conduct appears in 1:17; 2:17; 4:2; 6:3–10; 7:2; 10:2; 12:16–18.”³⁷ Somewhat less specifically, but along the same lines, Bieringer emphasizes how frequently 2 Corinthians speaks about Paul’s relations with his addressees.³⁸ And Vegge observes that “The whole of 2 Corinthians is concerned with the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians, and Paul’s apostolic role and ministry among the Corinthians.”³⁹

There are, I suggest, two consistent weaknesses that characterize claims about Paul’s topics, themes, or subjects. First, although terms such as *topic* or *theme* are notoriously vague, interpreters rarely make any effort to clarify what is meant by them. In the best cases, a handful of lexical items is cited. Sometimes verses are listed. But a precise definition of *topic* or *theme* or *subject matter* is never provided, nor are any descriptive criteria employed. Second, it remains unclear how the scholar can determine the relative importance of a specific theme or topic, whether the function of a theme matters, and—most importantly—how exactly themes or topics are related to the literary integrity of a text.

³⁵ Hall, *Unity*, 96.

³⁶ Fitzgerald, *Cracks*, 150.

³⁷ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 43.

³⁸ Bieringer, “Plädoyer,” 173–78; Bieringer, “Jealousy,” 246–51.

³⁹ Vegge, *Reconciliation*, 22.

This last weakness is particularly important because it renders all of the above observations potentially irrelevant. Even if a consensus were to emerge among interpreters to the effect that several important themes or topics recur in various places throughout 2 Corinthians, nothing indicates that such a consensus would affect the literary integrity debate. To the contrary, the presence of thematic continuity is conceded even by scholars who divide 2 Corinthians into multiple letter fragments. For example, Bornkamm writes, “trotz der erheblichen Divergenzen aller Teile...verbindet sie alle *ein* sachliches Thema und gibt dem Briefganzen sogar wie keinem anderen paulinischen Brief sonst seine innere Einheit.”⁴⁰ As Furnish explains,

the basic thematic coherence of these two sections is no guarantee of their literary unity. An underlying thematic coherence may also obtain in the case of two (or more) separate letters dispatched over a period of time, especially when they are addressed to the same congregation. A two-letter hypothesis does not deny that there is an important continuity of theme between chaps. 1–9 and 10–13. It suggests only that this theme and the issues related to it are approached and developed in such significantly different ways in these two sections that it is reasonable to conclude they were written on different occasions and under somewhat different circumstances.⁴¹

So then, even supposing that it were possible to clearly define the theme(s) or topic(s) of 2 Corinthians, it is unclear why this should matter for the literary integrity debate.

For reasons that will be made clear momentarily, this is also the place to discuss the commonly made suggestion that there are various passages in 2 Corinthians that “allude to” or “refer to” allegedly prior passages. Historically, such allusions were first

⁴⁰ Bornkamm, “Vorgeschichte,” 240. Similarly, Furnish asserts that “There is no doubt that apostleship—specifically Paul’s authority as the apostle to and for Corinth—is the pervasive underlying theme of canonical 2 Cor” (*II Corinthians*, 34).

⁴¹ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 37. Betz agrees: “Thematic connections hardly demonstrate literary unity; they can just as easily be explained as links between successive letters” (*2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 35).

noted by proponents of the four-chapter-letter hypothesis, who regarded them as proof that chs. 10–13 preceded chs. 1–9 (see Table 1).⁴² Other scholars, however, have criticized these arguments and advanced a different set of allusions as evidence that chs. 1–9 must have preceded chs. 10–13. Harris, for instance, argues on the basis of “verbal echoes” which are allegedly “precise and potent” that 12:19 presupposes 2:17, that 10:2 presupposes 1:17, that 12:14 presupposes 6:13, that 12:11 presupposes 3:2, and that 12:16 presupposes 4:2.⁴³ Bates is quite correct that alleged allusions need very careful handling. “Mere point of contact between the two sections is not enough, and would indeed be completely natural in any letter that was a unity.”⁴⁴ What is needed are passages in chs. 1–9 that *clearly* presuppose previous knowledge of chs. 10–13 or vice-versa. Here again, however, scholars on both sides of the literary integrity debate are citing accumulated proof-texts in support of different conclusions without employing any kind of theoretical framework or sustained analysis.

Table 1: Alleged Allusions to 2 Cor 10–13 in 2 Cor 1–9

10:1	θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς	7:16	θαρρῶ ἐν ὑμῖν
10:2	τῇ πεποιθήσει ἣ λογίζομαι τολμῆσαι ἐπί τινος	8:22	πεποιθήσει πολλῇ τῇ εἰς ὑμᾶς

⁴² See Kennedy, *Second and Third Epistles*, 79–92; Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xxxvii–xxxix; Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xxxi–xxxii; Strachan, *Second Epistle*, xix–xx; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 35.

⁴³ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 48. See also Lietzmann, *An die Korinther*, 140; Hughes, *Second Epistle*, xxxi–xxxiii; Bates, “Integrity,” 67; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 292–93; Bernard, *Second Epistle*, 25–26. Harris argues that the allusions in question must inhere within a single letter, because “readers or hearers would have been unlikely to recognize such allusions, given the passage of time” (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 49). Whether this calls into question the plausibility of the alleged allusions is something Harris fails to discuss.

⁴⁴ Bates, “Integrity,” 60. For his part, Bates thinks “the evidence does not carry sufficient conviction” (“Integrity,” 62).

10:6	ἐν ἐτοίμῳ ἔχοντες ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν παρακοήν, ὅταν πληρωθῇ ὑμῶν ἡ ὑπακοή	2:9	εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ ἔγραψα, ἵνα γνῶ τὴν δοκιμὴν ὑμῶν, εἰ εἰς πάντα ὑπήκοοί ἐστε
10:8	ἐάν [τε] γὰρ περισσώτερόν τι καυχῶμαι	3:1	Ἀρχόμεθα πάλιν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστάνειν;
10:13	ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα		
11:11	διὰ τί; ὅτι οὐκ ἀγαπῶ ὑμᾶς; ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν	2:4	ἔγραψα ὑμῖν...τὴν ἀγάπην ἵνα γνῶτε ἦν ἔχω περισσοτέρως εἰς ὑμᾶς
12:15	εἰ περισσοτέρως ὑμᾶς ἀγαπῶ[ν], ἦσσαν ἀγαπῶμαι;		
12:16	ὑπάρχων πανούργος δόλω ὑμᾶς ἔλαβον	4:2	μὴ περιπατοῦντες ἐν πανουργίᾳ μηδὲ δολοῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ
12:17	δι' αὐτοῦ ἐπλεονέκτησα ὑμᾶς;	7:2	οὐδένα ἐπλεονεκτήσαμεν
13:2	ἐὰν ἔλθω εἰς τὸ πάλιν οὐ φείσομαι	1:23	φειδόμενος ὑμῶν οὐκέτι ἦλθον εἰς Κόρινθον
13:10	Διὰ τοῦτο ταῦτα ἀπὸν γράφω, ἵνα παρῶν μὴ ἀποτόμως χρῶμαι	2:3	ἔγραψα τοῦτο αὐτό, ἵνα μὴ ἐλθὼν λύπην σχῶ

Turning now to alleged fragments within 2 Cor 1–9, we find much the same situation. Semler, for instance, observes that there is merely a difference of *phraseology* between chs. 8 and 9. Because it would be quite extraordinary for an author to repeat himself so extensively within a single letter, he suggests, chs. 8 and 9 were likely independent compositions.⁴⁵ Semler's argument has been given more detail by Windisch, who claims that the following passages are doublets: 9:1–2 // 8:1–5; 9:3–5 // 8:16–24; 9:6–7 // 8:12–15; 9:8–11 // 8:14; 9:8 // 8:7.⁴⁶ Other scholars, however, cite thematic consistency between 2 Cor 8 and 9 as evidence for the literary unity of the two chapters. It has been noted that ch. 8 begins with a mention of generosity (*ἀπλότης*) and that ch. 9

⁴⁵ For some discussion of this observation, see Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 27; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:3; Becker, *Letter Hermeneutics*, 4.

⁴⁶ Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 286–87.

ends similarly.⁴⁷ In between, “both chapters are replete with similar religious language such as ‘grace’ (8.1, 4, 6, 7, 26, 29; 9.8, 12, 15), ‘partnership’ (8.4; 9.13), ‘ministry’ (8.4; 9.1, 13), ‘sign of love’ (8.7), ‘blessing’ (9.5, 6) and ‘liturgy’ (9.12).”⁴⁸ And Stowers points out that “Paul’s boasting about the Corinthians is a theme that connects the two chapters (8.24; 9.2–3; cf. 8.22).”⁴⁹ With regard to chs. 8 and 9, therefore, scholars cite lexical and thematic continuity as evidence for mutually exclusive conclusions, without ever undertaking a comprehensive analysis of Paul’s vocabulary.

As regards the relationship that exists between chs. 1–7 and chs. 8–9, Dahl observes that the “thematic statement” in 7:4 is spelled out in the argument of 7:15–16, which continues into ch. 8. This, he suggests, is an indicator of the unity of chs. 1–8.⁵⁰ Using similar logic, Schmithals suggests that “the theme ‘Collections’ basically already begins in 7:13, since Titus’ presence in Corinth which is mentioned there served this purpose.”⁵¹ Schmithals also hesitantly accepts the conjecture of Greeven that Paul is already thinking of the collection in 7:11 when he uses the word σπουδή, suggesting that “it certainly argues for the connection of 7:5–16 with chap. 8 as well as for the separation of chaps. 8 and 9...that σπουδή and σπουδαῖος are frequent in chap. 8 (vss. 7, 8, 16, 17 and 22), but are lacking in chap. 9.”⁵² DeSilva asserts that “A strong indication of the

⁴⁷ Danker, *II Corinthians*, 143.

⁴⁸ McCant, *2 Corinthians*, 76.

⁴⁹ Stowers, “περὶ μὲν γάρ,” 347. This connection was previously observed by Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 225.

⁵⁰ Dahl, *Studies*, 38.

⁵¹ Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 97.

⁵² Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 97 n.28.

connectedness of 2 Cor 1–7 with the chapters on the collection is the high incidence of shared vocabulary. Terms which carry special significance, or are simply frequent, in chs. 1 and 7 reappear in ch. 8.⁵³ He cites in particular the terms παράκλησις, θλίψις, περισσεύω, κοινωνοί, χαρά, χαίρω, and καύχησις (along with related forms).⁵⁴ Danker similarly observes that

the term ‘joy’ (*chara*) echoes the repeated use in chap. 7 of the Greek cognate terms for the verb *chairō*, rejoice (7:7, 9, 13, 16) and the noun *chara* (7:4, 13). Likewise, the increase (expressed adverbially, *perissoterōs*, at 7:15) of good feeling on the part of Titus is the background for Paul’s reference to the Macedonians’ abundance (*perisseia*) of joy.⁵⁵

Here we are running into exactly the same problems as before, because the various observations that are being made are not being interpreted by means of an overarching theory but merely invoked in support of one or another hypothesis.

One of the few things that virtually all scholars agree upon is the fact that 2:14–7:4 constitutes a clearly defined thematic unit. The opening remarks in 2:14–17 are often regarded as a thematic statement that introduces the themes of 2:14–7:4,⁵⁶ and scholars on both sides of the literary integrity debate agree that the topic of Paul’s apostolic ministry dominates the entire section.⁵⁷ Kleinknecht provides some additional detail, listing

⁵³ DeSilva, “Ultimate Reality,” 42.

⁵⁴ DeSilva, “Ultimate Reality,” 42–44.

⁵⁵ Danker, *II Corinthians*, 118

⁵⁶ Collange, *Enigmes*, 21–41, 318–19; McDonald, “Preaching Ministry,” 43–48 (regarding 2:14–7:1); Harris, *Second Epistle*, 11.

⁵⁷ Various scholars are cited by Harris, *Second Epistle*, 11.

specific themes in 2:14–7:4 and providing a discussion of the linguistic evidence for these themes.⁵⁸

There are questions, however, about the status of 6:14–7:1 within 2:14–7:4. With regard to these verses, Strachan asserts that “any connexion of thought with what precedes and what follows is unrecognizable.”⁵⁹ Like Strachan, therefore, various interpreters regard 6:14–7:1 as an interpolation. Other scholars, however, have attempted to establish a defensible connection between 6:14–7:1 and its present textual environment, often through an appeal to covenantal or Second Exodus motifs. Links have been observed between the scriptural traditions that are cited within 6:14–7:1 and the wider context of 2:14–7:4.⁶⁰ And so intertextual relations with an allegedly unified collection of Exodus traditions are thought to create thematic unity between 6:14–7:1 and its surrounding co-text.⁶¹ Scholars have also observed that there are links between 6:11–13 and 7:2–4 that can be interpreted as resumptive signals. In particular, χωρήσατε ἡμᾶς in 7:2 is said to resemble πλατύνθητε καὶ ὑμεῖς in 6:13, πολλή μοι παρρησία πρὸς ὑμᾶς in 7:4 is said to resemble τὸ στόμα ἡμῶν ἀνέωγεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς in 6:11, 7:3 is said to be taking up 6:11b–12a, and the comment πρὸς κατάκρισιν οὐ λέγω in 7:2 is said to resemble the comment ὡς τέκνοις λέγω in 6:13.⁶² According to those who accept the integrity of 2:14–7:4 as a whole, these alleged connections indicate that Paul is returning to an earlier topic

⁵⁸ Kleinknecht, *Gerechtfertigte*, 250–51.

⁵⁹ Strachan, *Second Epistle*, xv.

⁶⁰ See esp. Webb, *Returning Home*, ch. 5.

⁶¹ See also Lane, “Covenant”; Beale, “Background”; Scott, “Use of Scripture.”

⁶² Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:26.

after a brief digression, but the arguments are somewhat haphazard and thus unlikely to persuade skeptics.

With regard to the relationship between 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 and the rest of chs. 1–7, Georgi goes so far as to claim that “The splits in 2:13/14 and 7:4/5...are so basic, and the connections between 2:13 and 7:5...are so obvious, that the burden of proof lies now with those who defend the unity of the present texts.”⁶³ And indeed, there is *some* linguistic evidence as regards alleged connections between 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16. As DeSilva argues, “the sections 1.1–2.13 and 7.5–16 share a common vocabulary which is conspicuously reduced in incidence in 2.14–7.4. Such central terms as παράκλησις, χαρά, παρηγοσία, θλίψις, καύχησις, and related noun and verb forms, forge a close relationship between 1.1–2.13 and 7.5–16 and also appear to distance those sections from 2.14–7.4.”⁶⁴ Notice, however, that unity advocates have embraced the close vocabulary connections between 2:13 and 7:5 as evidence that Paul and Timothy are signalling their return to an earlier topic following a digression, and have also cited similar verbal correspondences between 7:4 and 7:5–16 as evidence against the alleged partition at 7:5 (see Table 2).⁶⁵ Here again, therefore, the textual evidence is being made to cut both ways. Bultmann

⁶³ Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 335.

⁶⁴ DeSilva, “Ultimate Reality,” 49.

⁶⁵ The correspondences in the table are noted by various commentators, including Lambrecht, “Fragment,” 533–35; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:21; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 13; Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 22. Citing these correspondences, Lietzmann writes that “hier den Interpolationshypothesen, die 7:5 an 2:13 anschließen wollen, besondere Schwierigkeiten entgegenstehen” (*An die Korinther*, 131).

even says of these correspondences that they prove only the skill of the redactor who has assembled 2 Corinthians.⁶⁶

Table 2: Vocabulary Correspondences between 7:4 and 7:5–16

7:4	7:5–16
καύχησις	κεκαύχημαι...καύχησις (v. 14)
παρακλήσει	ὁ παρακαλῶν...παρακάλει (v. 6) παρακλήσει...παρακλήθη (v. 7) παρακεκλήμεθα...παρακλήσει (v. 13)
χαρᾶ	χαρῆναι (v. 7) χαίρω (v. 9) ἐχάρημεν...χαρᾶ (v. 13) χαίρω (v. 16)
θλίψει	θλιβόμενοι (v. 5)
ὑπερπερισσεύομαι τῇ χαρᾶ	περισσοτέρως μᾶλλον ἐχάρημεν (v. 13)

b. Tone

Although the vocabulary and subject matter of 2 Corinthians have played an important role in discussions of its literary integrity, pride of place in the discussion must be given to claims that have been made about the *tone* of Paul's language. According to Lake,

There is not only no connexion between 2 Cor. i.–ix. and 2 Cor. x.–xiii., but there is an absolute break between them....There never has been, and indeed there never can be, any dispute as to the fact that the whole tone of the Epistle changes suddenly at ch. x. 1, and that, if 2 Cor. x.–xiii. had existed in a separate form, no one would ever have dreamt of suggesting that it was the continuation of 2 Cor. i.–ix.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 52.

⁶⁷ Lake, *Earlier Epistles*, 156–57.

The nature of the break is well-described by Strachan, who writes that “We feel that all our impressions derived from chapters viii. and ix., with their lyric ending, ‘Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift,’ are suddenly shattered.”⁶⁸ And the seemingly inevitable interpretation of this break is captured by Kruse, who insists that “the change in tone which occurs at 10:1 is so great that it is psychologically improbable that chs. 1–9 and 10–13 were written at the same time to the same people.”⁶⁹ After all, as Plummer observes, “The change is not only surprising in its intensity, it is in the wrong direction.”⁷⁰ Virtually all scholars who partition 2 Corinthians into fragments deem there to be a psychologically inexplicable change in tone at 10:1.⁷¹

Interestingly, as Plummer points out, “The extraordinary change of tone which begins at x. 1 and continues to xiii. 10 is generally admitted, and is sometimes described in adequate language by those who nevertheless maintain the integrity of the whole Epistle.”⁷² A good example of this comes from Harris, who observes with regard to the transition from ch. 9 to ch. 10 that “Patent relief, unbridled joy, and gentle appeal are succeeded by scathing remonstrance, biting irony (or, some would say, sarcasm), and

⁶⁸ Strachan, *Second Epistle*, xvi.

⁶⁹ Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 33.

⁷⁰ Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xxix.

⁷¹ Furnish observes that “The overall tone of Letter D [i.e. 2 Cor 1–9] is earnest, and Paul’s mood as he writes is guardedly optimistic.... Thus, insofar as he deals at all with the specific situation in the Corinthian church or with certain lingering suspicions about his ministry (primarily in 1:12–2:13), he does so tactfully, even gently. The same kind of tactfulness is evident in the appeals, especially those of 6:11–7:3...and 7:4–9:15” (*II Corinthians*, 44). By way of contrast, Furnish observes that Letter E [i.e. 2 Cor 10–13] “expresses primarily his [i.e. Paul’s] anxiety, his frustration, even his sense of outrage at the way things seem to be going in the Corinthian congregation” (45).

⁷² Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xxix.

impetuous self-defence. After the weather has improved, the storm breaks!”⁷³ Even though he observes a change in tone, however, Harris does not regard this change as the result of literary fragmentation, preferring to accept the unity of the canonical epistle. In much the same way, Vielhauer downplays the importance of changes in Paul’s tone: “Aber die Änderung des Tons besagt nichts, sie findet sich auf engstem Raum 1Kor 4, 14–21, wo Paulus den Korinthern seine väterliche Liebe versichert und gleich darauf mit dem ‘Stock’ droht, in einem Passus also, den niemand deshalb auf zwei verschiedene Briefe verteilen würde.”⁷⁴

Taking a slightly different tack, other unity advocates argue against the alleged change in tone. Hughes wonders,

Is the change of tone really so abrupt as it is made out to be? And do these four chapters really constitute an outburst? The tone of this concluding section is set by the opening words of the tenth chapter, where Paul addresses an entreaty to the Corinthians ‘by the meekness and gentleness of Christ’. He is still writing as their spiritual father, moved by love and ‘godly jealousy’ for them.⁷⁵

Similarly, Ellis argues that all of 2 Corinthians is polemical, with chs. 10–13 differing only in degree.⁷⁶ And it has been observed that signs of affection do not disappear with ch. 9 but rather persist into chs. 10–13 (e.g. 11:2–3; 12:14–15a; 13:7).⁷⁷ Barrett, in

⁷³ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 29.

⁷⁴ Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 153. See also Marshall, *Enmity*, 404; Witherington, *Conflict*, 329; Vegge, *Reconciliation*, 29.

⁷⁵ Hughes, *Second Epistle*, xxiii.

⁷⁶ Ellis, “Problems,” 35. Harris makes much the same argument, pointing to 2:17; 3:1–6; 4:2; 5:12–13; 6:14–16a and citing the opinion of R. A. Knox that, apart from chs. 10–13, “all the rest of the epistle is disappointment and exostulation” (*Second Epistle*, 30, citing Knox, *Letters*, 175).

⁷⁷ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 30.

response to the allegedly violent change in tone at 10:1, writes: “There is an unmistakable difference between the end of chapter ix and the beginning of chapter x, but it is well not to exaggerate the difference.”⁷⁸ So although all scholars observe a specific change in tone at 10:1, they disagree about the degree of that change and they have differing opinions about how the tone of chs. 10–13 should be described relative to the tone that characterizes chs. 1–9.

Given the great importance that is placed upon Paul’s tone in 2 Corinthians, there are surprisingly few partition theorists who actually attempt to define the concept or to ground their assertions in the explicit wording of the text. Thrall observes that chs. 10–13 (containing only 85 vv.) have twice as many self-defensive rhetorical questions as chs. 1–7 (containing 128 vv.), but this sort of argument stands out as being unusual.⁷⁹ Descriptive phrases abound, but evidence is sorely lacking.

On the other side of the debate, Barnett, after a sustained discussion of topical continuity, observes the following two facts. First, “[Paul’s] address to [the Corinthians] as ‘brothers’ within chapters 10–13 (13:11) is matched within chapters 1–9 (1:8; 8:1).” Second, “[Paul’s] final admonition (*παρακαλεῖσθε*—13:11) yields only one specific parallel in chapters 10–13 (10:1), but several in chapters 1–9 (2:8; 5:20; 6:1).” Although Barnett does not explicitly connect these observations with the issue of Paul’s tone, this is a logical step to take. Throughout 2 Corinthians, Paul is appealing to the Corinthians as brothers and sisters, urging them to change their behaviour—and the tone that is set by

⁷⁸ Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 242.

⁷⁹ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:5 n.28.

this approach is seemingly different than would be the case if Paul called his addressees names and commanded them to obey his instructions. So although Barnett relegates these observations to a footnote and suggests merely that they “add cumulatively to an impression of epistolary unity,”⁸⁰ they constitute some of the only evidence that has been explicitly cited with regard to Paul’s tone.⁸¹ And they actually point towards a continuity of tone rather than an abrupt shift.

It may be that the change in tone at 10:1 is as significant as partition theorists have suggested, but such claims have hardly been substantiated with reference to testable generalizations. Indeed, nowhere in the debate has anyone attempted to clearly define what is meant by “tone” or how it is manifested in Paul’s written words, leaving one to wonder whether the notion of tone describes anything more clearcut than the interpreter’s vague, subjective impression of how Paul was probably feeling as he composed 2 Corinthians.

A similar lack of clarity surrounds related observations that have been made about changes in Paul’s tone within chs. 1–9. According to Dean, the atmosphere in ch. 9 differs remarkably from that in ch. 8. Whereas in ch. 8 Paul trusts that the Corinthians’ joy will motivate them, in ch. 9 he is anxious and urgent. Whereas in ch. 8 he confidently appeals to lofty motives; in ch. 9 his appeal is ultimately grounded in self-interest.⁸² But Dean employs no explicit evidence or explanatory framework, permitting other scholars

⁸⁰ Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 21.

⁸¹ See also the mention of the term ἀγαπητοί in Hall, *Unity*, 89.

⁸² Dean, *Saint Paul and Corinth*, 93–94.

to argue on similarly haphazard grounds that Dean's contrast between the sections is overdrawn. Harris, for instance, proposes that urgency is evident in ch. 8, and that Paul seems confident and cheerful in ch. 9. He also argues that exalted motives appear in ch. 9, and that self-interest is operative already in ch. 8.⁸³

Recent literature also contains some observations about a change of tone between chs. 1–7 and chs. 8–9. Thus Harris speaks about a change “from relief and almost excessive exuberance regarding the recent past to somewhat embarrassed admonition concerning the immediate future.”⁸⁴ But the significance of this change is disputed. Plummer, who forcefully insists that the change in tone at 10:1 must be an indication of literary fragmentation, takes an opposing interpretation with regard to chs. 1–7 and 8–9, arguing that “any change in tone is adequately accounted for by the change of subject. One does not ask favours in the same tone as that in which one claims rights.”⁸⁵ Regrettably, however, Plummer does not enter into a discussion of the relationship that exists between subject matter and tone, or into a discussion of how the interaction of these linguistic qualities should be related to debates over literary integrity.

⁸³ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 28.

⁸⁴ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 29.

⁸⁵ Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xxvi. Surprisingly, this is not the only place where Plummer rejects an appeal to change of tone as evidence for a literary seam. Regarding an alleged seam at 13:10, he writes:

The sudden change of tone, so far from being incredible, is natural, especially in one who was so full of shifting emotions as St Paul. The most unwelcome task of denouncing malignant enemies and threatening impenitent offenders is accomplished. He will not utter another word in that strain. He ends with a few words of exhortation, a few words of affection, and his fullest benediction (Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xxvii).

Aside from the the dramatic shift at 10:1, the most frequently observed change in tone involves 2:14–7:4 and the wider context of chs. 1–7. Many commentators have indicated that they perceive a change in tone between 2:13 and 2:14 as Paul moves from a discussion of his arrival in Troas and his restless spirit to a sudden burst of praise to God for God’s incessant triumph. And some perceive a marked change in tone between 7:4 and 7:5 as Paul moves from discussing his great happiness to discussing his restlessness in Macedonia. Citing these alleged changes in tone in support of his partition theory, Georgi asserts that “even the last verses of this passage, 6:11–13 and 7:2–4, do not fit into the letter of reconciliation [i.e. 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16]. Paul’s pleading and urging, especially the bitter tone of 6:11–13, speaks against such an interpretation.”⁸⁶ And so Georgi, like his predecessors Halmel and Weiss, isolates 2:14–7:4 from its current literary context as a text with an entirely different tone than its surroundings.

It is also notable at this point that there are differences of opinion regarding the relationship between 2:14–7:4 and chs. 10–13 among those who isolate 2:14–7:4 on the basis of its allegedly negative tone. Weiss, together with many of his subsequent followers, argues that 2:14–7:4 and chs. 10–13 *together* constitute the so-called tearful letter, since the two fragments are similarly negative in tone. Yet Schmithals, Bornkamm, Georgi and others have argued that the two fragments must be independent compositions.⁸⁷ The important thing about this disagreement, as far as the present survey is concerned, is that those who wish to separate the two alleged fragments point to a

⁸⁶ Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 13.

⁸⁷ For an overview of these developments, see Bieringer, “Teilungshypothesen,” 85–98.

difference in tone between them. Bornkamm, for example, finds it impossible that the optimism and confidence observable in 7:4 could be found in the same letter as chs. 10–13.⁸⁸ Similarly, Georgi writes:

There is much closer correlation between section 2:14–7:4 and chaps. 10–13 with respect to form as well as to substance. In both cases Paul is fighting the alliance of the Corinthian community with outside agitators, sometimes using similar ideas and wording. But still, 2:14–7:4 and 10–13 are fragments of different letters, for regardless of the similarity in subject and terminology, there is a clear difference in tone between the two letters.⁸⁹

So once again, we find alleged changes in the tone of Paul’s language being observed and cited on all sides of the literary integrity debate in support of opposing conclusions. And yet nobody has produced a clearly defined concept of “tone” or a general list of explicit indicators to which interpreters might appeal in the course of making claims about Paul’s tone.

c. Conjunctions and Articular Phrases

At several of the alleged “seams” in 2 Corinthians, conjunctions are present. This is noteworthy because it is common for conjunctions to relate the text that they introduce to preceding text. What has been said about this issue in the literature?

With regard to the conjunction $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ that appears in 10:1, some scholars have insisted that it must mark a relation with something that has gone before. If this is so, they argue, then chs. 10–13 must be the continuation of a text and not the beginning of a

⁸⁸ Bornkamm, “Vorgeschichte,” 251–53.

⁸⁹ Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 13.

text.⁹⁰ For adherents of the letter's unity, who are apt to accept the text as it now stands, the prior text in question is chs. 1–9, but other scholars are not inclined to accept the text as it now stands. These scholars then suppose that the conjunction *δέ* relates 10:1 to some prior text that has now been lost or displaced. Kennedy, for example, finds this to be much more likely than the suggestion that the text as it now stands is original:

The passage has all the appearance of being the continuation of an argument homogeneous with itself; for, in addition to the fact that it begins with a conjunction, it contains an allusion to an objection which had been brought against the Apostle, which it brings before us not as if the subject were now for the first time introduced, but as if it had been already mentioned.⁹¹

According to others, the conjunction *δέ* may have been inserted by a redactor in order to create an explicit relation between the two fragments that are joined at 10:1. For example, Thrall writes: “But in any process of compilation it would be natural to insert a connecting particle at the beginning of chap. 10, and *δέ* would be the most obvious one.”⁹² And yet Thrall's argument that *δέ* would be the most obvious conjunction to insert at 10:1 stands opposed to Kennedy's assertion that the relation signalled by the conjunction is such that its function cannot be to relate 10:1 to the text of ch. 9.

The most frequently discussed conjunctions in 2 Corinthians are undoubtedly those which begin ch. 9 (*περὶ μὲν γάρ*). And, as is almost always the case with linguistic

⁹⁰ E.g., Allo, *Seconde Épître*, 241. He writes: “*δὲ* qui marque une relation à quelque chose qui précède, est certainement authentique.” Thrall cites Bachmann and Schlatter as asserting this as well (*Second Epistle*, 1:10).

⁹¹ Kennedy, *Second and Third Epistles*, 96. Bernard retorts that “Rather should we say that *δέ* marks the transition to a new subject, a usage to which we have an exact parallel in viii. 1 of this very Epistle” (*Second Epistle*, 21).

⁹² Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:10.

observations, they are cited as evidence by scholars on all sides of the literary integrity debate. It is commonly observed that *περί* is often found at the beginning of a clause that introduces a new topic of discussion, whether at the beginning of a letter or at some point in the middle of a letter.⁹³ And then, because the topic that is introduced by *περί* in 9:1 is alleged to be present already in ch. 8, it is denied that 9:1 was originally continuous with ch. 8. Yet it is not entirely clear that *περί* must be viewed as introducing a new topic.⁹⁴ Similarly, there are several major interpretations as regards the conjunctions *μέν* and *γάρ*. According to many unity advocates, the conjunction *μέν* in 9:1 anticipates the *δέ* in 9:3. The *γάρ* on the other hand “points back to 8:24 and introduces the reason for Paul’s request there.”⁹⁵ Alternative interpretations generally grant the first of these two points, but then supply a different interpretation of the conjunction *γάρ*. One such reading goes back to a footnote in a 1761 commentary by Baumgarten. That footnote makes reference to a suggestion presented by Baumgarten’s student Nösselt to the effect that the particle *γάρ* has a much wider sense in 9:1 and that it indicates a return to the exhortation that was interrupted in 8:16–24. In support of this reading, Nösselt cites the manner in which Cicero uses the particle *nam* when moving on to new subjects.⁹⁶ For his part, Betz accepts

⁹³ Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 90; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:39; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 27.

⁹⁴ Kruse objects to this reasoning: “While it is true that Paul uses similar (but not identical) formulae elsewhere when taking up new subjects (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1), this does not mean that wherever such formulae are found we must assume the introduction of a new subject” (*2 Corinthians*, 32).

⁹⁵ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 27. Harris paraphrases the text as follows: “for although... it is superfluous for me to be writing to you like this (since I know your eager willingness which I am boasting about...) yet I am sending the brothers precisely so that our expressed pride about you should not prove to be unwarranted in this particular regard.” Thrall cites Bruce, Prümm and Furnish as arguing that the conjunctions suggest a connection back to ch. 8 (*Second Epistle*, 1:40).

⁹⁶ Baumgarten, *Auslegung*, 855 n.227. A translation of the footnote can be found in Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 6 n.25.

this idea that γάρ need not be explanatory, but then on this basis reads 9:1 as a completely fresh beginning with no connection to any preceding text: “The presence of the particle μέν means that γάρ (‘for’) need not refer to anything preceding. Rather, it refers to that which follows without connection to what has gone before.”⁹⁷

Responding to Betz’s work, Stowers calls Betz’s claims about περι μὲν γάρ “the only argument for [his] view of chapters 8 and 9 which is susceptible to anything resembling ‘objective’ verification or falsification.” “For that reason,” Stowers continues, “περὶ μὲν γάρ and the arguments based on it deserve careful and thorough investigation.”⁹⁸ Then, after carefully examining ninety textually certain examples of the series περι μὲν γάρ in extant Greek texts, Stowers concludes that “In no example does the expression introduce the body of a document or even come near its beginning.” Rather, it “expresses a close relationship—a reason, warrant, explanation, subtopic—to what precedes.”⁹⁹ He concludes: “Betz’ commentary is a noble experiment in testing a scholarly hypothesis. In this case, however, we must conclude that the hypothesis fails to account for the evidence.”¹⁰⁰ But of course, even granting Stowers’ conclusion that the conjunction γάρ in 9:1 forges a connection with ch. 8, there will be some who suggest that the conjunction is not original but rather redactional.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 90. Betz enthusiastically supports the work of Anton Halmel in this respect (Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 26, see Halmel, *Der Zweite Korintherbrief*, 11ff.). This reading can also be found in Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 268–69.

⁹⁸ Stowers, “περὶ μὲν γάρ,” 340.

⁹⁹ Stowers, “περὶ μὲν γάρ,” 345.

¹⁰⁰ Stowers, “περὶ μὲν γάρ,” 348.

¹⁰¹ E.g., Thrall writes: “But it could well be redactional. It is one of the most obvious transitional particles for an editor to use, and the equally obvious δέ is excluded on account of the μὲν...δέ construction

Lastly, a number of observations have been made about the conjunctions *καὶ γάρ* in 7:5. For example, Thrall observes that “the *καὶ γάρ* of 7.5, introducing the contents of 7.5–16, is a perfect logical fit with the last sentence of 7.4, since in vv. 5–6 we are given the reasons for the reference in v. 4 to joy and to affliction.”¹⁰² Surprisingly, given her comments on 10:1 and 9:1, Thrall even insists that “it is unlikely that these links are redactional.”¹⁰³ Welborn, however, disagrees with Thrall. He observes that “the common usage [of *καὶ γάρ*] was confirmatory and causal; the particles affirm the truth of a statement by adducing a motive or describing an action,” then he argues that “it is not possible to discover such a relation between 7.5 and 7.2–4.”¹⁰⁴ For his part, Welborn sees the *καὶ γάρ* in 7:5 as indicating an original progression from 2:13 and 7:5.¹⁰⁵ Here again, therefore, opposing claims are being made about literary integrity, but the same linguistic evidence is being cited by both sides.

A distinct but related form of linguistic evidence is invoked by scholars when they draw attention to Paul’s use of the Greek article or his use of various pronouns. For example, with regard to the alleged seam between chs. 8 and 9, at least three distinct observations have been made. First, according to some, the article before *διακονίας* in 9:1 is likely anaphoric, “since *τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους* (9:1a) is resumptive of the

in vv. 1–3” (*Second Epistle*, 1:42).

¹⁰² Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:21.

¹⁰³ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:21 n.132. Cf. Bultmann, who writes: “The *γάρ* stems from the redactor, who joined the pieces of the various letters” (*Second Letter*, 52).

¹⁰⁴ Welborn, “Broken Pieces,” 581.

¹⁰⁵ See also Harris, *Second Epistle*, 13.

identical expression in 8:4b.”¹⁰⁶ Second, it is possible that the present infinitive γράφειν draws attention to Paul’s *continuing to write* and that the article before the infinitive is anaphoric.¹⁰⁷ Third, the unqualified reference to τοὺς ἀδελφούς in 9:3, 5 is sometimes said to presuppose that the brothers in question are identifiable, which makes the most sense if they have just been introduced in ch. 8.¹⁰⁸

Not everyone is persuaded by these observations, however. In fact, Thrall rejects all three of them. Although she concedes that the longer expression τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους can be explained as due to the amount of material between 8:4 and 9:1, or perhaps as due to a desire for emphasis,¹⁰⁹ she argues that we would then expect ταύτης to appear with τῆς διακονίας. And indeed, Thrall points out that, after the collection is introduced in 8:4, every subsequent reference in ch. 8 has the demonstrative (vv. 6, 7, 19, 20). Similarly, after the collection is (re-)introduced in 9:1, it consistently appears with the demonstrative (vv. 5, 12, 13).¹¹⁰ With regard to the article before γράφειν, Thrall asserts that the articular infinitive is sometimes equivalent to an anarthrous infinitive and that Paul is merely beginning a new discussion of the collection by acknowledging that his readers already know something about it.¹¹¹ As for the brothers, Thrall accepts that

¹⁰⁶ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 27.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 233; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 426; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 249; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ E.g. Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 33; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 27.

¹⁰⁹ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:40.

¹¹⁰ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:39, citing Halmel, *Der Zweite Korintherbrief*, 15.

¹¹¹ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:39.

they are treated as identifiable in 9:3, 5 (“the ‘brothers’ are already known”),¹¹² but she suggests that this merely proves the chronological priority of chs. 1–8, not the literary integrity of chs. 1–9.

Among all the evidence surveyed here, the area of conjunctions and articular phrases is perhaps the most clearcut, since the interpretive options are clearly—even if not adequately—drawn from very specific linguistic items. Even here, however, interpreters cite the same linguistic evidence in support of different conclusions, and there is always the spectre of Paul’s alleged redactor lurking at hand, in the event that the most plausible reading of a given conjunction runs counter to a conclusion reached on other grounds.

d. Summary and Evaluation

In the wake of the above discussions, it is easy to agree with Betz: “As one reads the many contributions to the debate, the complete lack of methodological reflection becomes more and more irritating....Proponents of hypotheses of partition and of unity unconsciously employ the same types of arguments, turning them first to one purpose, then to another.”¹¹³ Discussions of Paul’s vocabulary or his themes or his alleged intertextual allusions employ no clear theoretical or methodological framework. They do not adequately define their terms, they do not successfully demonstrate that vocabulary or topical continuity has any relevance to the issue of literary integrity, and they do not

¹¹² Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:43.

¹¹³ Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 25–26.

establish that intertextual connections can be said to indicate literary or historical priority. Discussions of Paul's tone fare no better, since "tone" is never defined, explicit criteria for the identification of a written tone are never given, and it is never established that changes in tone have any necessary relevance to the issue of literary integrity. Scholars are on better ground when discussing Paul's use of conjunctions, since in these discussions at least there are specific linguistic items in view. Yet even here, arguments are employed in such a way that the linguistic evidence manages to support both sides of the literary integrity debate. And of course, whenever linguistic arguments fail to persuade, one can always attribute a specific conjunction to the work of a redactor.

Ultimately, therefore, language-related arguments about the literary integrity of 2 Corinthians remain under-theorized, under-specified, and inconclusive. On the basis of such arguments alone, one would be hard pressed to confidently conclude *anything* about the literary integrity of 2 Corinthians. Instead, confusion and contradiction abound as interpreters cite Paul's language without invoking linguistic generalizations and without showing how the cited details are relevant to the matter of literary integrity. Moving on from language, then, it is necessary to ask: Are things any different as regards claims about the situation(s) that underlie(s) 2 Corinthians?

2. Observations about the Situation of 2 Corinthians

In a certain sense, it can be said that all participants in the literary integrity debate agree that the various parts of 2 Corinthians relate to a single overall situation.¹¹⁴ J.-F. Collange,

¹¹⁴ Bieringer, "Ursprüngliche Einheit," 107–8 n.4.

for example, states that “personne ne conteste non plus que, même s’il n’y a pas unité littéraire, il y a unité quant la situation à laquelle les différentes parties de l’épître font face.”¹¹⁵ Usually, however, this situation is treated as an extended series of historical developments, the total duration of which is sometimes said to have spanned the writing of several letters. By way of contrast, the present study seeks to relate Paul’s linguistic content in the first place to one or more *semiotic situations*—and only *then* to the broader historical setting(s) within which those semiotic situations were constructed (see Chapter 2). Accordingly, as I survey situational claims that have been made about 2 Corinthians, I am mostly interested in how the alleged situational factors are thought to be manifested in 2 Corinthians. To what extent and in what manner are claims about the situation(s) of 2 Corinthians grounded in Paul’s explicit wording?

a. Purposes

The most frequent way in which scholars have made assertions about Paul’s semiotic behaviour is by means of the notion of *purpose*. This problematic notion is one that will not be employed in the present study, for reasons that will be discussed in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw claims about Paul’s purposes into the present survey by exploring how Paul’s alleged purposes are or are not manifested in the wording of 2 Corinthians. After all, if Paul’s purposes are being abstracted from the wording of his text, then there ought to be some kind of relation between what Paul is allegedly working

¹¹⁵ Collange, *Enigmes*, 15.

towards and what he actually *does* in 2 Corinthians—even if that relation is not clearly worked out in the literature.

As a starting point, it can be noted that some proponents of the unity hypothesis point to 13:10 as an explicit statement about Paul's purpose in writing. For instance, Meyer writes: "The aim of the Epistle is stated by Paul himself at xiii. 10, viz. to put the church before his arrival in person into that frame of mind, which it was necessary that he should find, in order that he might thereupon set to work among them, not with stern corrective authority, but for their edification."¹¹⁶ Moreover, when subsidiary purposes seem to be evident at various points throughout the letter, Meyer determines that they should all be related to Paul's purpose of preparing for his impending visit. "With the establishment of his apostolic character and reputation he is therefore chiefly occupied in the whole Epistle; everything else is only subordinate, including a detailed appeal respecting the collection."¹¹⁷

Hughes does something similar to Meyer when he argues that 2 Corinthians is primarily a defence. He writes:

This letter...was written largely with the purpose of refuting the accusations and insinuations against him with which these intruders had been poisoning the minds of the believers at Corinth. It is a defence by Paul of the integrity of his personal character and apostleship and an exposure of the intruders as imposters—dictated not by self-interest but by the necessity for protecting the church God had founded through him from forces and doctrines which were essentially inimical to the gospel committed to Paul and to the spiritual welfare of those who lives, through response to that gospel, had been transformed and set free.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 411.

¹¹⁷ Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 411.

¹¹⁸ Hughes, *Second Epistle*, xvi–xvii.

Other scholars have observed that these defensive purposes on Paul's part are not isolated but part of a broadly-based attempt to address relational troubles that have arisen on account of complaints being made against Paul. Young and Ford argue that "Throughout, Paul's fundamental aim, in the face of suspicions of his double-dealing, is to assert his utter transparency and openness and his single-minded commitment to his vocation."¹¹⁹ In this way "The entire letter is concerned with re-establishing mutual confidence."¹²⁰ Similarly, Witherington writes: "In 2 Corinthians...Paul seeks to reestablish positive contact and a healthy relationship with his Corinthian converts."¹²¹ And Amador writes: "The purpose of the letter is to build upon and develop a connection between Paul and the Corinthians along the lines Paul sees as necessary for continuing his task as apostle of Christ Jesus."¹²²

In a lengthy discussion, Harris attempts to draw together and combine numerous purposes into a description of Paul's overall aims in 2 Corinthians. He cites 12:19 and writes: "We may deduce that the apostle's general purpose in writing was to promote his converts' οἰκοδομή (cf. 10:8; 13:10), that is, to strengthen and stabilize their individual and corporate faith and to promote their advance and maturation in the Christian life."¹²³ This general purpose, he says, may be clearly seen in the prayer of 13:7 and in Paul's

¹¹⁹ Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 15.

¹²⁰ Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 14.

¹²¹ Witherington, *Conflict*, 339.

¹²² Hester Amador, "Revisiting 2 Corinthians," 111. By way of contrast, Price thinks that Paul does not have reconciliation as his main purpose, but is merely seizing a relational conflict as an opportunity for theological instruction (see Price, "Aspects").

¹²³ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 51.

statement in 13:9. Yet in another place Harris writes: “All of the content of the letter can be related to a single, coordinating purpose in writing—to prepare for this imminent visit by seeking to remove present or potential obstacles that could prevent the visit from being pleasant.”¹²⁴ According to Harris, “This overarching specific purpose is wholly compatible with the general purpose [i.e. building up the Corinthians].”¹²⁵ Adding still further detail to his observations, Harris suggests that there are numerous secondary purposes evident throughout the letter, including: (1) to express great relief and delight at the Corinthians’ positive response (chs. 1–7); (2) to exhort the Corinthians to complete their promised collection (chs. 8–9); and (3) to help the Corinthians recognize the proper criteria for distinguishing among rival apostles, and to encourage self-examination with a view to mending their ways.¹²⁶ Moreover, in various places Harris also identifies the following purposes:

- to inform the Corinthians about the severity of his affliction in Asia
- to solicit their comfort and prayer
- to answer the charge that he had acted insincerely
- to encourage them to end the punishment of the offender
- to describe the true nature of the Christian ministry
- to have the Corinthians renew their pride in him and reciprocate his love for them
- to call for a break from idolatrous associations and for personal holiness
- to defend his authority against rival apostles.

Like Harris, Barnett also suggests that there is a unity of purpose in 2 Corinthians that incorporates a variety of sub-purposes. He claims that the letter is “controlled from

¹²⁴ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 44. See also pp. 52–53.

¹²⁵ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 53.

¹²⁶ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 52.

beginning to end by the following simple aims”: (1) to explain and defend Paul’s actions; (2) to explain and defend his covenant ministry; (3) to encourage the Corinthians to resolve various difficulties in advance of his final visit; and (4) to teach a number of important doctrines.¹²⁷ Although Barnett’s list differs from the various lists provided by Harris, the two have in common the desire to relate certain localized purposes in 2 Corinthians—which sometimes seem to be equivalent with the activities that Paul performs in the letter—to a larger, unifying purpose.

Against these unifying descriptions of Paul’s purpose(s), other scholars deny that the various purposes can be fitted together into a coherent unity. This denial is supported by a two step argument. First, it is observed that some of the purposes in question are localized to specific parts of 2 Corinthians. For example, whereas 12:14 and 13:1 indicate that Paul’s purpose is to prepare for an imminent visit, it is alleged that there is no sign of this visit in chs. 1–9. Furnish writes:

The statement in 13:10—namely, that Paul writes as he does so that he will ‘not have to deal harshly’ with the Corinthians on his forthcoming visit—is fully appropriate as a description of the function of chaps. 10–13, with its sharp warnings and admonitions; but it is not at all appropriate with reference to chaps. 1–9. As a matter of fact, the prospect of an impending visit, which so pervades chaps. 10–13, is nowhere apparent in chaps. 1–9.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 24.

¹²⁸ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 31. Harris attempts to show that there may be indications of an impending visit in chs. 8–9. Harris, *Second Epistle*, 32. But Furnish would probably still argue that the threat of a harsh arrival still strikes a dissonant chord with those chapters:

Paul’s objectives in Letter D [i.e. 2 Cor 1–9] may be summarized as follows: (a) to assure his Corinthian congregation that he is genuinely concerned for them...; (b) to clarify what he understands his apostolic commission to require...; (c) to appeal to the Corinthian Christians to strengthen and confirm their commitment to the gospel and to his apostolate....Indeed, one may even say that the underlying practical purpose of Letter D is to appeal to the Corinthians to make good on their long-standing commitment to contribute to the collection (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 42).

Similarly, Kruse writes:

In 12:19–13:10 he [i.e. Paul] shows that the purpose of all he has said was for the Corinthians' upbuilding in the hope that when he makes his third visit he would not have to be severe in the use of his authority. Such a declared purpose fits in well with the content of chs. 10–13 so long as they are not regarded as belonging with chs. 1–9, for the latter bear no hint of a threat of imminent disciplinary action.¹²⁹

Second, partition theorists have argued that it would have entailed a major strategic blunder for Paul to combine in a single letter the various purposes that are evident in the major divisions of 2 Corinthians. If Paul's underlying practical purpose in chs. 1–9 is to strengthen relations with the Corinthians and to bolster support for the collection, would he have been so foolish as to follow them up with chs. 10–13? Plummer does not think so.¹³⁰

When one wishes to re-establish friendly relations with persons, one may begin by stating one's own grievances frankly and finding fault freely, and then pass on to say all that is conciliatory, showing a willingness to forgive and a desire for renewed affection. But here the Apostle does the opposite. Having written in tender language of his intense longing for reconciliation and his intense joy at having been able to establish it, he suddenly bursts out into a torrent of reproaches, sarcastic self-vindication, and stern warnings, which must almost have effaced the pacific effect of the first seven chapters. Nor is this all. In between these strangely inharmonious portions there is placed a delicate and somewhat hesitating, yet eager, petition for increased interest in the collection for the poor Christians at Jerusalem. This follows naturally enough after affectionate relations have been re-established in the first seven chapters. But it is strange

¹²⁹ Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 35–36.

¹³⁰ See also Georgi:

Paul has just urgently asked for active and existential participation in the collection for Jerusalem. And then a scathing philippic which gives the Corinthians no quarter! I cannot see how anyone could attribute strategy to Paul in order to explain this striking contrast. From a tactical point of view, having a philippic in chaps. 10–13 follow a request for money is not very shrewd (Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 9).

policy, immediately after imploring freshly regained friends to do their duty, to begin heaping upon them reproaches and threats.¹³¹

So one argument against the unity of chs. 1–9 and 10–13 is that Paul would not have been foolish enough to employ a “strange policy” that would certainly fail to achieve any of his purposes.¹³²

Responding to this argument, Harris supposes that while it is true that “if 2 Corinthians was sent as a single letter, chs. 10–13 would have led to renewed suspense concerning his converts’ reaction to stern words,” “a pastor who experienced a ‘daily burden of anxiety’ for all his churches (11:28) would not shrink from such a renewal of tension if it was necessary, irrespective of the dangers and unpleasantness involved.”¹³³ But the question remains as to why, having addressed some contentious issues and then settled down into the appeal of chs. 8–9, Paul would suddenly decide to raise contentious issues again. Harris claims that we must not “fail to distinguish the situation reflected in chs. 10–13 from the circumstances behind the ‘severe letter.’”¹³⁴ His implied point seems to be that a pastor who had already written the “severe letter” (which on Harris’s interpretation has preceded 2 Corinthians and brought about the reconciliation observable

¹³¹ Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xxix–xxx. Furnish writes: “It is extraordinary that the appeal issued in chaps. 8–9 on behalf of the collection for Jerusalem should be followed by the sharp polemic of chaps. 10–13 (see, e.g., Windisch, [*Der zweite Korintherbrief*,] 288–89). This incongruity is especially striking when one recognizes how carefully the appeal of chaps. 8–9 has been prepared for by the assurances of confidence in chap. 7” (*II Corinthians*, 31).

¹³² Murphy-O’Connor writes: “It is psychologically impossible that Paul should suddenly switch from a celebration of reconciliation with the Corinthians (1–9) to savage reproach and sarcastic self-vindication (10–13). Such an attack on the Corinthians would have undone everything he had tried to achieve in chapters 1–9” (*Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 10–11).

¹³³ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 32.

¹³⁴ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 32.

in chs. 1–9) would surely not shrink from repeating the exercise *if new and different circumstances* demanded a similarly stern response.

This idea of a second “severe letter” has been developed at greater length by Bieringer and Vegge. Bieringer argues that 2 Corinthians employs the resolution of an earlier problem involving “the offender” as a model for the resolution of a second, related problem involving external opponents.¹³⁵ Similarly, Vegge proposes that “it is reasonable to take chs. 10–13 as almost a *new* tearful letter where the purpose is, *again*, to cause the Corinthians pain (λύπη); a pain which can effect their final repentance (μετάνοια) and full reconciliation with Paul.”¹³⁶ Against the claim that this would be so foolish as to be implausible, Vegge argues that Paul is not *narrating* an entirely successful and complete reconciliation in chs. 1–7; rather, he is confidently *depicting* a completely reconciled relationship—despite clear signs that the relationship remains turbulent and that the Corinthians’ commitment to Paul remains uncertain—because this rhetorical strategy allows him to focus on the few positive steps that have been taken by the Corinthians (i.e. their handling of the ἀδικήσας-conflict).¹³⁷ The idea is that the Corinthians will respond warmly to Paul’s confident joy and will be motivated to sustain that pleasing sentiment by meeting expectations with regard to the collection and by severing their ties with the false apostles prior to Paul’s arrival in Corinth.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Bieringer, “Plädoyer,” 178–79.

¹³⁶ Vegge, *Reconciliation*, 36.

¹³⁷ In arguing this way, Vegge is leaning heavily upon the earlier work of Bieringer and Olson (see Vegge, *Reconciliation*, 35).

¹³⁸ An alternative explanation, from Allo, claims that it is strategic for Paul to show his support for Jerusalem in chs. 8–9 (by means of his collection for the saints) before engaging in polemic against his opponents in chs. 10–13, because his opponents are invoking the authority of Jerusalem (*Seconde Épître*,

One of the dangers of the notion of purpose has been helpfully drawn out by Hall, who points out that Paul was not able to freely pick and choose whatever he wanted to do. Although it might be valid to cite conflicting purposes in the event that Paul was solely responsible for the situation in which he found himself, Hall suggests that Paul was forced to work towards a multitude of conflicting goals in his letter, and that there was no good way to accomplish them all in a single text without introducing tensions into that text. “When composing 2 Corinthians Paul was forced by circumstances to deal in a single letter with a variety of issues.... There was no way he could combine all these elements into a logical whole.”¹³⁹ Goudge similarly affirms that “it was very difficult to deal with all these matter together, and the apparent awkwardness of his arrangement of what he has to say simply reflects the awkwardness of the situation in which he finds himself.”¹⁴⁰ To this I would add the general objection that it has never been clearly established how many purposes a letter can have, to what extent different purposes can be localized in different parts of a letter, or whether there is any correlation between an author’s purpose and his or her explicit wording.

Finally, as a last detail, it is noteworthy that many scholars discern a unified purpose in chs. 1–8 because the expressions of confidence in ch. 7 seem to lead so strategically into the appeal for money in ch. 8.¹⁴¹ According to this argument, Paul’s

238). Thrall, however, calls this argument “less than convincing,” an evaluation with which most commentators seem to agree (*Second Epistle*, 1:9).

¹³⁹ Hall, *Unity*, 100.

¹⁴⁰ Goudge, *Second Epistle*, lvii.

¹⁴¹ E.g., Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 36.

highlighting of his confidence is a behaviour that anticipates the subsequent behaviour of asking for money.

b. Relational Dynamics

Another prominent way in which scholars have made assertions about the behaviour being enacted in 2 Corinthians involves the *relational dynamics* that seem to underlie the letter. Here Vegge is on the mark when he writes,

The tension between reconciliation and conflict...has been the greatest reason for the different partition theories which have been proposed. On the other hand, different unity theories seek to show how the impression of both reconciliation and conflict can be held together within a unified letter.¹⁴²

Of course, one rarely finds the application of explicit, theoretically-motivated generalizations, whereby 2 Corinthians is described as an instance of a recognizable form of social interaction. Instead, where Paul's relationship with the Corinthians is discussed in connection with the literary integrity issue, one tends to find either simple description or historical reconstruction. Despite this limitation, however, a-theoretical descriptions can still provide important information about the specific relational dynamics that characterize the canonical epistle.

Responding to claims that there is an abrupt change in Paul's tone at 10:1 and that this indicates a changed relationship, a different historical situation, and a literary seam, Stephenson points to several passages in chs. 1–7 as indications that all is not well between Paul and his addressees even in this division of the epistle: 1:14; 5:20; 6:1–2,

¹⁴² Vegge, *Reconciliation*, 7–8.

11–12; 6:14–7:1; 7:2. He also notes that there seems to be a minority of people within the Corinthian community who have assessed Paul’s commanded punishment of the offender as too harsh.¹⁴³ Finally, he suggests that the length of space devoted to the collection is itself an indication of a shaky relationship, since there would have been no need for such a lengthy discussion if the relationship between Paul and his addressees involved a trusted apostle and his loyal congregation.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Kümmel writes of chs. 1–7 that

this section of the letter too is shot through with defenses against misinterpretation of Paul’s behaviour (1:13 ff, 23 ff; 4:2 f; 5:11 ff; 7:2) and with polemic against other missionaries (2:17 f; 3:1), and only a minority of the community has complied with Paul’s wishes (2:6).¹⁴⁵

Bates observes with regard to 2:5–11 and 7:5–16 that “Satisfaction done...is not the same as full and final reconciliation” and that “there is nothing in II Corinthians to show that St. Paul was completely satisfied with the situation.”¹⁴⁶ He describes the crucial passage of 7:5–16 as “not the most gracious acknowledgment of an apology.”¹⁴⁷

A related argument alleges that love and intimate concern are manifested throughout the entire letter, not merely in chs. 1–9. Kümmel writes, “Even in 10–13 Paul assumes that only certain people are attacking him (10:2, 7, 11 f; 11:5, 12 f, 18, 20; 12:11,

¹⁴³ Here Stephenson is following Bernard, *Second Epistle*, 22.

¹⁴⁴ Stephenson, “Defence,” 87–88.

¹⁴⁵ Kümmel, *Introduction*, 290. See also the sources cited by Bieringer, “Ursprüngliche Einheit,” 118 n.56.

¹⁴⁶ Bates, “Integrity,” 67–68.

¹⁴⁷ Bates, “Integrity,” 67.

21; 13:2) and the rest of the community is endangered by these people (11:1b, 4, 16; 12:11, 19; 13:2).¹⁴⁸ Responding to the claims of Plummer (see above), Hughes asks,

Do these four chapters really constitute an outburst? The tone of this concluding section is set by the opening words of the tenth chapter, where Paul addresses an entreaty to the Corinthians “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ”. He is still writing as their spiritual father, moved by love and “godly jealousy” for them.¹⁴⁹

Hall points to Paul’s use of the word ἀγαπητοί in both 7:1 and 12:19, remarking that “For Paul, straight speaking was a sign of love.”¹⁵⁰ He also affirms, with Udo Schnelle, that the conclusion of the letter in 13:11–13 “remains surprisingly positive and unites in itself both parts of the letter.”¹⁵¹ So both positive and negative aspects of Paul’s relationship to his addressees must be factored into any analysis of the interpersonal dynamics manifested in 2 Corinthians.¹⁵²

Building on these earlier observations, several scholars have begun to move towards a systematic description of the relational dynamics that characterize Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians as an instance (or instances) of enacted social behaviour. Bieringer, in several of his studies on 2 Corinthians, has made a point of investigating the author-addressee relationship manifested in the canonical letter. He writes: “In all of Paul’s authentic letters the immediacy of the apostle-community relationship can be felt.

¹⁴⁸ Kümmel, *Introduction*, 290.

¹⁴⁹ Hughes, *Second Epistle*, xxiii.

¹⁵⁰ Hall, *Unity*, 89.

¹⁵¹ Schnelle, *History and Theology*, 87.

¹⁵² Vegge writes: “The description of reconciliation in 7:5–16, just as much as the caustic, threatening and polemical tone in chs. 10–13, has been the most important impetus behind the various partition theories” (*Reconciliation*, 35).

Another common feature is the foundation of the relationship on the proclamation and acceptance of the gospel.”¹⁵³ In other words, the relationship that is enacted in the letters is (at least in part) that between an evangelistic preacher and his converts as well as that between an apostle and a church he has founded. Perhaps more interestingly, Bieringer observes that Paul’s letters vary in the degree to which they emphasize either objective information and moral appeal or personal self-revelation and appeals to relationship. In Romans, for example, the former dominate, yet in 2 Corinthians the latter are strikingly prominent.¹⁵⁴ So 2 Corinthians enacts a relationship that is not merely formal but sufficiently intimate that Paul routinely appeals *to the relationship itself* as the basis for his expectations. Bieringer also points out that 2 Corinthians—unlike most of Paul’s letters, but like his letter to the Galatians—enacts a relationship that is not entirely mutual. That is to say, the relationship is (from Paul’s perspective, at least) threatened by the fact that the Corinthians are turning to another gospel and to other apostles.¹⁵⁵ Bieringer concludes: “While the author-reader relationship plays an important part in every single letter, its neglect would be and indeed has been most detrimental to the interpretation of 2 Corinthians.”¹⁵⁶

Bieringer’s claim about the non-mutuality of the relationship enacted by 2 Corinthians is supported by a specific observation made by Olson with regard to Paul’s

¹⁵³ Bieringer, “Jealousy,” 251.

¹⁵⁴ Bieringer, “Jealousy,” 252.

¹⁵⁵ Bieringer, “Jealousy,” 252.

¹⁵⁶ Bieringer, “Jealousy,” 253. He cites Danker and Wolff as commentators who pay special attention to the relational aspects of the letter.

use of confidence expressions. Olson writes about these expressions that “They often have to do particularly with Paul’s self-image as counselor, teacher, admonisher, or preacher.”¹⁵⁷ For instance, in 1:12–14 Paul expresses his confidence as a preacher, a role that he has clearly played in Corinth as founder of the community there. In 2:17 his confidence relates to his role as someone who speaks to people on behalf of God. And in 11:15 it relates specifically to his role as a teacher and an apostle. Commenting on these texts, Olson makes the astute observation that Paul is using confidence expressions in order to commend himself, not merely as a commendable person, but as a commendable person who stands in a certain type of relationship with his addressees and who wishes to sustain and strengthen their recognition of that *specific* social relation.¹⁵⁸ In other words, Paul is not merely enacting an apostle–church relationship, but drawing attention to that specific relationship and emphasizing how important it is to him. This claim dovetails nicely with the oft stated opinion that one of Paul’s purposes in 2 Corinthians is to defend his apostleship.

Olson also makes the important observation that, because Paul’s expressions of confidence in 2 Corinthians are a form of persuasive rhetoric, they should not be connected prematurely to Paul’s actual feelings.¹⁵⁹ After examining confidence expressions in the entire Pauline corpus and in Greco-Roman letters more generally, Olson concludes that

¹⁵⁷ Olson, “Uses,” 592.

¹⁵⁸ Olson, “Uses,” 593.

¹⁵⁹ Olson, “Confidence Expressions”; Olson, “Uses”; Olson, “Pauline Expressions.”

the typical function of confident praise suggests that such expressions must be used with great caution when trying to reconstruct the relationship between the writer and his readers. The caution would apply, for example, to conclusions about the apparent variations in the tone of the relationship between Paul and his addressees in 2 Corinthians. The epistolary expression of confidence is best interpreted as a persuasive technique rather than as a sincere reflection of the way the writer thinks the addressees will respond to his proposals or to himself.¹⁶⁰

So Paul is using confidence expressions in an attempt to solidify a specific social relation between himself and his addressees (e.g. the relation that he thinks ought to exist between an apostle and the churches that he has founded), but his stated confidence cannot be cited as evidence for the actual status of Paul's relationship with the Corinthians.¹⁶¹ Nor can it be cited as evidence for the reaction that his letter would have received in Corinth. As Barrett reminds us concerning the optimistic and confident tone of ch. 9, "Paul has been describing not what is *actually* happening in Corinth and Jerusalem, but what he *hopes* will happen."¹⁶² Along similar lines, Bieringer, Engberg-Pedersen and Vegge have argued that 2 Corinthians—in all of its parts—manifests a relationship that is heavily strained, and that Paul's repeated references to his confidence in chs. 1–9 do not negate this basic fact. Although Paul is pleased with regard to certain developments in his relationship with the Corinthian community, confidence is hardly a sufficient description

¹⁶⁰ Olson, "Pauline Expressions," 295.

¹⁶¹ Commentators are sometimes willing to accept Olson's observations concerning the function of the confidence expressions but not his observations about their usefulness for historical reconstruction. Furnish believes that "in conformity with a familiar Hellenistic literary pattern, Paul emphasizes his confidence in those of whom he is about to make a substantial request" (*II Corinthians*, 392). And Hall writes: "[The expressions of joy and confidence in 7:13–16] represent a genuine feeling on the part of Paul. At the same time, as Olson says, they also perform a function within the letter" (*Unity*, 94). Garland writes that "We would not go as far as to say that this is only a manipulative technique that is not also a genuine reflection of how Paul feels about their response" (*2 Corinthians*, 35–36).

¹⁶² Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 242 (emphasis mine).

of his overall assessment of that relationship.¹⁶³ Rather, the axiom stands that one does not hope for what one already has.

In a recent paper, Bieringer has further extended this discussion by undertaking a detailed examination of Paul's use of "ἀγαπ-terminology" in 2 Corinthians. He proposes that Paul's use of specific terms should be carefully described, and that the resulting description should be evaluated in accordance with the various positions that have been taken within the literary integrity debate. Having accomplished this with regard to terms using the root ἀγαπ-, Bieringer notes that Paul's use of these terms in 2 Corinthians is "characteristically different from its use in the other letters where the use is more 'objective' and removed from the relationship of Paul and his addressees," and that the abstract uses such as are found in 1 Cor 13 are entirely lacking in 2 Corinthians, where "all the uses are very concrete and situational."¹⁶⁴ Most importantly for the present survey, however, Bieringer concludes that it is "possible to interpret the texts in which Paul uses ἀγαπ-terminology in such a way that in each part that is postulated by partition theorists as a part of a different letter the same narrative situation with regard to the love relationship between Paul and the Corinthians is presupposed."¹⁶⁵ This is possible because Paul's love for the Corinthians is explicitly expressed in each part of the letter (except ch. 9 and 13:11–13), but in the reverse direction we find only explicit mentions of obedience from the Corinthians. Bieringer concludes: "Paul was convinced that as a

¹⁶³ See Bieringer, "Plädoyer," 178–79; Engberg-Pedersen, "2. Korintherbrevs," 74–88; Vegge, *Reconciliation*, 31, 34–35.

¹⁶⁴ Bieringer, "Love," n.p.

¹⁶⁵ Bieringer, "Love," n.p.

result of the effects of the letter of tears, there was a change of mind and there was obedience and even longing for Paul on the side of the Corinthians, but not yet love.”¹⁶⁶

The difference that such a perspective makes can be seen in how various scholars handle the financial criticisms that have allegedly been levelled against Paul (see 12:14–18). Furnish writes the following:

Paul is aware, as he writes chaps. 10–13, that some in Corinth suspect him of collecting money for the Jerusalem church under false pretenses [sic] (12:14–18), that there are rumors about ‘deceit’ and ‘fraud’ (vv. 16, 17). However, in his discussion of the collection project in chaps. 8 and 9 there is no indication that he is aware of any such suspicions circulating about his motives and aims. Indeed, he seems confident that the procedures he is following will prevent any suspicions of that sort from arising (8:20). This kind of confidence about the collection is as inconceivable in a letter which postdates chaps. 10–13 as it would be in the same letter with the remarks of 12:14–18.¹⁶⁷

So according to Furnish, Paul is fully confident about his relationship with the Corinthians in chs. 1–9, but this confidence would be impossible if Paul was experiencing an ongoing sense of concern about accusations of financial exploitation. Because the defence against such accusations in 12:14–18 demonstrates precisely this sense of concern, Furnish reasons, chs. 10–13 must antedate chs. 1–9 and must reflect later developments. But as Vegge points out, this logic only works because Furnish downplays the strength of the accusations that are allegedly presupposed by 7:2. Indeed, the true sequence of Furnish’s logic is clear in his commentary on 7:2 where he writes:

Indeed, *for other reasons* it is probable that chaps. 10–13 were part of a letter written a little after the letter represented by chaps. 1–9.... *If so*, then the present simple denial of having defrauded anyone would suggest either (a) that so far

¹⁶⁶ Bieringer, “Love,” n.p.

¹⁶⁷ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 38.

there were only vague rumors in circulation about possible fraud, or (b) that Paul was not yet aware of how serious and widespread suspicions about him were.¹⁶⁸

So in discussing the integrity of 2 Corinthians, Furnish argues that chs. 8–9 *cannot* inhabit the same letter as the criticisms of 12:14–18, but in commenting on 7:2 he argues that the criticisms to which Paul is responding must be either minor or vague because they *do* inhabit the same letter as chs. 8–9. In truth, there is nothing in the text to suggest that the accusation being addressed in 7:2 is any less serious than the accusation addressed in 12:14–18.¹⁶⁹ In fact, the passages in question do not *explicitly* mention allegations of financial impropriety at all.

An alternative response to the interpersonal dynamics of chs. 1–9 and 10–13 argues that Paul has different people in view in the two sections.¹⁷⁰ This proposal goes back at least to Rückert, who argued that Paul’s purpose in chs. 1–9 was to restore good relations with the Corinthian congregation whereas his purpose in chs. 10–13 was to attack rival missionaries and thereby eliminate their influence in Corinth.¹⁷¹ In other words, “The polemic in 2 Cor. 10–13 is not directed towards the Corinthians, but against

¹⁶⁸ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 369 (emphasis mine).

¹⁶⁹ Vegge, *Reconciliation*, 192.

¹⁷⁰ Several scholars who view ch. 9 as an independent letter are of the opinion that it was addressed to the churches of Achaia rather than to Corinth specifically. E.g. Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 92–93; Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 17; Taylor, “Composition,” 81. Yet Moffatt writes that:

the attempts to isolate viii. as a separate note...written later than ix....or as part of the Intermediate Letter...break down for much the same reason as the cognate hypothesis that ix. itself was a subsequent letter sent to the Achaian churches.... The unity of the situation presupposed in viii. and ix. is too well-marked to justify any separation of the chapters either from one another or from the letter i.–ix., whose natural conclusion they furnish (*Introduction*, 128).

¹⁷¹ Cited by Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:7. Here Rückert is responding to Semler.

the opponents that are seen as a third group (cf. 2 Cor. 10.1–2).¹⁷² While it is sometimes accepted that this group may have included members of the Corinthian congregation, these are generally depicted as a small minority who are against Paul, as opposed to the majority who have been fully reconciled with Paul.¹⁷³ Few scholars are persuaded by this explanation, however. Krenkel points out that, although Paul normally takes care to indicate when he is referring to only some of his readers (e.g. *τινέες, πολλοί*, etc.), there are no expressions like this in chs. 10–13.¹⁷⁴ To the contrary, in 10:1–2 the church as a whole is addressed by the pronoun *ὅμας* and this whole is then differentiated from Paul’s opponents, who are referred to by means of the indefinite pronoun *τινάς*.¹⁷⁵ In addition, several passages in chs. 10–13 betray the fact that Paul is concerned about his relationship with the Corinthian congregation (e.g. 11:1–4; 12:11, 14–16, 19–21).¹⁷⁶ Thrall concludes: “The natural understanding of these chapters, therefore, is that Paul has in mind his whole Corinthian readership.”¹⁷⁷ As regards chs. 1–9, Strachan writes: “It is quite likely that not every member of the Corinthian Church submitted *ex animo*, or with a good grace, to Paul’s censures; but, of any remaining minority sufficiently active and

¹⁷² Schnelle, *History and Theology*, 87. Harris cites Wikenhauser and Rigaux as well (*Second Epistle*, 30 n.74).

¹⁷³ Thrall cites several scholars who express this view (*Second Epistle*, 1:7 n.41).

¹⁷⁴ Krenkel, *Beiträge*, 322–26, 328, as cited by Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:7.

¹⁷⁵ Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 272. See also his comments on p. xxxv: “there is no appeal to the example of the supposed submissive majority.”

¹⁷⁶ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 37.

¹⁷⁷ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:7.

important to warrant the attacks of chapters x.–xiii., there is not, in the rest of the letter, a single trace.”¹⁷⁸

Tackling the problematic tensions of 2 Corinthians from another angle, certain scholars have proposed that a change in authorship or readership might explain why the relational dynamics of chs. 1–9 are seemingly different from those in chs. 10–13. Murphy-O’Connor examines the first person references in 2 Corinthians and concludes that “there is a *prima facie* case that 2 Cor 1–9 is a joint letter into which one of the co-authors occasionally erupts.”¹⁷⁹ By way of contrast, the intensely personal tone of chs. 10–13 suggests an individual rather than a joint letter.¹⁸⁰ Furnish observes that “One may suppose that the address [of chs. 10–13] identified Paul as the only sender, since the mention of a co-sender (e.g., Timothy in Letter D, 2 Cor 1:1) would have fit poorly with the emphatic first person singular with which chap. 10 opens (10:1–2a) and which predominates throughout chaps. 10–13.”¹⁸¹ Taking this slightly further, Suhl cites the first person singular references in ch. 9 as evidence that it was written by Paul alone, in contrast with ch. 8 which belongs to the letter of reconciliation.¹⁸² And Holtzmann, pushing the idea of multiple authors to the extreme, advances the strange thesis that Timothy is the author of chs. 1–9 whereas Paul is the author of chs. 10–13.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Strachan, *Second Epistle*, xviii.

¹⁷⁹ Murphy-O’Connor, “Co-Authorship,” 572.

¹⁸⁰ Murphy-O’Connor, “Co-Authorship,” 576.

¹⁸¹ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 47. Furnish admits, however, that 1 Corinthians, Philippians (43), and Philemon (47) list co-senders yet do not use the first person plural.

¹⁸² Suhl, *Paulus*, 263.

¹⁸³ Holtzmann, *Das Neue Testament*, 2:717.

Summing up this discussion of the relational dynamics observed in 2 Corinthians, it can be said that all scholars attest to the complexity of Paul's relations with the church in Corinth. Different conclusions are drawn from this complexity, however. For partition theorists, the tensions that exist between the various relational signals in 2 Corinthians are indicative of its literary fragmentation. For those who regard 2 Corinthians as a unified text, the complex relational signals are indicative of complex relational dynamics, or perhaps even indicative of a tension between an "objective" assessment of Paul's relations with Corinth and a reality Paul has chosen to project in order to act upon those relations. With only a few exceptions, however, scholars have failed to employ any testable generalizations in order to describe the relational dynamics of 2 Corinthians (i.e. generalizations that correlate with specific linguistic indicators).

c. Method of Composition

Some observations are also found in scholarly literature as regards *how*, practically speaking, 2 Corinthians was composed. This is potentially significant because mode of composition does have an influence on the language of a text and might therefore provide an explanation for linguistic variation between parts of 2 Corinthians. The most famous proposal in this respect is that Paul used an amanuensis for chs. 1–9 but then wrote chs. 10–13 personally as an extended autograph.¹⁸⁴ This is an interesting consideration, because oral dictation and manual writing are likely to have produced slightly different

¹⁸⁴ E.g., Deissmann, *Light*, 167 n.7; Bates, "Integrity," 67; Bahr, "Subscriptions," 37–38; Richards, *Secretary*, 180–81, 90. Witherington (*Conflict*, 330) cites Stephenson as well, but I can find no mention of this view in Stephenson's article.

literary styles, but advocates of this explanation have not demonstrated a correlation between the two modes of composition and the specific facts that are at issue in discussions of 2 Corinthians. As Thrall observes, “this theory would not account for the change in background situation.”¹⁸⁵ A highly imaginative suggestion by Emmerling, that Paul refrained from voicing his most severe criticisms in the presence of his secretary but was without such inhibitions when writing in his own hand, has proven unpersuasive.¹⁸⁶

d. Summary and Evaluation

The works cited in the above survey correctly recognize that texts exist because people want to do things to or with one another by way of language. Applying this to 2 Corinthians, some scholars have argued that his wording manifests a single, sustained purpose (which is usually said to involve a series of subordinate purposes). Others, however, have argued that there are entirely distinct purposes behind the various sections of 2 Corinthians and that the purposes in question are either psychologically incommensurable or in practical conflict with one another. As regards Paul’s relations with his readers, scholars of all persuasions have correctly observed that the relational dynamics of 2 Corinthians are unusually important. Some stress that Paul and the Corinthians are on uncertain terms throughout 2 Corinthians. Others insist that there are separate relational stages visible in different sections of the letter as Paul’s attitude towards the Corinthians moves through anger, despair, joy, and relief in a Pauline soap-

¹⁸⁵ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:10.

¹⁸⁶ Emmerling, *Epistola*, xxxii–xxxiii. Thrall observes that Paul had no such inhibitions when writing to the Galatians (*Second Epistle*, 1:9–10).

opera of sorts. And, lastly, scholars have not lacked ingenuity when it comes to the mode of composition employed in the writing of 2 Corinthians. It has been suggested that seemingly abrupt shifts within 2 Corinthians are explainable with reference to a change in authorship, a change in addressee(s), or even a change in the physical mode of composition (i.e. dictation vs. writing).

Overall, however, attempts to describe the underlying situational parameters of 2 Corinthians remain inconclusive. The relationship between language and situation remains under-defined and under-described, and the claims that have been advanced are almost entirely subjective (i.e. scholars cite passages as though Paul's wording *in and of itself* adequately confirms whatever is being asserted, with no generalizations being necessary). What is more, scholars do not discuss how much situational complexity is possible within a single text, even though claims about multiple purposes and complicated relational dynamics abound.

3. Summary

After surveying the linguistic observations and the more abstract situational observations that have been advanced in discussions of the literary integrity of 2 Corinthians, I have come to the following two conclusions. First, most of the linguistic observations that are invoked in the literary integrity debate are either under-defined or a-theoretical altogether. Second, where observations are made concerning situational factors relevant to 2 Corinthians (as opposed to the more common practice of drawing specific historical conclusions), those observations are not grounded in any generalizable claims about

Paul's wording. With a few notable exceptions, literary or linguistic facts about 2 Corinthians are invoked only haphazardly in order to lend credence to existing theories.

The present study is predicated on the belief that the introduction of explicit criteria and explanatory generalizations will move the literary integrity debate in a productive direction. A linguistic analysis of 2 Corinthians will not mechanistically or magically produce an objective and irrefutable verdict about the integrity of the canonical epistle—we are, after all, dealing with language here—but a theoretically-motivated linguistic analysis of a general nature will likely turn up details that have been overlooked by previous interpreters. Whereas interpreters have typically isolated haphazard groups of linguistic features and then discussed the presence or function of those features in the alleged fragments in 2 Corinthians, it would be better to establish a set of features in advance and then observe the overall distribution of those features without presupposing the alleged literary seams that are themselves at issue in the discussion. Whereas interpreters have tended to make bald assertions about continuity and discontinuity within 2 Corinthians, it would be better to carefully consider whether linguistic variation ever occurs within a single text and what might be the best explanation for such internal variation if and/or when it does occur. And whereas discussions about the situation underlying 2 Corinthians have tended to depend heavily upon historical reconstructions based on imprecise references to actual persons or events, it would be better to discuss the situation encoded in a text with reference to the various ways that language-users are able to employ the linguistic resources at their disposal in order to enact culturally recognizable social behaviours and social relations.

CHAPTER 2: A THEORY OF TEXT AND A METHOD FOR ANALYZING TEXTS

In recent decades, linguistic ideas and methods have begun to make inroads into New Testament studies. Several different theoretical frameworks have been embraced and a variety of methods have been applied. For my analysis of 2 Corinthians, I have chosen to work with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).¹ In the opening section of this chapter I will articulate some of the most relevant theoretical presuppositions of SFL. I will then explain how I have gone about analyzing 2 Corinthians using some ideas developed by SFL linguists.

1. Systemic Functional Linguistics and the Notion of Text

Unlike many linguistic frameworks, SFL is not a physiological approach to the study of language. Adherents of SFL recognize that (most) human beings are able to learn and use language because a healthy human physiology permits this learning and use, but they do

¹ The earliest project to employ this framework in New Testament studies seems to have been Porter and Gotteri, "Ambiguity." Subsequently, a variety of studies have applied different aspects of the theory, including Porter, *Verbal Aspect*; Reed, "Cohesive Ties"; Reed, "Timothy or Not"; Malina, "Maverick"; Reed, *Discourse Analysis*; Martín-Asensio, *Transitivity-Based Foregrounding*; Porter, "Register"; Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure*; Kwong, *Word Order*; Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*; Westfall, "Pauline Autobiography"; Lee, *Paul's Gospel*; Stovell, *Metaphorical Discourse*.

not seek to study language use with reference to human physiology.² Similarly, SFL is not a psychological or cognitive approach to the study of language. So whereas many linguists attempt to explain language with reference to human psychology or with reference to the workings of the human mind (whatever that means), SFL chooses to approach language from the outside, as a social behaviour warranting careful sociological study. As a theory of language-in-use rather than a theory of how brains or minds enable people to use language, SFL works primarily with naturally occurring texts, something that makes SFL a close cousin of other functional theories and of corpus linguistics, and even of applied linguistics. This preoccupation with texts also makes SFL very applicable to New Testament studies, since the discipline of biblical studies is oriented around the study of a particular collection of texts.

What distinguishes SFL from other functional theories is its prioritization of the text as the *de facto* locus of linguistic meaning. Other theories are interested in how different linguistic units function, sometimes in relation to other linguistic units and sometimes in relation to context (whatever is meant by that), but SFL is chiefly interested in how texts themselves function in human cultures, regarding the study of smaller linguistic units as a subsidiary pursuit that must be brought into connection with this broader explanatory task.³ Moreover, SFL has developed several methods of analysis that

² This is not to say that a physiological approach to language cannot be brought into a mutually productive dialogue with an approach like SFL, or that SFL is unaware of the role that biogenetic factors play in the emergence of cultural systems such as language (see, e.g., Hasan, "Speaking," 219–20).

³ In a 1978 essay entitled "Text in the Systemic-Functional Model," Hasan observes that as far as SFL is concerned, "from the earliest stages, text has been viewed as a linguistic entity, the description of which is as legitimate a concern of linguistics as the description of the traditionally recognized units in the grammar and lexicon of a language" (Hasan, "Text," 228). This means that, unlike many alternative approaches, SFL does not presuppose that the notion of *text* is something that can be taken for granted. To the contrary, SFL is very concerned to explain how language users are able to recognize the difference

can be used not merely to probe clauses or sentences but also to probe actual specimens of text. For these reasons, SFL is a true theory of texts, both in the sense that it provides a theoretical definition of text and in the sense that it provides criteria by means of which texts can be recognized. These characteristics make SFL is an attractive choice for scholars seeking to explore the literary integrity of an alleged text.⁴

Within the theoretical architecture of SFL, the notion of text can be approached in a variety of ways. It can be approached from above with reference to the way that texts function in extra-linguistic contexts, from roundabout with reference to the semantic relations by means of which the meanings of a text are related to one another, and from below with reference to the lexicogrammatical resources that are deployed in texts. As a functional theory, however, SFL affords greater priority to the view from above when formulating its definition of text.⁵ Semantic and lexicogrammatical generalizations are employed in order to develop identification criteria, since they describe what texts look like (i.e. how one can recognize a text). What texts do, however, is more important overall, inasmuch as the performance of a social function is the *raison d'être* of

between a text and a non-text, arguing that this process of recognition is rooted partly in language itself and partly in a cultural system in much the same way that both phonology and grammar must be considered in order to establish the difference between a clause and a non-clause.

⁴ I am indebted to Reed for demonstrating this in his earlier studies. See esp. Reed, "Cohesive Ties"; Reed, *Discourse Analysis*.

⁵ See Matthiessen et al., *Key Terms*, 218: "Text is defined by reference to context, not by reference to lexicogrammar."

language—and hence of texts as well.⁶ According to SFL, a *text is an instance of language that realizes an instance of human culture (i.e. a context of situation)*.

In order to understand what is meant by this definition, it is important to know that the term *context* in SFL has a very technical meaning whereby it refers to a semiotic system that defines the different social situations in a given culture wherein language is used. The notion of context is thus neither material nor mental within SFL, as though it might be possible to describe contexts apart from language or to imagine that contexts somehow pre-exist language. Rather, contexts are said to be inter-dependent with language in much the same way that lexicogrammatical units are inter-dependent with their phonological or graphological expressions, such that there is an inseparable bond of symbolization between language and the contexts in which it is used. Indeed, in a certain sense, “One may liken the speech event to the linguistic sign....[T]he text...is the signifier or expression, while...the context...is the signified or content.”⁷ Just as a random string of letters does not make a word, so also a random string of linguistic units does not make a text. Rather, for a string of linguistic units to form a text, they must signify something, culturally speaking. They must work together to realize a single context of situation, where *context of situation* is defined as an instance of some culturally-recognizable behaviour made possible through the use of language.

Given the history of biblical scholarship, wherein a great deal of attention has been paid to the historical settings of the different New Testament writings, it cannot be

⁶ With regard to the role social context plays in explaining language, see Hasan, “Conception of Context,” 200; Hasan, “Wherefore Context”; Hasan, “The Meaning of ‘Not’,” 277.

⁷ Hasan, “Conception of Context,” 200.

stressed enough that SFL does *not* define the notion of context historically, as though the claim is being made that a text must emerge from a single historical setting. Rather, SFL defines cultural contexts as socio-semiotic constructs that emerge from the observation and systematization of different instances of language use. This means that even “actual” contexts of situation are semiotic constructs, because their status as identifiable contexts derives entirely from the cultural system that defines them as such.⁸ It also means that an actual text does not emerge “out of” an actual context of situation in any simple sense, because it just as valid to say that the context of situation emerges “out of” the text.⁹ Context and text are mutually defining, because texts are created in order to realize socio-semiotic situations, and socio-semiotic situations are created whenever language users create texts.

A very general implication of SFL’s approach to texts and contexts is that, even when biblical scholarship cannot determine with any precision the historical setting of a given New Testament text, it may nevertheless be possible to say a great deal about the context that is encoded in a text—because, as Halliday and Hasan observe, “many of the features of a text can be explained by reference to generalized situation types.”¹⁰ This opens up a fresh approach to the contexts of the New Testament, whereby it becomes less important to discuss historical details, such as who did what to whom in the months or

⁸ As Firth observes, “The factors or elements of a situation...are abstractions from experience and are not in any sense embedded in it, except perhaps in an applied scientific sense, in renewal of connection with it” (Firth, “Ethnographic Analysis,” 111).

⁹ Halliday and Hasan, *Language, Context, and Text*, 55.

¹⁰ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion in English*, 21.

years leading up to the composition of a given text, and more important to discuss who is doing what to whom by means of the language of a given text. Similarly, SFL's notion of context keeps the thoughts and intentions of authors at a distance in much the same way that SFL's approach to language distances itself from psychological or cognitive claims, with the result that contextual descriptions can focus less on notions such as authorial purpose and more on the cultural recognition afforded to different linguistic behaviours.¹¹

A related implication of SFL's notion of context is the fact that written texts construe complete contexts, even though they are more or less independent of the material settings in which they are composed. Whereas the *material situational setting* in which a text is composed is "an actual physical space containing actual physical elements," the *context* of a text is "a theoretical space abstracted for metalinguistic purposes."¹² It follows that the notion of context will contain only those aspects of a material setting that have a discernible impact on the language that is being used—and in the case of written texts it is relatively unlikely that an author will invoke his or her material setting, and even less likely that the details of that setting will significantly affect the nature of whatever socio-semiotic situation is being realized.¹³ The upshot of this is

¹¹ This move away from the subjective thoughts and intentions of actual language users is not undertaken because authorial intentions are deemed unreal, but because they are mediated to others—including the linguist as analyst—only by means of inter-subjective, socio-semiotic constructs, which must therefore be dealt with *before* one can ask intelligent questions about the subjective intentions of a given author. See, e.g., Hasan, "Speaking," 236–37.

¹² Cloran, "Material Situation," 179.

¹³ "In principle we can think of the material situational setting as a dormant source for affecting the verbal goings-on. Elements of this dormant source are available for activation; it is a different matter whether such activation would entail a change in the context of situation or not" (Hasan, "What's Going On," 39). For example, it is entirely irrelevant to the socio-semiotic context of the present text that it is late evening and that it is raining even now as I write these words. In fact, these material details will *continue* to make no real difference to the context of situation encoded in this text, despite the fact that I have just referred to them. Similarly, the repeated revisions undergone by the present study are largely irrelevant to

that, if someone wishes to propose that 2 Cor 10–13 was written in a different material setting than 2 Cor 1–9, it must immediately be stated *in addition* that this change of material setting coincided with changed historical circumstances which caused Paul to complete his letter to Corinth by encoding an entirely different context of situation than had been previously encoded in the earlier chapters.¹⁴ This sort of clarification is necessary, according to SFL, because a changed material setting does not *in itself* entail anything about the textuality of a text. Even if we could somehow establish with certainty that Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in a series of vastly different material settings, this material fact would have no bearing on its status as a text or non-text.¹⁵

Given that the notion of context plays such a crucial role in SFL, it becomes especially important to inquire how contexts can be identified and analyzed.¹⁶ Here a helpful analogy can be drawn with the more familiar process whereby lexicogrammatical units are described and analyzed. Just as we ask, “Which functional elements of which sort make up each kind of clause?” so also we must ask, “Which functional stages of which sort make up each kind of context?” And in the same way that we attempt to state

its context of situation, even though language users who are familiar with the register of academic writing will be aware that such a process is a normal part of the process of creating texts like this.

¹⁴ Something like this is in fact being argued by those who hypothesize what Vegge calls “unity in composition but not in content” (*Reconciliation*, 23–25).

¹⁵ For a discussion that closely parallels the situation involving 2 Corinthians (involving a blurb on the back of a dust jacket), see Hasan, “Speaking,” 230. Note especially Hasan’s observation that “at each resumption, the writer’s sense of the social activity he was engaged in and his sense of the addressee he was addressing had remained the same as when the interruption(s) occurred—in other words, the writer’s perception of the context relevant to his composition did not undergo any significant change during the process of production.”

¹⁶ E.g. Hasan, “Conception of Context,” 200–201: “More often than not, human actions proceed in a continuous flow.... Is it possible to identify in this continuous flow a context of situation?... How do I recognize a context when I see it? And how do I know a text when I come across it?”

which phrase-types can realize the different elements of a given clause-type, so also we must attempt to state which linguistic units can realize the different stages of a given situation-type. And finally, just as we ask whether there are any constraints on the order in which clausal elements appear, so also we must ask whether there are any constraints on the order in which the stages of a situation must unfold.¹⁷ Granted, to the extent that situations are both larger and more abstract than clauses, the process of describing and analyzing them is both more difficult and more time consuming. And to the extent that we possess fewer Greek texts than clauses and even then only a small subset of the relevant text-types, we cannot expect to have the same degree of coverage in our contextual descriptions as we have in our linguistic descriptions. But even though these practical constraints make the task of analyzing a whole text or situation a very daunting and potentially inconclusive exercise, they do not invalidate the notion of context itself, nor do they render contextual descriptions impossible.

Within SFL, the internal organization of language is said to reflect the fact that language performs three major functions. The *interpersonal* function of language is to enact social exchanges, while its *ideational* function is to construe both human experiences (the *experiential* function) and the various logical relations that exist between those experiences and their various components (the *logical* function). By way of contrast, the third major function of language, the *textual* one, is a second-order function that derives from the fact that language must manage the flow of information that is

¹⁷ See Hasan, "Conception of Context," 267. In other linguistic models, these questions are sometimes answered using cognitive concepts such as frames, schemas, and scripts, which can be conceived of as analogous to SFL's stratum of context. See Matthiessen et al., *Key Terms*, 78.

created whenever language is used to perform its interpersonal and ideational functions.¹⁸ Because language is an evolving system, these three so-called “metafunctions” are not always neatly tied to discrete linguistic components. Yet it is often the case that certain linguistic systems will fall entirely within a single metafunction. For example, the mood system of the Greek language is interpersonal, the system of transitivity is ideational, and the distinction between an explicit participant and an implicit participant (e.g. a pronoun) is textual.

This division of labour into three metafunctional components is helpful for my analysis of 2 Corinthians, because there is a non-random relationship between the three linguistic metafunctions and the three main parameters that are needed in order to describe a context of situation. Just as language enables people to enact social exchanges, to construe human experiences, and to manage information, so also contexts involve: (1) discourse participants who are enacting an *activity* that entails a particular set of participant *relations* and *roles*; (2) some *sphere* of human experience; and (3) a *mode* of conveying information.¹⁹ Apart from these three components, there can be no linguistic interaction and hence neither context nor text. But when these three contextual

¹⁸ See Halliday and Matthiessen, *Construing Experience*, 511–32.

¹⁹ In choosing to phrase things in this way, I am consciously departing from SFL. For instance, Hasan writes: “An encoding definition of context would be: context is a verbally construed three part construct composed of some doing, by some doers in some verbal mode of doing” (Hasan, “Conception of Context,” 219). These three components are typically referred to as field, tenor, and mode, although Hasan occasionally uses the acronym ARC (action, relation, contact) as a more general description that is applicable to all social interactions irrespective of whether language is used (Hasan, “Wherefore Context,” 7–8). I have chosen to distance myself from this way of describing contexts because different *verbal actions* (or what Halliday earlier called different rhetorical modes; see Halliday, *Social Semiotic*, 223; Halliday and Hasan, *Language, Context, and Text*, 12) correlate most strongly with different *interpersonal* meanings, suggesting that “what is happening” and “who are taking part” are both interpersonal notions. For earlier remarks along these lines, see Porter, “Dialect and Register,” 203, 205.

components are present and a text is produced, there will be a non-random relationship between the three contextual components and the three metafunctional components of its language.²⁰

In this way, SFL provides a way for analyses of 2 Corinthians to move beyond *ad hoc* descriptions by introducing theoretically motivated descriptive parameters. If we want to know about the activity (or activities) and social relations being enacted in 2 Corinthians, we need to look at the interpersonal aspects of its language. If we want to know about the sphere(s) of experience being construed in 2 Corinthians, we need to look at the ideational aspects of its language. And if we want to know about the mode of contact by means of which 2 Corinthians communicates information to its readers, we need to look at the textual aspects of its language. Having an explicit framework like this forces the analyst to produce balanced contextual and linguistic descriptions instead of picking out whatever isolated factors seem relevant. Or, if specific features must be isolated for analysis, the presence of an overall framework demands that the analyst be intentional about choosing which parameters to consider and hence conscious of the ways that unconsidered parameters might affect the language of whatever text is being analyzed.

²⁰ I say *non-random* rather than *fully predictable* because, as Hasan writes, “The hypothesis [of a relation between contextual systems and semantic systems] has to be formulated in probabilistic terms, because, no matter how strong this probability, it seems also logically impossible to claim a one-to-one relationship between strata” (Hasan, “Conception of Context,” 226). In some places this relationship of realization is described as a *resonance* between strata, such that the various metafunctional components of context “resonate” with the various metafunctions within language (e.g. Matthiessen et al., *Key Terms*, 189).

In very simple terms, therefore, the goal of the present study has been to analyze 2 Corinthians linguistically with a view towards articulating the activity (or activities) that the text enacts, along with any associated social roles and relations, as well as the sphere(s) of experience that it construes. And this exercise has been carried out with the conviction that it is vital for the literary integrity debate whether or not 2 Corinthians enacts a single overarching activity and a single set of social relations, whether or not it construes a single sphere of experience, and whether or not the resulting meanings presented as an integrated flow of information.

Is it really possible, however, to constrain a single context in this way? Is it true that the interpersonal and ideational parameters of a context or text must remain constant? Certainly, something like this seems to be implicated by Halliday and Hasan's often-cited claim that something can only be called a text if it represents "a passage of discourse which is coherent...with respect to the context of situation, and therefore consistent in register."²¹ It needs to be considered, however, whether this idea is perhaps too simplistic.

In the first place, it is necessary to consider the possibility that the unfolding activity of a text might be interrupted in some way or another, perhaps even by another linguistic activity. This possibility was being studied by SFL practitioners already in the 1960s, at which time it was concluded that such complications do not in any way problematize SFL's notion of text. To the contrary, the phenomenon of textual interruption simply reveals that two or more texts can be spatio-temporally related to one

²¹ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion in English*, 23.

another—by means of enclosure, interspersion, or sequence—without the material whole being a single text. Indeed, such a possibility follows logically from the fact that contexts and texts are defined by their cultural functions and not by spatio-temporal continuity.²²

The material relations of enclosure, interspersion, and sequence occur most frequently in spoken discourse, where people will often interrupt what they are doing in order to permit a brief exchange of some other kind to take place, or else engage in two distinct behaviours in parallel, switching back and forth between two distinct registers. Nevertheless, the categories are still useful for New Testament studies. If the language of a Pauline letter suddenly shifts mid-stream so as to construe a markedly different context of situation, involving a different activity, or different relations, or a different sphere of experience, then one possible explanation might be that two or more distinct texts have become materially related. As regards 2 Corinthians, the Semler-Windisch and Hausrath-Kennedy hypotheses posit the presence of sequential texts in canonical 2 Corinthians (chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13); the Weiss-Bultmann hypothesis posits the presence of an enclosed text (ch. 9) and two interspersed texts (1:1–2:13/7:5–8:24 and 2:14–7:4/chs. 10–13); the Schmithals-Bornkamm hypothesis posits the presence of three sequential texts (chs. 1–8; ch. 9; chs. 10–13) with one enclosed text (2:14–7:4); and all hypotheses which isolate 6:14–7:1 treat it as an enclosed text.

All of the partition theories that have been advanced with regard to 2 Corinthians are thus consistent with SFL's notion of text, in that observed changes in its context of situation are interpreted as evidence that 2 Corinthians contains multiple texts (or at least,

²² See Hasan, "Speaking," 250.

fragments of multiple texts). More recent work in SFL, however, has continued to explore the material relatedness of different linguistic behaviours and introduced the idea that certain texts need to be regarded as *complex texts*. Hasan introduces the problem in this way:

The prevalent contextual descriptions in SFL are based on an assumption of contextual constancy across a given text...[But] while the claim of contextual/registral constancy is empirically validated in the majority of cases, it is not universally true. It is possible to find cases where the integrity of a text is able to survive certain kinds of contextual/registral changes.²³

Specifically, Hasan and some of her colleagues have observed that certain occasions of talk seem to instantiate two or more distinct situation-types in such a way that the resulting contexts of situation are not functionally independent of one another. Rather than being merely enclosed, interspersed, or sequential, these contexts of situation and their textual realizations are in some way integrated. For example, a mother might be amiably chatting with a bathing child and then suddenly need to correct some unwanted behaviour taking place in the bath. Or a mother might be telling her son a story and then opt to teach him something mid-story in order for him to fully understand what is being narrated. In such cases, neither mother nor child are likely to display any of the symptoms typically associated with textual disruption, such as the *probe*, *repair*, and *realign* strategies that have been observed elsewhere.²⁴ To the contrary, the newly introduced context of situation is incorporated into the existing context of situation, and the result is a complex text that employs two or more linguistic registers.

²³ Hasan, "Speaking," 225.

²⁴ Halliday and Hasan, *Language, Context, and Text*, 66–67.

In the course of analyzing 2 Corinthians, I have kept in mind the possibility that sudden changes in its language or sudden changes in its situation might be indicative of a complex text rather than a series of unrelated texts or fragments. Yet because I have not found that the language of 2 Corinthians instantiates multiple registers, I will set aside Hasan's proposals here and focus my attention instead on a more mundane question: if the notion of text is defined with reference to an overarching context of situation that involves some semiotic activity, does this mean that texts will never enact more than one activity? Does it not seem intuitively necessary to recognize that a single context of situation might demand that different things are done, such that linguistic shifts will take place even within a single text of a single register?

Whereas Hasan introduced the notion of the complex text into SFL in order to account for occasions of talk involving two or more culturally distinct context-types, the above question points in a different direction, towards the property of linearization that is characteristic of even the simplest of texts and contexts. If all texts were monolithic happenings, it might suffice to describe texts and contexts synoptically as internally consistent entities. In reality, however, very few texts are semantically consistent throughout their duration or length, because most contexts unfold by means of ordered stages, with different meanings being activated at each stage. This complexity, however, is not a complication with regard to SFL's notion of text, because the study of text structure has been an important component of SFL from its inception. In fact, the importance of text structure was noted above in connection with the task of identifying and describing contexts, because situational structure plays a crucial role in the

description of different cultural institutions (i.e. situation types) and hence in the identification of different registers.²⁵

Essentially, what the problem of text structure necessitates is the introduction of a hierarchy of scale within the stratum of context, so that each situation-type implicates an arrangement of smaller-scale contextual stages. These contextual stages determine the shape of a situation, and then by implication the shape of its text. As Hasan writes,

the structure of interaction is realized semantically: in the meanings of any text, there are certain ‘bundles of meaning’ about which we are able to specify within reason where each such specific bundle would occur vis-a-vis some other.... These bundles of meaning in that specifiable order vis-a-vis each other is the structure of that talk, each such bundle representing a stage.... *The expression of textual structure is semantic in nature; but the activation of this structure is contextual.*²⁶

In other words, although every context involves only a single overarching activity, a single set of social roles and relations, and a single mode of contact, the different stages within a context must also be described, along with the characteristic meanings of those stages. For only in this way can the analyst account for the unfolding structure of a situation and the semantic variation that correlates with this structure within the development of the associated text.

Adding text structure to the above considerations, we now have at least three possible explanations for linguistic discontinuity within an apparent text. One explanation is that what appears to be a text is actually an assembly of textual fragments—each with a distinct linguistic profile and each construing a distinct context of situation. Another

²⁵ For a concise overview of Hasan’s work on the structural potential of different registers, see Hasan, “Situation,” 142–43.

²⁶ Hasan, “Conception of Context,” 269 (emphasis mine).

explanation is that a complex text has been formed through the integration of two or more text-types and situation-types. And still another explanation is that a single situation is unfolding through a series of stages with distinct characteristics and hence different linguistic requirements. In the case of 2 Corinthians, therefore, it is necessary to ask whether shifts and changes within the canonical epistle implicate multiple contexts of situation—and hence multiple texts or perhaps a single complex text—or whether they might implicate multiple stages of development within a single context of situation. Of these possible explanations for semantic discontinuity, the simplest explanation is the unfolding of an overall text structure, since structural transitions are characteristic of all but the most minimal texts. So the more complex hypotheses of textual fragmentation or textual integration need only be considered in the event that it is impossible to describe the meanings of 2 Corinthians as the gradual, structured unfolding of a single instance of a single situation-type.

2. A Method for Analyzing 2 Corinthians

Given that SFL's notion of text receives its definition from the cultural contexts within which language is used, the next obvious step is to ask the question: How can the modern analyst, using only the available linguistic evidence, explore whether or not something is a text?

According to SFL, the various meanings of a text will be structured so as to construe a recognizable context of situation, and they will also relate to one another so as to form a cohesive whole. Or, as Hasan puts it, "The unity in any text...is of two major

types: unity of structure; and unity of texture.²⁷ In undertaking the analysis of an apparent text, therefore, the analyst must start at the beginning and abstract from its interpersonal and experiential features such contextual notions as *what is being done*, *who is participating*, and *what is being talked about*, all the while taking careful note of those places where linguistic devices are used to relate specific meanings to one another (e.g. conjunction, reference, etc.).²⁸ Then, if texture drops to a minimum, or if the semantic profile of a text shifts so as to affect *what is being done*, *who is participating*, and *what is being talked about*, the analyst should take careful note, because such decreases in texture need to be explained with reference to contextual structure (which affects even simple texts), contextual integration (which affects only complex texts), or literary fragmentation (which renders something a non-text).²⁹

In what follows, I will discuss the interpersonal and experiential features that I have looked at in order to develop hypotheses about *what is being done*, *who is participating*, and *what is being talked about*. I will also discuss the textual devices that I have looked at, some of which are used to bind interpersonal meanings together, others of which are used to bind experiential meanings together.

²⁷ Halliday and Hasan, *Language, Context, and Text*, 52.

²⁸ In reality, this process is a dialectical one, in that one's initial hypothesis about the context of a text will immediately begin to exert a top-down influence on the interpretation of its wordings. Thus throughout chs. 3–7 of this study, I will discuss numerous wordings that are amenable to different interpretations depending on differing conceptions of the context into which they are appearing, and I will explain why my own conception of the emergent context of 2 Corinthians has caused me to interpret them as I have.

²⁹ It is also important to note that decreases in texture can sometimes be explained with reference to poor compositional skills or textual corruption. These possibilities tend to be more relevant in the case of localized incoherences, however, whereas the debate over 2 Corinthians involves large spans of text.

a. Interpersonal Meanings in 2 Corinthians

As already mentioned in Chapter 1, the interpersonal meanings of 2 Corinthians are very important to the literary integrity debate. After all, it is the status of Paul's relationship with his Corinthian readers—as reflected in his behaviour towards them—that is most frequently cited as indicating a changed historical setting between the various alleged fragments identified in the canonical epistle. As regards this component of the Greek language, however, the biblical scholar has only a very imprecise set of descriptions with which to work. The various interpersonal resources of the Greek language have not yet been organized into an explicit framework with a view towards systematizing how they vary in accordance with different socio-semiotic activities or different socio-semiotic roles and relations.

Taking this limitation into account, I have approached the interpersonal characteristics of 2 Corinthians in two distinct ways. On the one hand, I have looked at some of Paul and Timothy's most general interpersonal meanings in order to develop a very general description of what the two men are doing. On the other hand, I have looked at those passages where Paul and Timothy explicitly describe what they are (or are not) doing. Then, I have drawn these two perspectives together in order to develop a series of hypotheses about the different things being done in 2 Corinthians.

As will quickly become apparent, neither of these approaches has enabled me to make dogmatic pronouncements about the "tone" of Paul's writing. Is this a serious deficiency? Without denying that it would be nice to have a more delicate breakdown of

the interpersonal choices available in Hellenistic Greek, I propose that social relations are more directly derived from *what* people do to one another than from the more delicate matter of *how* people go about doing what they do to one another. Until we have adequately analyzed Paul and Timothy's interpersonal meanings in order to determine in very general terms what kind of activity (or perhaps activities) they are enacting in 2 Corinthians, we can hardly proceed with an analysis of their more delicate meanings and hence with an assessment of their "tone." After all, it is not the lexicogrammatical wordings of 2 Corinthians in and of themselves which manifest the subtle nuances of Paul and Timothy's interactions with the Corinthians, as though there were some kind of an inherent "tone" associated with the imperative mood or with an interrogative clause. Rather, the interpersonal nuances in question are conveyed by the use of particular wordings in the enactment of particular socio-semiotic activities and relations.

(i) *The General Perspective: Paul and Timothy's Moves.* In deciding which linguistic details are most likely to shed light on what Paul and Timothy are doing, I have taken note of Hasan's distinction between progressive and punctuative moves. The former are the interactive moves by means of which most situations advance towards completion, such that the obligatory elements of a contextual structure will typically be realized by progressive moves. Accordingly, it is progressive moves that will most clearly implicate the general nature of whatever is happening. Punctuative moves, by way of contrast, provide what Hasan calls "locutionary and/or expressive guidance."³⁰ They guide the

³⁰ Hasan, "Semantic Networks," 118.

flow of linguistic interaction, punctuating its stages with predominantly interpersonal meanings, and so they tend to realize the optional elements of a contextual structure (e.g. saying *hello* or *thank you*, or perhaps *καλῶς* or *ἀλληλουϊά*). Punctuative moves are thus associated with more delicate distinctions pertaining to *how* a given activity is being enacted.

Ideally, the analyst of a text would possess a clear and explicit breakdown of all the different progressive moves that might be made using a language, as well as a description of where these moves are likely to occur in all of the different contexts of the relevant culture. In this respect, however, the modern analyst is at a significant disadvantage relative to the native speaker of Hellenistic Greek. We possess fairly clear descriptions of the different lexicogrammatical forms available to Greek speakers, but we do not (yet?) possess comprehensive descriptions of how those wordings can be used in different contexts to do different things. In describing what is being done in a given text, therefore, the New Testament scholar must relate its lexicogrammatical wordings to a tentative hypothesis about what is being done—all the while remembering that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the activities of a culture and the different wordings of a language. What one speaker might do on one occasion using a second person imperative, another speaker (or the same speaker on another occasion) might do using a second person future indicative, or a second person aorist subjunctive, or even an independent *ἵνα* clause.

In order to deal with this complexity, I have employed as a heuristic tool some basic interpersonal distinctions that have been employed by SFL linguists in order to

analyze English texts. These distinctions define some very general speech functions (or speech acts), while simultaneously defining some very general speech roles that are implicated by those different speech functions. “The most fundamental types of speech role,” Halliday and Matthiessen propose, “are just two: (i) giving and (ii) demanding. Either the speaker is giving something to the listener...or he is demanding something from him.”³¹ Moreover,

Even these elementary categories already involve complex notions: giving means ‘inviting to receive’, and demanding means ‘inviting to give’. The speaker is not only doing something himself; he is also requiring something of the listener. Typically, therefore, an ‘act’ of speaking is something that might more appropriately be called an interact: it is an exchange, in which giving implies receiving and demanding implies giving in response.³²

Taking over this admittedly blunt description of different English moves, I have endeavoured to ask with regard to each progressive move in 2 Corinthians whether Paul and Timothy are giving or demanding. I have not, however, explored in detail the responsive roles implicated by their giving and receiving, because 2 Corinthians is a monologic written text. Each move made by Paul and Timothy arouses certain expectations as regards how the Corinthians should respond, but the nature of the different responses has a less immediate impact on the unfolding of the text than would be the case in a dialogic text, where unexpected responses can drastically affect an unfolding context of situation.³³

³¹ Halliday and Matthiessen, *Introduction*, 107.

³² Halliday and Matthiessen, *Introduction*, 107.

³³ For a discussion of such a dialogic text, see Land, “Jesus Before Pilate.”

Cutting across this first distinction, Halliday and Matthiessen propose a related opposition that concerns the nature of what is being given or demanded. On the one hand, language is often used to facilitate the exchange of non-linguistic commodities. In such exchanges, “what is being demanded is an object or an action, and language is brought in to help the process along. This is an exchange of goods-&-services.”³⁴ On the other hand, it is frequently the case that the commodity whose exchange is enacted in language is itself linguistic. In such cases, “what is being demanded is information: language is the end as well as the means, and the only answer expected is a verbal one.”³⁵

For the sake of convenience, the moves that are described by these two oppositions might be referred to using the following labels: *command* (demand goods-&-services); *offer* (give goods-&-services); *statement* (give information); and *question* (demand information). My experience, however, has been that the connotations of these terms are so strong that it becomes confusing to the biblical scholar when they are used as technical terms. So while it is useful heuristically to have a general category that encompasses both *Give me that now!* and *Could you please pass me the salt?*, or both μή γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις (2 Cor 6:14) and καθαρίσωμεν ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος (2 Cor 7:1), I will refrain from using technical terms for such categories and will instead use non-technical language to sketch what is being done by means of the progressive moves in 2 Corinthians.

³⁴ Halliday and Matthiessen, *Introduction*, 107.

³⁵ Halliday and Matthiessen, *Introduction*, 107.

Lexicogrammatically, progressive moves are almost always realized by finite clauses, so that it is especially important to consider the finite clauses in 2 Corinthians. Two caveats are in order, however. First, not all finite clauses are progressive in function. On the one hand, certain more-or-less formulaic finite clauses will in certain contexts be enacting punctuative moves (e.g. ἔρρωσθε/ἔρρώσω, ἰδοῦ, μὴ γένοιτο, etc.) and the contribution that such punctuative moves make to an interactive exchange is best described using simple categories such as *exclamation*, *greeting*, etc.³⁶ On the other hand, in the course of a given text, there will almost certainly be a large number of finite clauses that do not directly realize an interpersonal move on account of the fact that they have been logically subordinated to some other clause. For example, when 1 Cor 16:10 says with regard to Timothy, προπέμψατε δὲ αὐτὸν ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἵνα ἔλθῃ πρὸς με, the conjunction ἵνα frames the subjunctive clause ἔλθῃ πρὸς με in such a way that it is related to the preceding imperative clause and thus not interpreted as realizing a speech function in its own right.³⁷ In SFL, clauses that have been logically subordinated in this way are referred to as supplementing, because they do not *directly* realize an interpersonal move

³⁶ See Hasan, "Semantic Networks," 118–120. Cloran writes:

Consider greetings such as *How are you?* These are construed by punctuative messages and their form is invariant: we do not say, in greeting: *How were you?* or even *Tell me how you are.* Of course, one can say these things but they (usually) do not construe a greeting and (unlike a greeting) they are likely to be answered non-formulaically, i.e. by something other than, e.g. *Fine* or *Not bad* ("Bakhtin's Chronotype," 33).

³⁷ Because the distinction I am making here between primary and secondary clauses pertains to the way that clauses are related to one another in actual contexts of use, it does not follow that a wording which would *typically* function in a supplementary way cannot under certain conditions realize a speech function. For example, grammarians have frequently discussed the possibility that ἵνα clauses or participial clauses or infinitive clauses will occasionally occur independently and realize the general speech function of demanding goods-and-services. Along similar lines, a ὅτι clause will sometimes stand alone as a primary clause, as when a ὅτι clause is enacting an independent question.

in their own right but rather make a contribution to the overall shape of a text by elaborating a nearby move. This is why supplementary messages do not employ the full interpersonal potential of the Greek language, even though they are often realized by finite clauses (e.g. the probability of an imperative verb is negligible in the case of logically subordinated clauses).

Whereas my first caveat is that not all finite clauses are progressive in function, my second caveat is that not all progressive moves will be realized by finite clauses. Rather, Greek speakers will sometimes enact a progressive move using a non-finite clause, a strategy that often results in wording that appears odd or even ill-formed to English speakers (e.g. an independent use of a participial clause).³⁸ Such cases must be carefully examined on an individual basis in order to exclude the possibility that the non-finite clause in question is dependent on a nearby finite clause. It seems indisputable, however, that independent non-finite clauses do on rare occasions enact progressive moves that serve to advance the mainline of a discourse. Because the use of a non-finite form in this manner forces the context of a text to play an even more important role in the interpretation of what a speaker is doing, I will discuss non-finite progressive moves wherever they seem to occur in 2 Corinthians.

Given that most progressive moves are realized by independent or primary finite clauses, with the use of non-finite clauses being a relatively rare (albeit significant) departure from this norm, it would seem likely that the consideration of the primary

³⁸ See, e.g., BDF §468: “In several instances...the ptcp. is more or less independent, so that it receives the meaning of an independent statement or exhortation acc. to the situation.” Also Moulton, *Grammar*, 222–25: “That the participle can be used for the indicative or imperative seems to be fairly established now by the papyri” (222).

clauses of 2 Corinthians would provide a good basis for the analysis of *what is being done*. There are, however, some further details that need to be taken into account.

Sometimes, for example, a speaker will enact a progressive move by giving it some kind of explicit characterization, with the result that actual content of the move in question may not be primary in the resulting clause structure. In 2 Cor 2:8, for example, the wording παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς introduces the infinitive clause κυρῶσαι εἰς αὐτὸν ἀγάπην as the content of an encouragement, with the result that the entire construction—encompassing both the indicative preface and the infinitive content—is doing a single thing (i.e. *demanding goods-and-services*).

This finite + infinitive construction, moreover, is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg, because the Greek language affords its users with a large set of similar options. In addition to the very simple finite + infinitive construction found in 2 Cor 2:8, another common way to preface a move is to use a noun and an identifying clause. Nouns are a very useful device for prefacing because languages always possess a large number of nouns describing different interpersonal moves (i.e. speech acts), and these will often lexicalize semantic distinctions that are potentially unclear in the grammar (e.g. the English words *instruction* and *suggestion*). For example, in 2 Cor 1:12 the following wording is found: ἡ καύχησις ἡμῶν αὕτη ἐστίν, τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως ἡμῶν, ὅτι ἐν ἀπλότητι καὶ εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ...ἀνεστράφημεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. The primary verb in this grammatical construction is ἐστίν; in context, however, it is ἀνεστράφημεν that serves to progress the discourse. Here again, a preface has been employed in order to

explicitly characterize the information that is being given as both a source of pride and as information whose truthfulness is strongly affirmed.³⁹

Another widely used form of prefacing involves the use of projecting clauses, which will typically construe some process of thinking or saying. This type of preface is effective because it allows a speaker to explicitly connect his or her linguistic meanings with the sayers and sensors who are exchanging those meanings (i.e. the participants in the relevant discourse). Jesus, for instance, seems to have been well-known for his use of the preface ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι, and Paul uses an abundance of projecting prefaces. Throughout Romans, he routinely uses the preface οἶδαμεν ὅτι in order to emphasize that he and his addressees think similarly with regard to what he is saying. Yet additional projective prefaces are also used, including πιστεύομεν ὅτι (6:8), πέπεισμαι ὅτι (8:38), λογίζομαι ὅτι (8:18), μαρτυρῶ αὐτοῖς ὅτι (10:2), οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι (6:16), and ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι (6:3; 7:1). Sometimes, as in 2 Cor 1:8, the content that actually progresses a text is buried beneath multiple different projecting verbs: οὐ θέλομεν ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς θλίψεως ἡμῶν τῆς γενομένης ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ ὅτι.⁴⁰ And sometimes, as in 2 Cor 1:23, the

³⁹ The identification of a preface, it should be noted, depends partly on linguistic details and partly on context, making it unwise to be over-simplistic. For example, when Jesus says in John 15:12, αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ ἢ ἐμὴ, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, he is *demanding goods-and-services* but using an indicative preface in order to draw greater attention to his instruction and in order to situate it relative to the ideas in the surrounding discourse. By way of contrast, when the author of 1 John says in 3:23, καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα πιστεύσωμεν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, the author is not *demanding goods-and-services* but rather *giving information* about goods-and-services that have been demanded by *Jesus*. In the latter case, therefore, there is no preface, but only a normal progressive move.

⁴⁰ Frequently, scholars describe projecting prefaces as formulae (e.g. Mullins, “Disclosure”; White, “Introductory Formulae”; Mullins, “Formulas”; Porter and Pitts, “Τοῦτο Πρῶτον”; Porter and Pitts, “Disclosure Formula”), but this characterization is too narrow for my purposes here. I would argue that the alleged formulae are merely well-worn prefaces. And even in the case of the much discussed disclosure formula, a notable flexibility remains, which is why similar but different wordings are found in passages like 2 Cor 8:1 (γνωρίζομεν δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δεδομένην ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Μακεδονίας ὅτι) and Phil 1:12 (γινώσκειν δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι).

content that is being prefaced is projected by someone who is not an immediate participant in the discourse at hand: ἐγὼ μάρτυρα τὸν θεὸν ἐπικαλοῦμαι ἐπὶ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ὅτι.

Yet another kind of preface involves the use of an exclamation. Exclamations, when they appear independently, are best described as punctuative moves (see above). Sometimes, however, an exclamation is used to punctuate a specific progressive move. In Paul's letters, for example, one often finds wordings like the following: εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς ὅτι, πιστὸς ὁ θεὸς ὅτι, τῷ θεῷ χάρις ὅτι, or χάρις τῷ θεῷ ὅτι. These sorts of exclamations contribute important interpersonal meanings whenever they occur, but they also result in the grammatical subordination of the content that is most directly progressing the texts in question. Like the other constructions discussed above, therefore, these sorts of exclamations are best described as prefaces rather than as independent punctuative moves, and the grammatically dependent ὅτι clauses they introduce should be analyzed as supplying the content that advances the relevant context of situation.

Drawing together all of the foregoing, I can summarize my *general* analysis of interpersonal meanings in 2 Corinthians as an attempt to describe what is being done by means of the mainline interpersonal moves in 2 Corinthians. Taking into account the fact that there is no one-to-one correspondence between speech functions and lexicogrammatical wordings, and taking into account the fact that prefaces will often clarify a speech function while simultaneously subordinating the ideational content of that speech function, I have endeavoured to describe, with respect to all of Paul and Timothy's progressive and non-supplementary messages, both what Paul and Timothy are

doing (i.e. giving or demanding) and what they are exchanging (i.e. information or goods-and-services).

(ii) *The Specific Perspective: Paul and Timothy's Meta-Commentaries*. Alongside the very general analysis that I have just described, which will produce only a very blunt sketch of what Paul and Timothy are doing, I have also paid careful attention to those places in 2 Corinthians where Paul and Timothy explicitly comment on what they are doing or how they regard their relations with their Corinthian addressees. Becker refers to these passages as “meta-communicative statements,” drawing them into a larger description of what she calls the “epistolary hermeneutics” of 2 Corinthians.⁴¹ For my purposes here, however, I am interested only in those passages where Paul and Timothy discuss the communication in which they are presently engaged, since these meta-communicative statements—which I will call simply *meta-commentaries*—are the ones that will shed light on Paul and Timothy’s understanding of the context of situation being construed by the language of 2 Corinthians. I will thus exclude all of the other things included in Becker’s broader investigation.

In some ways, meta-commentaries are related to prefaces, in that they permit a speaker to characterize his or her own speech. But whereas a preface provides information about how an author regards a specific move that is being made, a meta-commentary provides explicit information about how an author regards broader matters relevant to the context of situation that is activating his or her text, such as what is being

⁴¹ Becker, *Letter Hermeneutics*, 84–89.

done, or perhaps the social relations that are relevant to what is being done. So whereas the finite clause *παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς κυρῶσαι εἰς αὐτὸν ἀγάπην* in 2 Cor 2:8 employs a preface in order to frame a demand for goods-and-services as an “encouragement,” the finite clause *πρὸς κατάκρισιν οὐ λέγω* in 7:3 is an independent meta-commentary that clarifies how Paul regards the behaviour he has been enacting in multiple preceding moves.

Because meta-commentaries are most likely to occur in environments where the wording of a text does not *unambiguously* construe a context (i.e. when there is a relatively high probability that hearers will misinterpret what a speaker is doing), they must be carefully attended to, so that the analyst is not misled into an erroneous contextual description by the general appearance of the wordings of a text. From the perspective of the modern analyst, therefore, the meta-commentaries in 2 Corinthians provide invaluable evidence concerning the context(s) of situation being construed in the canonical epistle.

b. Experiential Meanings in 2 Corinthians

Historically speaking, experiential meanings have played a disproportionate role in the literary integrity debate surrounding 2 Corinthians. After all, when different experiential meanings are found in different parts of the canonical epistle, or when the same experiential meanings are found to be functioning differently in its different parts, it is correctly concluded (by unity advocates) that this is irrelevant to the literary integrity of 2 Corinthians. After all, there is no reason to think that a single handful of experiential

meanings will remain in view throughout the entire duration of a text the length of 2 Corinthians, and there is no reason to insist that a single lexical item or experiential meaning will be used in precisely the same way throughout a text the length of 2 Corinthians. Yet conversely, when the same experiential meanings are found in different parts of 2 Corinthians, it is correctly concluded (by partition theorists) that this does not in itself eliminate the possibility that the canonical epistle has been redacted, given that the various fragments in question are all said to have construed the same general sphere of experience (e.g. “the Christian church” or perhaps even “the Corinthian church”).

This state of affairs should not be taken to entail, however, that ideational meanings can be ignored in my analysis of 2 Corinthians. Just as I have not deemed the interpersonal meanings of 2 Corinthians irrelevant simply because the different things being done in the letter can all be related to a very general activity (e.g. “community leadership”), nor do I deem its experiential meanings irrelevant simply because they can all be related a single sphere of experience. Rather, my approach in both cases is to observe how the meanings in 2 Corinthians change over the course of its development, and then to inquire whether the more-or-less discrete segments identified in this way can be described as realizing the different structural elements of a single context of situation. Moreover, just as I have taken both a general and a specific perspective on the interpersonal aspects of 2 Corinthians, so also I have adopted both a general and a specific perspective on the experiential aspects of 2 Corinthians.

(i) The General Perspective: Semantic Domains and Fields. Just as different interpersonal moves are employed for the enactment of different activities and relations,

so also different experiential meanings are used for the construal of different spheres of human experience.⁴² Here again, however, the analyst needs some way to define different clusters of meaning so that a workable degree of generality is achieved. In the case of interpersonal meanings, I have opted to work with very general categories; here, however, I will take a different approach and seek to work with some categories that are only slightly more general than the specific lexical items of 2 Corinthians. In the first place, this will involve the arrangement of the different lexical meanings in 2 Corinthians into semantic domains. Then, in the second place, it will involve the association of those semantic domains with different semantic fields.

Topologically speaking, a semantic domain can be conceived of as a space containing related meanings, with the degree of their closeness varying along multiple dimensions. The experiential meanings of the lexical items ζώην and θανάτου in 2 Cor 2:16, for example, can be located within a single semantic domain because they both involve a particular quality: namely, the presence or absence of biological life. And they can be drawn together with other meanings in 2 Corinthians that similarly implicate the presence or absence of biological life, such as the meanings realized by νεκρούς, ζῶντος, ἀπέθανεν, ἀποθνήσκοντες, συναποθανεῖν, and συζῆν (to list just a few). These gathered words do not realize the *same* meaning, but inasmuch as they share in common a very delicate semantic feature, they are more closely related to one another than they are to

⁴² See Hasan, "Speaking," 287.

most of the other meanings in the Greek language, such that they can be said to realize very *similar* experiential meanings.⁴³

As regards the identification of similar Greek meanings, a tremendous resource has been given to the field of New Testament studies by Louw and Nida, who have employed the notion of semantic features in the development of their *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*.⁴⁴ In the course of my experiential analysis of 2 Corinthians, therefore, I have made judicious use of Louw and Nida's lexicon. In the case of each lexical item in 2 Corinthians, I have examined the work of Louw and Nida and attempted to discern which of the listed sub-domains best applies to the instance at hand.⁴⁵ Then, I have surveyed the resulting list of domains and combined domains whenever the distinctions between them have seemed unnecessarily detailed for the purposes of my analysis.

Obviously, it is possible to take issue with Louw and Nida at points, and various readers may wish to quibble with the way I have handled a particular word here or

⁴³ Of course, the idea of using semantic features as a tool for the description of lexical semantics is neither new nor unique to SFL. To the contrary, such features or components are used by a variety of theories and frameworks, albeit with different theoretical presuppositions. For a discussion of these theoretical differences from the perspective of SFL, see Halliday and Matthiessen, *Construing Experience*, 39–40.

⁴⁴ In introducing their lexicon, Louw and Nida discuss the method employed in its formulation (see Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vi–xx). A more sustained treatment, however, can be found in Nida and Louw, *Lexical Semantics*. Another popular resource within New Testament studies is Silva, *Biblical Words*.

⁴⁵ Ideally, this process might be improved through the use of a more objective method of domain disambiguation, but it lies well outside of the present study to develop and implement such a method. As O'Donnell observes in his discussion of semantic domain annotation, the manual disambiguation of domains is typically done on the basis of an annotator's intuitive understanding of the relevant text (O'Donnell, "Annotated Corpora," 87).

there.⁴⁶ The important thing to recognize, however, is that my analysis is attempting to get *away* from the interpretive details surrounding individual lexical meanings so as to move towards a broader consideration of the overarching experiential characteristics of 2 Corinthians as a whole. My goal is thus not the best interpretation of every single word, but an awareness of large-scale patterns. My goal is to observe sustained experiential chains that are formed through the repeated use of closely related meanings, and to observe how those chains interact with one another and cluster together in different ways over the course of 2 Corinthians.⁴⁷

As Porter and O'Donnell observe, an explicit breakdown of the semantic domains in a particular text constitutes a useful descriptive abstraction because “the use of such devices provides a method of handling the vast amount of information that must be taken into account.”⁴⁸ Pushing this idea even further, I have endeavoured in my analysis of 2 Corinthians to group multiple semantic domains together into what I will call semantic fields. What is a semantic field? As I am using the phrase here, a semantic field consists of a cluster of semantic domains or specific participants (see below) that tend to co-occur across a range of texts or even registers. So unlike the meanings in a semantic domain, which must be similar to one another by virtue of having some shared semantic feature,

⁴⁶ For a critique of the Louw-Nida lexicon, see Lee, “United Bible Societies’ Lexicon.” For a response, see Louw, “Analysis of Meaning.”

⁴⁷ For a discussion of semantic domain analysis with an application to Romans, see Porter and O'Donnell, “Patterns,” esp. 158–64. Large scale studies employing semantic domain analysis include Reed, *Discourse Analysis*, 62–80; Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 82–85; Lee, *Paul’s Gospel*. The method has also been applied to 2 Corinthians by O’Mahony (*Pauline Persuasion*, ch. 3), although his focus is the delimitation of chs. 8–9 as a discrete unit.

⁴⁸ Porter and O’Donnell, “Patterns,” 162.

the meanings in a semantic field are related by virtue of collocation.⁴⁹ Thus the English words *boat* and *sea* do not inhabit a single semantic domain, but they do inhabit a single semantic field.

Ideally, patterns of collocation ought to be analyzed statistically across an entire corpus, but a systematic approach like this is impossible within the confines of the present study. I have chosen, therefore, to employ an informal method, whereby I have sketched some intuitive fields after examining recurring patterns of co-occurrence and interaction among the different lexical domains in 2 Corinthians. Here again, it is probable that various readers will want to quibble with the way I have handled particular details, and so it must be underscored that the goal of abstracting away from specific lexemes to general semantic domains and then on to semantic fields is to get away from the details in order to sketch a broad description of what is going on experientially across 2 Corinthians as a whole. I have chosen to use semantic domains and semantic fields not because they are crucial for the interpretation of individual passages within the canonical epistle, but because they provide categories that can be used as filters by the analyst who is sifting through Paul's meanings or attempting to summarize those meanings. In particular, I have employed semantic domains and fields in order to probe and then summarize the structure of 2 Corinthians. After all, as Hasan observes, "the topics...that are relevant to one element of the text structure will be more closely related to each other

⁴⁹ Crystal defines collocation as "the habitual co-occurrence of individual lexical items," noting that it tends to be used especially by Firthian linguists (Crystal, *Dictionary*, 86). For a brief introduction to collocation from the perspective of SFL, see Halliday and Matthiessen, *Introduction*, 576–79.

than those across elements, so that there will be fewer interactions at the boundaries of two elements than there will be within each.”⁵⁰

(ii) *The Specific Perspective: Cohesive Harmony*. As in the case of the interpersonal analysis discussed above, I have opted to complement my general perspective on the experiential meanings of 2 Corinthians with an additional perspective that takes into account the specifics of the text. In this case, I have chosen to investigate how the specific participants mentioned in the text interact with the different qualities and processes discussed in the text, since this will provide a summary of the realities construed by 2 Corinthians. It is at this point, therefore, that my analysis will connect most directly with debates over the historical setting(s) of 2 Corinthians, even if a clear distinction must be maintained between the way 2 Corinthians construes reality and its actual historical setting(s).

What exactly does it mean to examine the various participants in 2 Corinthians and the processes in which they participate?⁵¹ Essentially, it means to undertake—at least in part—what SFL refers to as a cohesive harmony analysis.⁵² Because I am using the

⁵⁰ Hasan, “Situation,” 152. Similarly, O’Donnell writes that semantic domain analyses can be used “not only for identifying the ideational component of the discourse, but also in the discovery of discourse structure” (O’Donnell, “Annotated Corpora,” 88).

⁵¹ In general terms, a participant can be defined as a cluster of meanings with the potential to fill one of the core roles of an experiential configuration (i.e. the ability to participate in an experiential process). See, e.g., Halliday and Matthiessen, *Construing Experience*, 59: “They are phenomena capable of taking on a participant role in a process configuration, e.g. bringing it about or being affected by it.” This definition excludes what are sometimes called non-referential noun phrases, because such phrases do not realize a core participant in an experiential configuration and do not employ the textual resources that are essential for the grounding of participants and the formation of identity chains (cf. Bakker, *Noun Phrase*, 189–99). Conversely, it includes such things as rank-shifted clauses and nominalizations, even though these participants are not at all typical and will often involve grammatical metaphor. Because the latter types of participants do not form chains within 2 Corinthians, however, I will not discuss them any further.

⁵² See esp. Hasan, “Coherence and Cohesive Harmony”; Halliday and Hasan, *Language, Context*,

method as a heuristic tool for probing the experiential consistency of 2 Corinthians rather than as a statistical tool for the evaluation of its relative coherence, which is the purpose for which the method of cohesive harmony was initially developed, I will not delve into the details of this type of analysis or its theoretical underpinnings. It is enough for my purposes to observe that a cohesive harmony analysis involves the identification of different identity chains and then the examination of the processes or qualities with which those identity chains interact. Moreover, in order to catch more of the relevant patterns, the method employs semantic domains rather than specific lexemes, such that it can be said to involve the interaction of identity chains on the one hand and lexical chains on the other. Simply put, I will be looking for all of the places in 2 Corinthians where a repeated participant in the discourse is ascribed related qualities or described as experiencing related events or states-of-affairs.⁵³ Then, having isolated these places, I will be able to inquire whether the different passages in question can be integrated into a coherent representation of reality. If they cannot, then some explanation will be required for the experiential inconsistencies (e.g. the realities in question are not being framed as simultaneous, or the different segments of the canonical epistle were written at different times).

and Text, 70–96.

⁵³ In other words, I have not examined every single interaction in 2 Corinthians between a participant and a process or quality, but rather every interaction involving a participant that is mentioned at least two times in the text.

c. Textual Meanings in 2 Corinthians

Unlike the two preceding metafunctions, the textual metafunction serves a second-order function in that it acts upon meanings formed by the interpersonal and experiential metafunctions, enabling the language-user to present those meanings as organized information. When scholars debate whether the language of 2 Corinthians creates semantic connections across any of its alleged seams—as when commentators discuss the conjunctions in 9:1, or when they debate the possibility that there are anaphoric nominal groups in 2 Cor 9—it is always textual devices that are at issue.

In general, my analysis of 2 Corinthians prioritizes interpersonal and experiential meanings over textual meanings, because I have prioritized the broad patterns of meaning that distinguish entire segments of the text over the specific localized meanings that hold the text together. This approach may seem odd, given that it is the textual meanings of the Greek language that make it possible for texts to hang together. All of the parties in the literary integrity debate, however, acknowledge the presence of textual devices at each of the alleged seams in 2 Corinthians, with the crucial question being whether those devices were used by Paul to integrate the canonical text of 2 Corinthians or whether they were used to integrate a variety of texts that are now fragmentary—and answers to *this* question are consistently dependent on abstractions concerning what is being done, who is participating, and what is being talked about in the text surrounding the alleged seams. The history of scholarship, therefore, confirms the second-order nature of the textual

metafunction and undermines the importance of interpersonal and experiential meanings for the literary integrity debate.

Notwithstanding the priority I have given to broad patterns of interpersonal and experiential continuity or discontinuity, I have by no means ignored textual meanings entirely. Rather, I have incorporated a small handful of textual meanings into my interpersonal and experiential analyses, as the following sections will explain.

(i) Linking Interpersonal Meanings: Conjunctive Relations. When Paul and Timothy deploy interpersonal meanings in 2 Corinthians, they are doing something using language, and the *kinds* of moves they make will shed light on the *kind(s)* of behaviour they are enacting (see above). When developing a linguistic profile of progressive moves, however, it is important to keep in mind that the moves which advance a text do not all make an equal or identical contribution to the behaviour that is being enacted. Instead, some moves will be relatively more essential to the enactment of what is being done, and other moves will be relatively less essential.⁵⁴ So as to ensure that my analysis of interpersonal patterns in 2 Corinthians is as inductive as possible, I have chosen not to distinguish between mainline and offline moves using a predetermined framework. I have, however, taken careful note of conjunctive relations in 2 Corinthians.

Above, it was observed that subordinating conjunctions can be used to mark supplementary moves and that the imperative mood is virtually unattested in such moves

⁵⁴ The distinction in view here is so closely related to the more familiar mainline vs. offline distinction (see, e.g., Longacre, *Grammar of Discourse*, 12) that I will treat the two distinctions as the same. It should be noted, however, that I understand the opposition in accordance with the theoretical architecture of SFL, where it is closely tied to context and contextual structure (see esp. Hasan, "Nursery Tale").

because they are interpersonally subordinate. Textual meanings, therefore, can be used to signal that a particular message is interpersonally subordinate to some other message, with the result that an entire complex of finite clauses will sometimes need to be analyzed as realizing only a single discourse move. This clearly manifests both the second-order nature of the textual metafunction, as well as the relevance of textual meanings for an interpersonal analysis.

What is the analyst to do, however, with the conjunction γάρ, since this conjunction has been described as both coordinating and subordinating by traditional grammarians?⁵⁵ For the purpose of my analysis of 2 Corinthians, I have chosen to exclude from my interpersonal profiles any moves introduced with γάρ. I recognize that γάρ is different from the traditional subordinating conjunctions in that it has the ability to organize the meanings in a text on a relatively large scale.⁵⁶ At the same time, however, I take seriously the fact that the conjunction γάρ restricts the interpersonal potential of the moves it introduces, such that they very rarely employ the imperative mood. Indeed, when the imperative mood does occur in clauses introduced by γάρ, it almost invariably occurs in some kind of preface (e.g. Eph 5:5; Jas 1:7). Because moves introduced by γάρ are interpersonally constrained in this way, they are relatively less significant for a general description of *what is being done*, even if they are often crucial for the logical development of a specific text.

⁵⁵ E.g. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 669.

⁵⁶ On levels of discourse and their significance for our understanding of conjunctions, see Porter and O'Donnell, "Conjunctions," 8–10.

To use the language of Levinsohn, “The presence of γάρ constrains the material that it introduces to be interpreted as *strengthening* some aspect of the previous assertion, rather than as distinctive information.”⁵⁷ So when a move introduced with γάρ relates back to a command, it in some way supports that command. And when a move introduced with γάρ relates back to an offer, it supports that offer. And when a move introduced with γάρ relates back to a statement, it supports that statement. Effectively, therefore, moves introduced with γάρ are almost invariably offline rather than mainline.⁵⁸ Their presence or absence is essential to the *specific* character of a text, but their inclusion in a very *general* interpersonal analysis will only obscure those other moves that are more directly related to what is being done and thus more important for the identification of broad interpersonal patterns.

(ii) *Linking Experiential Meanings: Identity Chains*. When introducing cohesive harmony analysis above, I made passing reference to identity chains involving repeated participants. Here again, however, we have to do with the textual meanings, inasmuch as it is the textual metafunction which supplies the language user with resources for the formation of identity chains.

In simple terms, a participant is said to enter into an identity chain in the event that the same participant is mentioned twice over the course of a text.⁵⁹ This means, on

⁵⁷ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 91. See also Black, *Sentence Conjunctions*, 280.

⁵⁸ Westfall relates γάρ to the difference between mainline and supportive material (*Discourse Analysis*, 70), but in the context of discussing prominence rather than the realization of extra-linguistic activities. The simpler claim that I am making here is that finite clauses introduced by γάρ are less important as regards the extra-linguistic parameter of *what is going on* than the clauses they serve to support. Whether or not the support material in question is prominent is a distinct matter.

⁵⁹ A useful introduction to the notion of identity chains can be found in Halliday and Hasan,

the one hand, that identity chains can be formed not only through anaphoric references (e.g. demonstrative pronouns, third person verbs, intensive pronouns, etc.) but also through exophoric references (e.g. first and second person references) and even more explicit wordings (e.g. articular nominal groups). In the end, it does not really matter *how* the reference is encoded, or *what* the referent is, or *where* the referent is located, or even *whether* the referent can be located; all that matters is that the different participants are perceived to be co-referential, because it is this perception of continuity that creates the identity chain.⁶⁰

On the other hand, the above formulation entails that identity chains cannot be formed across textual boundaries, as though we might take every reference to Jesus of Nazareth in every existing text and describe the entirety of this dataset as an identity chain. To the contrary, SFL's principle of co-referentiality presumes that language is operative within an actual context of situation, because the linguistic resources by means of which participants are presented are (with the exception of proper nouns) textual resources—and textual resources operate by definition within the parameters of some overarching situation.⁶¹ This explains why exophoric pronouns must be grounded in a

Language, Context, and Text, ch. 5.

⁶⁰ For a discussion of these matters, see Halliday and Hasan, *Language, Context, and Text*, 77–79.

⁶¹ The defining feature of the textual metafunction, as already noted above, is its second-order function as a way to operationalize meanings in actual environments of language use:

The textual metafunction is second-order in the sense that it is concerned with semiotic reality: that is, reality in the form of meaning. This dimension of reality is itself constructed by other two metafunctions [sic]: the ideational, which construes a natural reality, and the interpersonal, which enacts an intersubjective reality.... The function of the textual metafunction is thus an enabling one with respect to the rest; it takes over the semiotic resources brought into being by the other two metafunctions and as it were operationalises them (Halliday and Matthiessen, *Construing Experience*, 398).

single context of situation in order to be deemed co-referential within the framework of SFL.⁶² It also explains why explicit nominal groups will only be deemed co-referential and thus chain-forming if there is a textual motivation for their explicitness (e.g. the avoidance of ambiguity). If a speaker fails to employ implicit chain-forming devices in an informational environment where they would normally be expected, the reader will perceive a lack of texture and will not integrate the relevant explicit participants into a chain.⁶³

One of the more interesting developments to emerge from my identification of identity chains in 2 Corinthians involves its first person references. Obviously, given the above paragraph, I will refrain from citing exophoric references to Paul and/or Timothy as inherently texture-forming and thus as evidence of textual unity. There is, however, another way in which the first person references in 2 Corinthians are of relevance to my analysis. In particular, there is the oft-repeated claim that Paul's use of the first person varies across 2 Corinthians in such a way that it is possible to identify some parts of the letter as first person singular sections and other parts as first person plural sections (see Chapter 1). This distinction, if valid, would provide my analysis with yet another piece of data indicating linguistic variation within 2 Corinthians, and thus more evidence

⁶² Thus Hasan observes that "to claim cohesive continuity between two cases of speaking simply on the basis of reference to the interactants themselves is problematic: it potentially extinguishes the very claim of individuality for texts and contexts, since such reference is likely to pervade over a wide range of cases of speaking by the same person(s)" ("Speaking," 258).

⁶³ Consider, for example, the phenomenon of children's writing, where the repeated use of explicit participants contributes to the perception of a fragmented discourse (e.g. *John came to my house. John played trains with me. John ate lunch but not his crusts. John went home.*). Even though the mature, enculturated reader can recognize that the same extra-linguistic person is in view throughout such a text, he or she will nevertheless perceive the language in question to lack texture and will presume that the speaker has not yet learned how to use the text-forming resources of the English language.

requiring some kind of explanation. Accordingly, I have taken careful note of the first person items in 2 Corinthians and attempted to discern what can be learned from them.

Because variation between first person singular and plural references will typically indicate only that a speaker is construing him- or herself as sharing processes or qualities with other participants to a greater or lesser extent depending on what is being talked about or done at different points throughout a text, it would seem at first glance that no special discussion of the first person items should be necessary. After all, this sort of variation is precisely the sort of thing analyzed by a cohesive harmony analysis. A need for special consideration, however, is prompted by the possibility that some of the first person plurals in 2 Corinthians refer to Paul together with some other person(s), while others refer to Paul alone (i.e. the so-called epistolary plurals).⁶⁴ Although variation between first person singular and plural items will be accounted for by a cohesive harmony analysis if this variation entails different identity chains, this same grammatical variation will not be captured by a cohesive harmony analysis in the event that both the singular and the plural items are found to be referentially identical.

In approaching the interpretation of the first person plural items in 2 Corinthians, it is important to note that the letter opening of the canonical epistle construes multiple authors as well as a group of addressees (2 Cor 1:1), such that both Timothy and the

⁶⁴ At this point I will not deny outright that an individual can use the Greek first person plural as a form of self-reference in certain contexts. I should note, however, that I find the evidence for this usage to be overstated and in need of review. Lardinois observes with regard to Homeric Greek:

It is often assumed that “I” and “we” are interchangeable in archaic Greek poetry, but the situation is in fact not as simple as that. The latest studies of the Homeric language suggest that single characters normally use a first-person singular in referring to themselves, and that instances in which they use a first-person plural are to be explained as indications that they somehow want to include one or more other persons (Lardinois, “Sappho’s Songs,” 160).

church in Corinth are latent components of its context of situation irrespective of whether or not Timothy had any real input into the compositional process that produced the letter.⁶⁵ So if it is found that first person plural references are used in places where no co-textual participants are in view, an interpretive framework for the plurality of the references is available in the opening prescript. This being so, I have made the methodological decision to recognize a semantically singular use of the first person plural only in the event that a particular instance *cannot* be interpreted as including someone who is co-textually or situationally accessible. In the end, this has not proven to be the case anywhere in 2 Corinthians, such that I have not needed to supplement my cohesive harmony analysis with an additional analysis of Paul's first person references.

3. Summary

In this chapter, I have isolated some linguistic details which, according to SFL, are likely to be of interest as regards the literary integrity debate. Some of the meanings in question are interpersonal, which means that they will shed light on what is being done and what

⁶⁵ Sometimes, the listing of co-authors is rejected as a significant consideration as regards the variation between first person singular and plural items, as when it is pointed out that Paul routinely uses the first person singular in letters whose prescripts identify multiple authors (see, e.g., Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 43–44, 47). This logic, however, fails to perceive the significance of the cited evidence. The fact that someone can employ first person singular references in an ostensibly co-authored text indicates only that the first person singular can isolate an individual author, even within a text ascribed to multiple authors, provided that the reader can be expected to know which individual is in view (usually, of course, the one who is actually composing the text). It does not in any way follow from this that it is also plausible to perform this same function in an ostensibly co-authored text by means of the first person plural. In fact, if anything is to be concluded from the cited evidence, it is that Paul uses first person *singular* references when referring to himself individually in letters introduced as having multiple authors. What is needed in order to support the casual identification of sporadic epistolary plurals is an individually authored text (i.e. one which does not identify any co-authors) throughout which Paul employs first person plural items that cannot be interpreted as including any co-textually or situationally retrievable participants in addition to himself.

sort of social relations are being enacted. Others are experiential, which means that they will implicate an extra-linguistic sphere of experience. Still others are textual, which means that they will show how specific interpersonal and experiential meanings are being related to one another within 2 Corinthians.

As regards the interpersonal meanings of 2 Corinthians, my analysis begins with an investigation of broad patterns. It isolates those moves in the discourse that will most directly implicate *what is being done* (i.e. progressive moves not introduced with γάρ) and then examines their speech function (i.e. giving or demanding information or goods-and-services) and how textual meanings (i.e. conjunctive relations) are used to integrate them. Then, working at this very general level, my analysis generates preliminary abstractions regarding *what is being done* in 2 Corinthians and identifies points in the canonical text where there are shifts in *what is being done*. Finally, my analysis leverages a number of passages where the authors of 2 Corinthians make explicit remarks about *what is being done* by means of language (i.e. meta-commentaries).

As regards the experiential meanings of 2 Corinthians, my analysis begins once again with an investigation of broad patterns, identifying all of the semantic domains instantiated in the text in order to explore *what is being talked about*. These domains are examined synoptically in order to determine whether they cluster into recurring semantic fields, and then it is considered whether those fields can be related to a single, overarching sphere of experience. In addition, these domains are tracked throughout 2 Corinthians and then used to identify localized shifts in *what is being talked about*.

Textual meanings are once again brought into the picture in order to show where specific

experiential participants are mentioned repeatedly in 2 Corinthians (i.e. identity chains), and then it is determined whether those participants interact repeatedly with certain kinds of processes or qualities (i.e. cohesive harmony analysis). This more specific experiential information is then used to identify experiential continuity more precisely, as well as to isolate those points in 2 Corinthians where there are shifts in *who is/are taking part* (i.e. patterns involving first person references).

In the course of actually carrying out these linguistic analyses, I began at the beginning of the letter body of 2 Corinthians and then proceeded through the entire text until 13:10. Moreover, as I proceeded in this way, I constructed preliminary abstractions with regard to *what is being done*, *who is/are taking part*, and *what is being talked about*—with reference, it should be noted, to the general patterns identified by my analysis of move types or semantic domains rather than with reference to specific historical details mentioned or implied by the actual wording of 2 Corinthians. Whenever an ambiguous wording was encountered, I made notes to this effect and then moved on, knowing that the broad patterns under analysis would assist later on with the processes of disambiguating such wordings. Also, whenever it became clear that the linguistic features in question were undergoing a significant variation, such that it became difficult or even impossible to regard the behaviour enacted by a passage as serving a functional role relative to the behaviour enacted in the immediately preceding text, I made notes of the relevant details and then proceeded with the remaining text, leaving the observed discontinuities as a matter for subsequent consideration.

Having undertaken a general analysis of 2 Corinthians, I next began to explore the details of its language more closely. I took note of the appearance or disappearance of identity chains, and I considered the significance of both local cohesive harmony (e.g. such as would bind a small passage of text together) and non-local cohesive harmony (e.g. such as is found when a specific participant interacts with recurring domains in disparate parts of a text). I also gave special attention to the various meta-commentaries throughout the canonical text, drawing them into connection with my own abstractions concerning *what is being done, who is/are taking part, and what is being talked about.*

Only after undertaking all of this analytical research did I finally survey my analysis as a whole and ask the question that is at the heart of this study: can 2 Corinthians be described as a single text? As one might expect, clear-cut answers to questions of textuality are not always possible. Rather, as Halliday and Hasan observe, “The distinction between a text and a collection of unrelated sentences is in the last resort a matter of degree, and there may always be instances about which we are uncertain.”⁶⁶ In the case of 2 Corinthians, however, its interpersonal and experiential meanings can all be related to a single situation type, and its patterns of semantic continuity and discontinuity can be related to the structured unfolding of a single situation. Although many have argued to the contrary, therefore, it is the argument of this study that 2 Corinthians is a single text. Linguistically speaking, there is nothing about 2 Corinthians that indicates literary fragmentation, and there is much that indicates literary unity.

⁶⁶ Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion in English*, 1.

Although these analytical results represent the core of this study, they do not directly address the specific exegetical details that are discussed in the context of the literary integrity debate—an issue that presents something of a problem for a study designed to engage participants in that debate. The presentation of my results in Chapters 3–7 of this study, therefore, will intermingle both analytical observations and exegetical observations. The former constitute this study’s primary contribution; the latter are designed to explore its implications for the way 2 Corinthians is actually read (such that readers should not expect an exhaustive exegetical discussion of the text, but rather some innovative suggestions designed to put flesh on the bare bones of my linguistic data).

In Chapter 8, I will pull together both the results of my analysis and its exegetical implications in order to provide a synthetic overview of the context of situation construed by 2 Corinthians. I will also make a brief proposal concerning the likely historical setting in which that context was constructed.

CHAPTER 3: 1:3–2:13

As mentioned above in Chapter 2, the linguistic analysis at the heart of the present study seeks to abstract from the meanings of 2 Corinthians some general contextual parameters relating to *what is being done, who is/are taking part, and what is being talked about*. It does this by observing the progressive moves that advance the discourse and by observing how conjunctive relations are used to relate those moves to one another. It does this by taking careful note of those places where Paul and Timothy discuss 2 Corinthians itself or the situation activating it. It does this by observing which semantic domains are used. And it does this by means of a cohesive harmony analysis, which observes both how cohesive devices are used to form identity chains as well as how the participants involved in those chains interact with semantic domains.

In the case of 1:3–2:13, there are no preceding letter body segments. The letter opening in 1:1–2, however, states that Paul and Timothy are writing to the church in Corinth together with all the saints in all Achaia. My analysis, therefore, has endeavoured to interpret the wording of 1:3–2:13 within a context of situation involving two church leaders writing to a church they have founded.

1. The Analysis and Its Implications

*a. Opening Thanksgiving (1:3–7)*¹

The first segment of 2 Corinthians, following the Letter Opening of 1:1–2, begins like most of the other Pauline letters—with an expression of praise to God and a remark about the positive feelings Paul and Timothy have towards their readers (1:3–7).² As is typically the case, the moves in these opening verses are stylistically ornate, containing a number of elaborating nominal groups and clauses. And at the core, there are only two verbless clauses (εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεός; ἡ ἐλπίς ἡμῶν βεβαία). The first expresses praise to God; the second expresses a positive disposition towards the addressees of the letter.

From an interpersonal perspective, it is noteworthy with regard to 1:3–7 that we find a series of first person plurals immediately following the prescript of 1:1. These plurals are most naturally taken to indicate that 1:3–7 is expressing a disposition shared by both Paul and Timothy. So irrespective of how 2 Corinthians was actually composed—whether by Paul on behalf of both himself and Timothy or as a genuinely collaborative effort together with Timothy—the wording of 1:3–7 frames the hope of 1:7 as something shared by both men. Paul, Silas and Timothy laboured to found the church

¹ Throughout chs. 3–7, I will employ sub-headings in order to break my discussion into more manageable sections. I cannot underscore enough, however, that these sub-headings do not provide a structural outline of 2 Corinthians. They have been dictated by the contours of the present discussion and do not constitute a part of my analysis.

² For a recent discussion of the thanksgiving element, see Arzt-Grabner, “Letter Thanksgiving.”

in Corinth (1:19). Now, years later, Paul and Timothy are still partners in ministry, and together they are hopeful regarding their converts in Achaia.³

From an experiential perspective, it is noteworthy that 1:7 expresses a positive disposition towards Paul's readers by means of the domain TO PUT STOCK IN SOMETHING OR SOMEONE (ἐλπίζ). The future-oriented disposition of hope or anticipation, however, varies somewhat from what we find in Paul's other thanksgivings, where we find the disposition of thankfulness (Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4; Eph 1:16; Phil 1:3; Col 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:3).⁴ Granted, 2 Corinthians is more positive than Galatians, in which Paul omits the thanksgiving element entirely and thus fails to manifest any positive disposition towards his readers. Yet the conveyance of hope rather than thanksgiving remains significant, since it orients the beginning of 2 Corinthians towards anticipation rather than

³ What happened to Silas? This is a fascinating question, but one which I cannot pursue here. All that can be said at this point is that he was not involved in the composition of 2 Corinthians and that he is not mentioned in the letter in connection with anything other than the founding visit.

⁴ This little section is in fact the "thanksgiving" of 2 Corinthians, because the difference between hopefulness and thankfulness is best described as semantic variation within generally defined parameters. Generally speaking, Paul's thanksgiving elements contain: (1) statements; (2) inclusive of the present moment; (3) involving himself and any co-author(s); (4) in some kind of positive psychological disposition; (5) that in some way relates to his addressees; and (6) that is ultimately directed towards God. The actual realization of these meanings, however, is quite variable, with the difference between hopefulness and thankfulness being only one case in point. Another point of variation can be seen in the way that some scholars distinguish between an opening *thanksgiving* and an opening *benediction* on account of the lexical items used by Paul (e.g. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul*, 239; O'Brien, "Unusual Introduction"). I suggest that this distinction too is best handled as permissible variation within the thanksgiving element. In some cases Paul's directing of his positive feelings towards God is combined with his positive feelings towards his readers, so that he explicitly thanks God for his readers. In other cases, however, Paul uses distinct moves in order to identify God as the ultimate source of the good things that are making him happy, with the relation between the praise and the positive disposition being implied. The thanksgiving in 2 Cor 1:3–7 is of the latter type, in that an initial expression of praise to God on account of Paul and Timothy's ministry (1:3–5) is subsequently elaborated by means of an observation about the hope the two men feel with regard to their Achaian ministry (1:6–7).

satisfaction.⁵ As we will see, this note of anticipation runs throughout 1:3–2:13. Indeed, it runs throughout all of 2 Corinthians.

Another notable experiential domain in 1:3–7 is the domain TO BE PARTNERS OR TO COLLABORATE (κοινωνός [2x]). This domain appears at key places in 2 Corinthians, but the most important of its occurrences is the one here in 1:7, since this early occurrence establishes quite explicitly the social relation that is most relevant to the letter. Paul and Timothy are writing to the Corinthians with the understanding that they are writing to partners and collaborators in the work of the gospel. Of course, it does not follow that the Corinthians regarded themselves as Paul and Timothy's partners. We cannot even presume that Paul and Timothy wholeheartedly believed that the Corinthians viewed themselves as supporters of the Pauline mission. We can only observe that Paul and Timothy have *construed* themselves as partners with Corinth, and consequently that the semiotic situation encoded within 2 Corinthians is being *construed* as an interaction between partners.

I also wish to highlight that 1:3–7 employs a number of domains pertaining to the enduring of hardships: TO CAUSE OR EXPERIENCE TROUBLE OR RELIEF (θλίψις [2x]; πάθημα [4x]; θλίβω [2x]; πάσχω), TO ENCOURAGE (παράκλησις [8x]; παρακαλέω [5x]), and TO HARM OR RESCUE FROM HARM (σωτηρία). Notice as a starting point that various participants are involved in these experiential processes:

⁵ Notably, the conditional protases in 1:6 do not entail any real hypotheticality, as though Paul and Timothy's hope is conditional. Rather, the immediately preceding statement makes it clear that Paul and Timothy are in fact suffering and finding encouragement. In this context, therefore, the conditional protases provide an effective way of contextualizing Paul and Timothy's hope. Irrespective of all the ups and downs that have been affecting their relations with Corinth, the two men remain steadfastly hopeful.

- Christ Experiences Trouble (1:5)
- Paul and Timothy Experience Trouble (1:4, 5, 6 [2x])
- People Experience Trouble (1:4)
- Paul and Timothy's Addressees Experience Trouble (1:6)
- God Encourages (1:3)
- God Encourages Paul and Timothy (1:4 [2x])
- Paul and Timothy Are Encouraged (1:6)
- Paul and Timothy Encourage People (1:4, 5)
- Paul and Timothy Encourage Their Addressees (1:6 [2x])

There is a clear pattern here whereby Christ's sufferings spill over into the experiences of Paul and Timothy, and then spill over once again into the experiences of their partners in Corinth. Also, God's encouragement of the two men enables them to encourage other people—including especially their partners in Corinth.

Notably, Paul and Timothy are hopeful irrespective of whether (εἴτε) they are suffering so that their readers might be encouraged and saved, or else (εἴτε) receiving encouragement so that they can encourage their readers to endure suffering. Here Paul and Timothy's sufferings are presented as beneficial for the Corinthians, and Paul and Timothy are presented as encouraging the Corinthians to endure suffering. Both of these ideas will be elaborated later in the letter, at which point I will discuss their relevance to the Corinthian situation. At this point in the text, however, there is little grist for the mill of historical reconstruction, because the grammatical metaphors that permit the ornate style of this opening thanksgiving have rendered 1:6–7 less interpersonally explicit than might otherwise have been the case.⁶

⁶ Harris argues that the articles before παθημάτων and παρακλήσεως in 1:7 are likely anaphoric, and he relates them back to 1:4–5 (*Second Epistle*, 150). More likely, they point to the trouble and encouragement discussed throughout 1:3–6, and thus serve to bind 1:7 together with the preceding benediction.

b. Elaboration of the Thanksgiving (1:8–11)

Although the thanksgiving of 2 Corinthians comes to an end in 1:7, it must be duly noted that 1:8 is introduced by means of γάρ, which indicates that the material beginning in 1:8 in some way supports the content in 1:3–7. Thus the thanksgiving in 2 Corinthians is not merely a formulaic element; it is also very important as regards what Paul and Timothy are doing in this first segment of their letter. In particular, with the subsequent content in 1:8–11, Paul and Timothy proceed to support their claim that God’s encouragement is overflowing amidst their troubles by reporting how a recent experience of despair has given way to a renewed confidence that God will rescue them and will ensure the success of their endeavours.⁷ This is why the domains TO CAUSE OR EXPERIENCE TROUBLE OR RELIEF (θλίψις; βαρέω; ἐξαπορέω) and TO HARM OR RESCUE FROM HARM (ρύομαι [3x]) continue from 1:3–7 into 1:8–11, and why the related domain LIFE AND DEATH appears in 1:9 (ζάω; θάνατος [2x]; νεκρός). It is also why the domain TO BE ABLE OR UNABLE is used once again in 1:8 in connection with Paul and Timothy’s abilities (δύναμις).⁸ As these details indicate, 1:8–11 is an elaboration of the claim that Paul and Timothy are receiving divine

⁷ Notably, the report beginning in 1:8 is introduced with a fairly lengthy preface (i.e. a disclosure formula, concerning which see Porter and Pitts, “Disclosure Formula”). This preface suggests that the material being introduced is important, but it does not change the function of the conjunction γάρ. So despite numerous arguments to the contrary, I maintain that the formula in 1:8 introduces the subsequent verses as support material for the propositions advanced in 1:3–7.

⁸ The earlier occurrence is in 1:4 (εἰς τὸ δύνασθαι ἡμᾶς παρακαλεῖν). Note that in 1:8, the point is once again the enabling power of God’s divine encouragement, even though Paul writes that he and Timothy were *not* able in themselves (ὕπερ δυνάμιν ἐβαρήθημεν). This is because, as the conjunction ἀλλά indicates, the depression reported in 1:8 is a foil for the hopeful outlook manifested in 1:10c–11, with Paul’s interpretation of the purpose of his earlier depression serving as the fulcrum on which the contrast pivots.

encouragement amidst suffering and thus are able to provide encouragement that will help the Corinthians to endure suffering. They are able to endure hardship and continue in ministry because God helps them (1:3–7), as their recent experiences demonstrate (1:8–11).

As regards the progression from 1:3–7 to 1:8–11, it is also essential to observe that the final statement of 1:8–11 brings together once again (cf. 1:7) the Corinthians and the semantic domain TO BE PARTNERS OR TO COLLABORATE (συνυπουργέω) in the environment of the domain TO PUT STOCK IN SOMETHING OR SOMEONE (ἐλπίζω). This confirms that, although Paul and Timothy have been speaking in 1:8–11 about their own suffering and encouragement, their focus has not moved away from the hope they possess with respect to their partnership with Corinth. Rather, the endurance of hardship is still being discussed in connection with the partnership that exists between the Pauline mission and the addressees of 2 Corinthians. Moreover, that partnership is still being spoken about as something that gives Paul and Timothy a sense of anticipation. Having survived a great trial in Asia, the two men are eager to carry on with their labours and grateful for the ways that the Corinthians will partner with them in those labours.

What exactly are Paul and Timothy anticipating? The help that is mentioned explicitly in 1:11 is prayer support, because Paul and Timothy are still preoccupied with an impending danger from which they expect to be rescued (yet again). Semantically, therefore, 1:10c–11 is very similar to Rom 15:30. In Rom 15:30 Paul mentions co-operative action (συναγωνίζομαι), which falls within the domain TO BE PARTNERS OR TO COLLABORATE, and he also employs the wordings ἐν ταῖς προσευχαῖς ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ and the

verb ῥόομαι. In both texts, therefore, Paul is asking for prayer support because he is expecting trouble of some kind.⁹ From here, it is but a small step to conclude that the term χάρισμα in 2 Cor 1:11 is a reference to the Jerusalem collection, which is a divine gift being given over to Paul and his co-workers through many people (τὸ εἰς ἡμᾶς χάρισμα διὰ πολλῶν) and which is expected to cause great thanksgiving (ἐκ πολλῶν προσώπων...εὐχαριστηθῆ).¹⁰ Granted, the specific term χάρισμα is not used elsewhere for Paul's collection, but it is semantically related to words that Paul does use (cf. χάρις in 1 Cor 16:3 and 2 Cor 8–9). Moreover, a glance at 2 Cor 9:8–15 reveals that Paul does regard the Corinthians' contribution as *God's* gift given *through* their obedience (2 Cor 9:8, 11, 14, 15) and that he is very much hoping for a response of gratitude and praise *to God* (2 Cor 9:11, 12).¹¹

In several ways, therefore, 2 Cor 1:10c–11 is related to Rom 15:30, with the major difference being that Paul and Timothy are not *asking* for prayer support in the former

⁹ It is essential to ask *how* Paul and Timothy are able to predict that they will soon face death again. A recurring medical problem is possible, but much less likely if the plurals include Timothy (as I am arguing here). Probably, Paul and Timothy have reason to anticipate that they will encounter violence on the occasion of their trip to Judea. It is interesting, given 1:8–11, that Luke attributes the violence Paul subsequently experienced in Jerusalem to *Asian Jews* (Acts 21:27), introducing them into his narrative as a recognizable group (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἰουδαῖοι).

¹⁰ As the text of the Nestle-Aland edition currently stands, nothing in the text explicitly indicates that Paul and Timothy are expecting from the Corinthians a financial contribution to the collection as well as prayer support on the occasion of its delivery. The textual variant ὑμῶν, however, should be duly noted. After all, although Metzger writes that “The reading ὑμῶν (P46* B D^e K P 614 *al*), which is almost unintelligible in the context, is a scribal blunder” (*Textual Commentary*, 507), it is distinctly possible that ὑμῶν is original. Such a reading would entail that Paul is speaking about thanksgiving in Jerusalem on account of *the Corinthians'* participation in the collection.

¹¹ See Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 48–49; Welborn, “Identification,” 152. Thrall (*Second Epistle*, 1:122) observes some of the semantic overlap between 2 Cor 1:11 and Rom 15:30 (i.e. the mention of a partnership in a co-operative action), but she does not draw the conclusion that Paul is speaking about his collection in 2 Cor 1:11.

passage but merely stating that they *expect* prayer support and *expect* to survive. This difference can be partly accounted for with reference to the fact that Paul has no established partnership with his Roman readers. It is also important to remember, however, that 2 Cor 1:8–11 is elaborating on 1:3–7, which expresses (among other things) Paul and Timothy’s anticipation of continued support despite all of their troubles.

c. Justification of Paul and Timothy’s Hope (1:12–13a)

According to many readings of 2 Corinthians, 1:12 constitutes a beginning. Some, for instance, identify 1:12 as the beginning of the letter body of 2 Corinthians.¹² Others identify 1:12 as the beginning of a sub-unit enacting a defence of Paul’s apostolic behaviour.¹³ The commencement of something new is indicated by the temporary disappearance of several earlier domains and by the appearance of the new domains TO TESTIFY (μαρτύριον, μάρτυς), CONSCIENCE (συνείδησις), and TO BEHAVE (ἀναστρέφω [4x], χράομαι). It is important to clarify, however, that 1:12 is closely tied to 1:3–11 by means of the conjunction γάρ, which introduces the statements in 1:12 as supportive of the hopeful expectation described in 1:10c–11.¹⁴

¹² Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:129. See also Scott, “Use of Scripture,” 34; Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 37; Matera, *II Corinthians*, 45.

¹³ E.g. Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 22; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 18–19; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 25; McCant, *2 Corinthians*, 32.

¹⁴ The position taken here, that the moves in 1:12–13a are best interpreted as supporting the climactic observation of 1:10c–11, is argued by Meyer (*Epistles to the Corinthians*, 424) and Windisch (*Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 53), although Furnish calls it “not convincing” (*II Corinthians*, 129). Even scholars who treat 1:12 as the beginning of a new section, however, are often forced to admit that the passage is closely connected to the preceding hope by means of γάρ (e.g. Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 23, who concludes that vv. 12–14 are “transitional” because they both relate back to what precedes and initiate what follows). Once the transition at 1:13b is recognized, however, it is possible to recognize that the ideas relating to Paul’s defence appear initially in supporting material (i.e. 1:12–13a) before becoming the new

What is the relationship between 1:3–11 and 1:12? In considering this question it is vital to recall what is being done in 1:3–11. Paul and Timothy are expressing the confident expectation that their partnership with Corinth will persist, which point is illustrated with reference to the Corinthian prayer support that will enable Paul's Jerusalem collection to become a success despite the looming danger of violence.¹⁵ Given this overarching preoccupation, the question is quite naturally raised whether Paul and Timothy are justified in expecting ongoing support. Why should the Corinthians support the Pauline mission and its collection efforts, knowing that Paul and Timothy are so unpopular in Jerusalem that God will need to rescue them from those who are seeking to kill them? In the face of such questions, it makes very good sense for Paul and Timothy to insist that they have conducted themselves blamelessly throughout their travels.¹⁶ In 1:12, therefore, Paul and Timothy are not beginning to do something entirely new; they are merely justifying the optimism that permeates 1:3–11.¹⁷

Next, we must consider in detail the progression that binds together 1:12–13a. Whereas 1:12a–c contains only a general remark about Paul and Timothy's conduct throughout their travels (ἀνεστράφημεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ), 1:12d proceeds with a more

preoccupation of the mainline of the discourse (i.e. 1:13b–2:4).

¹⁵ Looking to other sources, it can be seen that the Pauline mission is provoking violent opposition from non-Christians (Rom 15:31; Acts 20:3) and receiving little support from certain Jewish Christians (Rom 15:31; Acts 21:20–25).

¹⁶ See esp. Hall, *Unity*, 124–28.

¹⁷ Notably, the first statement in 1:12 is prefaced in order to indicate that Paul and Timothy are boasting (ἡ καύχησις ἡμῶν αὐτῆ ἐστίν, τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως ἡμῶν, ὅτι...). But although this preface suggests the communication of something important, it does not in any way entail the commencement of something new (cf. my comments on 1:8).

specific claim about the way Paul and Timothy have behaved towards the Corinthians ([ἀνεστράφημεν]...πρὸς ὑμᾶς). This claim about Paul and Timothy's conduct towards their addressees is then supported in 1:13a by a more specific claim about the way the two men write to the Corinthians. And then, in 1:13b–2:13, we find a number of moves using the first person singular that all have to do with an earlier letter Paul wrote in place of a planned visit (1:13b–2:13).¹⁸ All of 1:12–2:13, therefore, functions in context as an explanation of Paul and Timothy's confident expectation of support and success. What has happened is that a very brief supporting remark about Paul and Timothy's conduct (1:12a–c) has prompted a more specific remark about their conduct towards the Corinthians (1:12d), which has prompted a still more specific remark about their correspondence with the Corinthians (1:13a), which has prompted an entire section devoted to explaining the circumstances surrounding an earlier piece of correspondence that did not involve Timothy (1:13b–2:4).¹⁹

¹⁸ The fact that 1:13b switches to the first person singular suggests that the earlier correspondence at issue in 1:13b–2:4 did not involve Timothy. It is possible, in view of this, that the first person plural γράφομεν in 1:13a is somewhat transitional (i.e. the text is moving from behaviour in general, to writing in general, to writing in the past), such that Timothy need not have been involved in any earlier correspondence with Corinth. It is also possible, however, that Timothy co-authored some Corinthian letter that preceded the letter at issue in 1:13b–2:4. Of course, neither of these possibilities is relevant if the first person plurals in 1:3–13a are epistolary, as is presumed by scholars who argue that Paul's switch from plural to singular is "prompted by the intensity of his hope" (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 188) or an indication of "what is important to him, what concerns him most at present" (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 129).

¹⁹ Cf. the approach of those interpreters who take 1:12–14 together as the theme statement of the epistle (e.g. Fitzgerald, *Cracks*, 232–34; Wolff, *Zweite Brief*, 28–29; Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 83–84).

d. Discussion of Paul's Confidence (1:13b–17a)

The first thing I wish to note about 1:13b–2:4 is that it begins with a tightly integrated argument in 1:13b–17a. Despite the regular practice of inserting a paragraph break at 1:15, there is actually an extremely tight progression between 1:13b–14 and 1:15–16. As the conjunction *καί* and the fronted phrase *ταύτη τῇ πεποιθήσει* indicate, 1:13b–14 introduces a hope that Paul possesses and then 1:15–16 presents that hope as essential to a correct interpretation of his past behaviour. To paraphrase: “I trust that you’ll continue in your recognition, even as (*καθὼς καί*) you have recognized us to date, because (*ὅτι*) we are your boast on the day of our Lord Jesus just as you are ours. And (*καί*) *with this very confidence* (*ταύτη τῇ πεποιθήσει*) I planned to visit you beforehand so that you might have a second gift.”²⁰ Since 1:13b–14 sets up the crucial fronted element in 1:15–16, it is inappropriate to separate the two statements by beginning a new paragraph with *καί*, as do most editions, translations, and commentaries.²¹

Within the overall development of 1:3–2:13, moreover, 1:13b–16 does not simply raise the new topic of Paul’s travel plans. On this traditional reading, Paul brings up the controversial issue of his travel plans in 1:15–16, and then explores in 1:17a how the facts surrounding his travels should be interpreted (i.e. “Such-and-such has happened. So

²⁰ The *ὅτι* clause in 1:14 may be parallel with the *ὅτι* clause begun in 1:13b, or explanatory, or perhaps even an example of the so-called consecutive *ὅτι* clause (BDAG, 731–32). Here I have paraphrased it as explanatory.

²¹ Warfield correctly catches this connection: “Ver. 15 takes close hold upon the expression in vers. 13b, 14 of the Apostle’s hope.... The emphatic prepositing of *ταύτη τῇ πεποιθήσει*... must not be overlooked” (Warfield, “Difficult Passages,” 36).

then [οὖν], how should this situation be evaluated? Does this change of plans make me fickle?"). This reading, however, prematurely introduces the notion of consistency, which is raised only in 1:17b–22. It also gives inadequate consideration to the semantic field of relational concord or discord that is active in the preceding co-text. In 1:13b–16, it is the domains TO PUT STOCK IN SOMETHING OR SOMEONE (ἐλπίζω; πεποίθησις) and TO AFFIRM (ἐπιγινώσκω [3x]) that are important. Moreover, these domains relate back to the confident anticipation that Paul and Timothy have articulated in 1:3–11 (e.g. ἡ ἐλπίς ἡμῶν βεβαία ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν [1:7]; εἰς ὃν ἠλπικαμεν ὅτι καὶ ἔτι ρύσεται συνυπουργούντων καὶ ὑμῶν [1:10c–11]). We must, therefore, pay close attention to the presence of these semantic domains in the fronted constituent in 1:15–16.²² Paul is not only trusting that his readers will continue to recognize his and Timothy's leadership, as has been communicated repeatedly throughout 1:3–11, but he is stressing this fact in 1:13b–16 in order to establish that his earlier travel plans were an expression of that very confidence.

Why would Paul draw his earlier travel plans into connection with his confidence? He does so because he feels a need to combat the notion that he lacks

²² As I am reading the text here, Paul introduces the verb ἐπιγινώσκω in 1:13a by pairing it effectively with ἀναγινώσκω, a phonologically similar word. He then exploits the semantic range of ἐπιγινώσκω as he moves from the Corinthians' recognition (i.e. affirmation) of what Paul and Timothy write in their letters (1:13a) to their recognition (i.e. affirmation) of Paul and Timothy themselves (1:13b), facilitating this transition into a new section by means of an intransitive use of ἐπιγινώσκω (cf. 1 Cor 13:12), which picks up on 1:13a but clears the existing object in order to pave the way for the change to ἡμᾶς in 1:14: "Speaking of affirmation, I hope that you'll continue to be affirming in the same way that you affirmed us for a while...." This reading differs from the more commonly accepted reading wherein the ὅτι clause in 1:14 is related back to ἐπιγινώσεσθε in 1:13b (e.g. Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 426; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:134). It fits better, however, with the fact that Paul is employing lexical repetition while nevertheless shifting his discourse into a new, extended discussion in the first person singular (cf. the similarly transitional repetition in 5:11b and 6:1). It also coheres with the idea that the Corinthians had at one point in time ceased to affirm Paul and Timothy, but have recently taken a step of obedience that Paul regards as an affirmation of his leadership (i.e. the church discipline in view throughout 1:13b–2:13 and 7:5–16).

fortitude as a leader. What is more, the denial of this allegation is the point to which all of 1:13b–16 has been advancing.²³ On this reading, 1:17a denies—by means of a rhetorical question employing μήτι—that Paul is flighty in a manner unbecoming of a good leader, a charge which seems to suggest that he is not taking his responsibilities towards Corinth seriously enough.²⁴ The conjunction οὖν introduces this denial as the anticipated conclusion Paul towards which the preceding remarks in 1:13b–16 have been advancing, the fronted clause τοῦτο...βουλόμενος recapitulates the preceding remarks, and the inferential particle ἄρα draws out the logical connection that is being made between the strength of Paul’s leadership and his earlier travel plans.²⁵ Paul is not at all flighty or insubstantial as a leader, as may be seen in the fact that he made plans to visit Corinth *twice*. How does Paul’s intention to visit Corinth twice demonstrate his fortitude as a

²³ Hall, albeit in the course of dismissing this possibility, makes the insightful observation that, “If Paul had already told them the reasons for his change of mind, there would have been no need for him to explain those reasons again in such detail. The most natural charge for his enemies to lay against him would in that case not have been the charge of fickleness but the charge of cowardice” (*Unity*, 246).

²⁴ Larson correctly discerns that “The quality of ‘lightness’ (ἐλαφρία, Lat. *levitas*) was the opposite of the masculine virtue of weightiness or dignity, *gravitas*.... In traditional gender ideology, women’s fickle character justified male oversight and control,” although she persists in regarding the consistency of Paul’s travel plans as the focus of 1:17 (Larson, “Paul’s Masculinity,” 91). Following through on this observation, it would seem that the fundamental issue in 1:13b–17a is not Paul’s consistency but his masculinity—in the sense that he is being accused of lacking the typically masculine strength that was widely regarded by the ancients as essential to good leadership.

²⁵ Warfield correctly follows the progression of Paul’s argument, although he reads χαράν in 1:15 and thus reaches a slightly different interpretation than the one presented here. He argues that

the whole matter concerning his change of plan is settled by the first sentence (vers. 15, 16), and the Apostle is able to leave the necessary inference to be drawn by his readers and to content himself with a single pointed question (ver. 17a) which could not fail to pierce the duller conscience. ‘*Seeing, therefore, that it was this that I was intending, was it then fickleness that I showed?*’ he asks in a tone that branded the affirmative answer beforehand as utter folly. The ‘*this*,’ put forward with a very strong emphasis, refers not merely to his intention of coming to them first, but to his intention of so arranging his plan as to bring them a second joy. The οὖν thus has its collective force fully developed” (Warfield, “Difficult Passages,” 36).

leader? Unfortunately, nothing in the present passage provides an answer. It will become clear later in the letter, however, that Paul's critics are casting him as a weak leader who is tip-toeing around Corinth instead of confronting the Corinthian situation directly and personally (see my Chapter 7).²⁶

e. Discussion of Paul's Reliability (1:17b–23)

Accepting this reading of 1:13b–17a, what is the point of 1:17b? Usually, the second interrogative in v. 17 is treated as parallel with the first, with some interpreters arguing that μήτι is somehow implied.²⁷ Interpreters have also suggested that the second rhetorical question is “far more comprehensive than the first,”²⁸ introducing “an additional and far more general accusation.”²⁹ The movement between 1:17a and 1:17b, however, is not a broadening from a specific accusation of fickleness to a more general accusation of unreliability. To the contrary, the particle ἤ here coincides with a different kind of movement—away from a consideration of the confident leadership manifested by Paul's earlier travel plans and towards a consideration of the extent to which he is committed to his current plans. Although Paul's plan to visit Corinth twice was abandoned, he is still

²⁶ The English phrase *tip-toeing around* captures the thrust of τῆ ἑλαφρία ἐχρησάμην much better than typical renderings such as *act with fickleness*, since the issue on the table at this point is not consistency but confidence, but it fails to convey the lack of *gravitas* or seriousness and thus fails to make the connection with masculine leadership. Unfortunately, the same problem plagues the less colloquial renderings *tread cautiously* or *tread lightly*.

²⁷ E.g. “μήτι is understood” (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 196).

²⁸ Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 32.

²⁹ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 196. Similarly, the English simple present is used by many translations (e.g. NET, NRSV, NASB95), which effectively makes the verse habitual: “Do I make my plans according to mere human standards?”

now—despite the cancellation of his first planned visit—fully committed to the second of his planned visits.

What linguistic factors substantiate this proposal regarding 1:17a and 1:17b?

First, whereas 1:13b–17a is structured around aorist tense-forms, 1:17b–22 employs mostly present tense-forms.³⁰ Second, the inclusion of the fronted phrase ἃ βουλεύομαι in 1:17b suggests the introduction of a new focus, inasmuch as it contrasts with the fronted participial clause τοῦτο βουλόμενος in 1:17a.³¹ Third, although the fronted participant ἃ βουλεύομαι in 1:17b is often regarded as a generic reference to *the plans that Paul makes*, it can just as easily be taken as a reference to *the things Paul is currently planning*. Fourth, the repetition in the clause ἢ παρ' ἐμοὶ τὸ ναὶ ναὶ καὶ τὸ οὐ οὐ is best explained on the hypothesis that Paul is beginning to speak about his current plans. He fully admits that his first *yes* did turn into a *no*, as is obvious from the fact that his visit *en route* to Macedonia never came to pass; yet he disputes the inference that he will similarly abandon his second planned visit. His second *yes* will not also become *no*, for reasons he will discuss in 1:23–2:13.³²

Taking into account the foregoing observations, 1:17 can be paraphrased as follows: “You can see, then, can’t you, that I wasn’t tip-toeing around when I made this

³⁰ Granted, there is an aorist in 1:19, but it occurs in a section that is introduced with γάρ and that serves to support the assertion made in 1:18.

³¹ Note that Paul could easily have written the following: τοῦτο οὖν βουλόμενος μήτι ἄρα τῆ ἐλαφρία ἐχρησάμην; ἢ κατὰ σάρκα βουλεύομαι, ἵνα ἢ παρ' ἐμοὶ τὸ ναὶ ναὶ καὶ τὸ οὐ οὐ;

³² Later, I will argue that the cancellation discussed in 1:13b–2:4 was preceded by an earlier cancellation, but this historical detail does not materially affect the point I am making here, since there is nothing in the immediate co-text which invokes that earlier cancellation directly. When Paul speaks about saying ναὶ ναὶ καὶ οὐ οὐ, therefore, he probably has in view the two visits explicitly mentioned in 1:15–16.

plan? Or maybe you suppose that I'm planning in a worldly manner now, as though I intend to back out as before?" In other words, Paul's failure to stop over in Corinth on his way to Macedonia has given some people the idea that he is shying away from the city, which idea is in turn causing some people to doubt that Paul will actually follow through and visit the city on his way from Macedonia to Judea.³³ Paul and Timothy are confident with respect to the strength of their partnership with Corinth—and Paul's cancelled visit should not be interpreted to suggest otherwise. Were these seeds of doubt being planted or fostered by competing leaders in Corinth? This seems probable, given later passages in 2 Corinthians like 10:8–11, but it must be duly noted that Paul's wording at this point does not explicitly indicate this. Rather, the wording of 1:13b–17 indicates only that his recently cancelled visit to Corinth has fuelled questions about the strength of his commitment to Corinth as well as the strength of his leadership, with the implied insinuation being that his failure to visit demonstrates a lack of resolve as well as a lack of commitment to the Corinthians.

How does Paul vindicate his reliability in response to the allegation in 1:17b, given that he has indeed failed to follow through on his original two-visit plan? Typically, scholars look for an answer to the question of 1:17b in 1:18–22, where Paul defends his mission with reference to the preaching that brought his readers to faith (a familiar strategy) and with reference to God's appointment of those who serve as leaders (another

³³ This forges yet another connection back to the assertion in 1:10b–11 that Paul and Timothy are eagerly anticipating the support they will receive from their addressees. If this hope presumes the delivery of Paul's collection, as I have suggested, then it probably has in view an upcoming visit *en route* to Jerusalem. If so, then it is possible to regard both the assertions about Paul and Timothy's conduct and communication during their travels (1:12–13a) and the assertion that Paul will indeed be making a visit soon (1:13b–17a) as attempts to support the hope of 1:10b–11 amidst both criticisms and doubts.

familiar strategy). This way of reading Paul's argument is somewhat awkward, however, since the statements in 1:18–22 do not in any way address the brute fact that Paul never came to Corinth as he said he would. Taking a rather different tack, I suggest that 1:18–22 is not Paul's main answer to the question in 1:17b, but only a gradual build up towards an explanation supplied in 1:23–2:4. In other words, although 1:18–22 provides a very general denial of the suggestion that Paul's mission is unreliable, it is the more specific explanation of Paul's absence given in 1:23–2:4 that successfully puts the matter to rest.³⁴ In context, the sweeping claims made in 1:18–22 only heighten the tension of the discourse by accentuating Paul's authority and thus underscoring the seriousness of the accusation implied in 1:17b, with the climax of this heightening being the dramatic preface in 1:23 that introduces Paul's own interpretation of his conduct (ἐγὼ μάρτυρα τὸν θεὸν ἐπικαλοῦμαι ἐπὶ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν).³⁵

³⁴ What is the internal logic of 1:18–22? To begin with, Paul issues a very broad denial: "As surely as God is reliable, the things that we (i.e. Paul and Timothy, and perhaps other members of the Pauline mission as well) communicate to you are not unreliable." But then, having dismissed out of hand the suggestion that the Pauline mission is unreliable, Paul shifts his focus onto God's reliability (1:19–20) and onto God's appointment of himself and his co-workers (1:21–22). Presumably, there is some kind of logical connection between God's reliability, God's appointment of Paul and his co-workers, and Paul's own reliability, given that Paul uses γάρ to relate 1:19–22 back to 1:18. I propose that this logical connection is as follows: God has been proven trustworthy by Jesus Christ, as Paul's readers have learned through the gospel ministry he and his co-workers conducted in Corinth (1:19–20) and God has chosen Paul and his co-workers as official representatives who proclaim Christ (1:21–22) and thus Paul himself is reliable (1:18)—with the unstated premise being that a reliable God would not choose to proclaim his reliability through unreliable servants.

³⁵ Notably, the preface in 1:23 invokes the semantic field of the law court, which substantiates the idea that Paul is responding to charges that have been levelled against him.

f. Discussion of Paul's Motives (1:23–2:4)

In 1:23–2:4, Paul provides his own version of events. He was, he insists, trying to spare his readers by not stopping off in Corinth on his way to Macedonia. Now, in context, Paul's reason for saying this must be to underscore—in a way that will put to rest any doubts about the strength of his resolve—that he had a perfectly good reason for not passing through Corinth on his way to Macedonia. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, that Paul proceeds in 1:24–2:4 to clarify what he does and does not mean when he asserts that he has spared his readers. On the negative side, Paul and his co-workers do not regard themselves as lords over their converts' faith. On the positive side, Paul and his co-workers strive to bring joy to their converts, which is why Paul did not want to return to Corinth upset.³⁶ This clarification is of no small importance, because it reveals that Paul is walking a kind of tightrope. He wants to deny the allegation that he is a weak leader, but he does not want to concede the definition of strong leadership that underlies the allegation. This balancing act explains why he clarifies that the sparing mentioned in 1:23 does not imply a worldly authoritarianism, and why he characterizes his avoidance of Corinth as a genuine and heartfelt attempt to serve the best interests his readers.³⁷

³⁶ I say "Paul and his co-workers" because the first person plurals here, which can very easily be explained as inclusive of Timothy, can perhaps be extended so as to include the Pauline mission more broadly.

³⁷ Notably, the first statement in 1:24 involves the use of an elliptical preface, much like the now well-worn English expression *Not that there's anything wrong with that*. It may be that some projecting verb is implied (e.g. φημί), or it may be that something simpler is in view (e.g. ἔστιν). Probably, however, the expression should be regarded as idiomatic, in which case it becomes relatively less important to resolve the ellipsis.

How does 2:1–4 relate to what precedes? Do these verses: (1) support the statement in 1:23; or (2) develop the statements in 1:24? The first of these options accepts the reading γάρ in 2:1 and consequently treats 2:1–13 as an elaboration on the sparing mentioned in 1:23.³⁸ Yet this requires a direct relation between 2:1 and 1:23, with the result that the three intervening statements in 1:24 are deemed parenthetical. The second option accepts the reading δέ in 2:1 and consequently regards 2:1–4 as further developing the remarks in 1:24. In support of this second approach, I note that there is experiential continuity uniting 1:24 and 2:1–4. Specifically, the domain TO BE HAPPY OR UPSET—which is very concentrated in 2:1–4 (λύπη [2x], λυπέω [3x], εὐφραίνω [2x], χαίρω, χαρά)—is first introduced in 1:24 by means of χαρᾶς. To the extent that this domain permeates Paul’s explanation of his conduct, it is odd to describe its point of entrance as a parenthetical aside. Probably, therefore, the content of 2:1–4 develops the basic line taken by 1:24, which is that Paul and his colleagues do not enact their authority in a worldly way.³⁹

So then, Paul asserts in 1:23 that he chose not to pass through Corinth because he wanted to spare his readers, a remark that refutes the allegations that can be inferred from the preceding co-text. Next, he clarifies in 1:24 that, although he *is* a strong leader, this does not mean that he is strong in the way most people think leaders ought to be strong.

³⁸ Metzger writes: “Although γάρ has rather limited support (P46 B 31 33 1739 it^r syr^{h, pal} cop^{sa ms. bo} al), a majority of the Committee preferred it to δέ (κ A C D^{b, c} (D^{gr} τε) G K P Ψ 614 most Old Latin vg syr^p al), because 2:1 is neither a mere addition nor a contrasting statement to the preceding, but supplies the reason for Paul’s delay in visiting the Corinthians (1:23f.)” (*Textual Commentary*, 508).

³⁹ Note that the domain TO TRUST occurs in 1:24a and 1:24c and that the domain TO BE HAPPY OR UPSET immediately follows these occurrences in both 1:24b and 2:1. Arguably, this is because Paul’s tactic in 1:24–2:4 is partly to elevate the Corinthians’ faith as a matter of more importance than their evaluation of church leaders, and partly to underscore his deep personal concern as regards the Corinthians’ faith.

To the contrary, he and his co-workers do not exalt themselves as lords over their converts, and they are personally concerned about the emotional well-being of their converts. Finally, Paul explains at length in 2:1–4 how exactly his behaviour demonstrates his personal concern for the Corinthians. He did not want to return to Corinth upset (ἐν λύπῃ) and thereby make his converts upset (λυπῶ ὑμᾶς; ὁ λυπούμενος ἐξ ἑμοῦ; λύπην σχῶ ἀφ’ ὧν ἔδει με χαίρειν). And so, instead of barging ahead with his original plans, he chose to write a letter and defer his return to the city. That letter was written amidst great emotional distress (ἐκ πολλῆς θλίψεως καὶ συνοχῆς καρδίας; διὰ πολλῶν δακρύων), as an expression of his love (τὴν ἀγάπην ἵνα γνῶτε ἦν ἔχω περισσοτέρως εἰς ὑμᾶς), with the confident expectation that its positive effect on the Corinthian community would enable him to once again look forward to his arrival in Corinth with the eager anticipation of a joyful reunion (πεποιθῶς ἐπὶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ὅτι ἡ ἐμὴ χαρὰ πάντων ὑμῶν ἐστίν).⁴⁰

Possibly, the appeal to loving concern in 1:24–2:4 is nothing more than an attempt to divert attention away from the preoccupations of those who have advanced the alternative explanation of Paul’s conduct that seems to underlie 1:13b–1:23 (i.e. Paul is a weak and ineffective leader). This hypothesis would explain the experiential contrast in 1:13b–2:4, whereby 1:13b–24 employs such terms as ἐπιγινώσκω, καύχημα, πεποίθησις, ἐλαφρία, βεβαιόω, χρίω, σφραγίζω, φείδομαι, and κυριεύω, whereas 1:24–2:4 employs such terms as χαρά, λύπη, λυπέω, εὐφραίνω, χαίρω, συνοχῆς καρδίας, δάκρυον, and

⁴⁰ On the matter of οὐκέτι in 1:23 and πάλιν in 2:1, I defer to Warfield’s observations, which have stood the test of time (“Difficult Passages,” 37–39).

ἀγάπη. It would also account for the crucial role of 1:24, which—as a clarification of 1:23—is the pivot on which this experiential contrast turns. There is, however, a detail in 2:4 that disturbs this literary and logical explanation: namely, the disclaimer that Paul did not intend for his letter to upset his converts.⁴¹ Because of this disclaimer, it is impossible to explain the semantic field of relational concord or discord solely with reference to an ideological contrast between authoritarian (worldly) leadership and loving (Pauline) leadership. Rather, we must reckon with the situational fact that Paul has upset his readers by means of his recent conduct.

Apparently, then, Paul wants to project the possibility of forceful discipline as a way of rejecting the charge that he has shown himself to be impotent, while at the same time explaining that his leadership should be regarded as loving rather than as authoritarian.⁴² Later in this study, more evidence will be presented that will help to explain this intriguing tension between Paul's assertions of power and denials of inappropriate force. Here it must suffice for me to draw attention yet again to the fact that 1:12–2:4 plays a supporting role relative to 1:3–11, which conveys Paul and Timothy's hope that their partnership with Corinth will endure. Because of this, the complex scene

⁴¹ I have opted throughout the present study to translate Greek terms with the root *λυπ-* using the English term *upset* and its cognates, because these cognate terms quite helpfully preserve the flexibility of Paul's Greek. Welborn, even though he observes this semantic flexibility (Welborn, *Enmity*, 43–44), nevertheless attempts to derive from Paul's use of the term the following inferences: (1) the wrongdoer was a person of higher social status than Paul; (2) the hurt caused by the wrongdoer occurred in the context of a friendship; and (3) the wrongdoer's action was not merely a mild injury but a serious insult (Welborn, *Enmity*, 43–51). To my mind, Welborn does not adequately demonstrate why we should import these particular details from other texts and situations, given that they are not inherent in the words Paul uses.

⁴² This issue of *power* is sometimes missed when the focus of the passage is taken to be Paul's lack of consistency or reliability. See, e.g., Meyer: "After Paul has vindicated himself (vv. 16–22) from the suspicion of fickleness and negligence...he proceeds in an elevated tone to give...*the reason why* he had not come to Corinth" (*Epistles to the Corinthians*, 435). A more recent example of this can be seen in Young, "Note," which attempts to read all of 1:15–22 together as a discussion of consistency.

that unfolds in 1:13b–2:4, wherein Paul asserts that he is authoritative yet denies that he is authoritarian, is best regarded as a response to a complex and multifaceted historical setting that is causing some people, at least, to call into question the strength of the Pauline mission’s partnership with Corinth.

g. Cessation of Paul’s Anger (2:5–7)

Does 2:5–13 continue on from 1:12–2:4? In some sense it must, given the experiential continuity that exists between 1:24–2:4 and 2:5–13. Most obvious are the continuity established by the domain TO BE HAPPY OR UPSET, which persists by means of *λυπέω* (2:5 [2x]) and *λύπη* (2:7), and the persistent use of the first person singular. Also overt is the connection between 2:3 (*ἔγραψα ὑμῖν...τὴν ἀγάπην ἵνα γνῶτε*) and 2:9 (*ἔγραψα ἵνα γνῶ τὴν δοκιμὴν ὑμῶν*), which are presumably speaking about the same correspondence.

Looking more broadly at 1:13b–2:4, it can be further noted that Paul’s journey through Troas to Macedonia (2:12–13) establishes a connection between 1:13b–2:4 and 2:5–13 by means of the domains TO MOVE TOWARDS OR AWAY FROM SOMEWHERE (*ἔρχομαι, διέρχομαι, ἀποτάσσω, ἐξέρχομαι*) and PLACES (*Μακεδονία, Ἰουδαία, Κόρινθος, Τρωάς*), even though the journey in 2:12–13 does not follow the route outlined in 1:15–16. On the basis of these points of contact, at least a preliminary case can be made that 2:5–13 is a continuation of 1:13b–2:4.

In what way does 2:5–13 continue on from 1:13b–2:4? A key piece of evidence as regards this question is the way Paul employs interpersonal meanings in 1:13b–2:13.

Whereas in 1:13b–2:4 Paul is mostly giving of information, 2:5–13 is constructed around two moves in which Paul exchanges goods-and-services rather than information:

1. παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς κυρῶσαι εἰς αὐτὸν ἀγάπην (2:8)
2. ὧ̄ τι χαρίζεσθε, κἀγώ (2:10a)

The first of these two moves calls for the termination of church discipline; the second offers forgiveness to whoever has been disciplined. In 2:5–13, therefore, Paul is no longer discussing his earlier conduct (1:13b–2:4) in order to explain his and Timothy’s anticipation of continued support (1:3–11), but rather taking action as one who is in a position of leadership. And yet 2:5–13 falls within the overarching effort of 1:13b–2:13 to the extent that it develops and even substantiates the claim of 1:24. Having learned of his readers’ obedient imposition of discipline, Paul now wishes for forgiveness, encouragement, and love to take the place of pain and anxiety. He defers to his readers in this, however, insisting that his extension of forgiveness comes in response to their own extension of forgiveness. In these ways, 2:5–13 enacts and substantiates the claim in 1:24 that Paul and Timothy are not authoritarian lords but rather partners who seek to produce joy.

Generally speaking, the transitional statements in 2:5–7 are broken down by modern scholars as follows:

1. εἰ δέ τις λελύπηκεν, οὐκ ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν (2:5a)
2. ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέρους—ἵνα μὴ ἐπιβαρῶ—[λελύπηκεν] πάντας ὑμᾶς (2:5b)
3. ἱκανὸν τῷ τοιούτῳ ἡ ἐπιτιμία αὕτη ἢ ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων... (2:6–7)⁴³

⁴³ Hofmann argues something very similar, except that he treats οὐκ ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν as a question (*Zweite Brief*, 41). Meyer correctly rejects this suggestion, noting that “the blunt question..., bringing forward so nakedly a sense of personal injury, would be sadly out of unison with the shrewdly conciliatory tone of the whole context” (*Epistles to the Corinthians*, 445), yet he fails to see that a temporal interpretation of ἀπὸ μέρους can be incorporated into the conciliatory agenda provided that οὐκ ἐμὲ

Accordingly, 2:5–6 is often paraphrased like this: “Although a certain someone has caused an upset, he has not upset me, rather (ἀλλά) he has to a certain extent—so as not to put things to severely—upset all of you. This punishment that is now being inflicted upon him by the majority of you is sufficient.” To my mind, however, it is far more likely that there are only two statements in 2:5–7:

1. εἰ δέ τις λελύπηκεν, οὐκ ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέρους, ἵνα μὴ ἐπιβαρῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς (2:5)
2. ἰκανὸν τῷ τοιοῦτῳ ἡ ἐπιτιμία αὐτῆ ἢ ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων... (2:6–7)

When Paul’s observations are structured in this way, it can be seen that he means something like this: “If anyone has caused an upset, they’ve only upset me temporarily (οὐκ ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέρους), since I don’t want to burden all of you. I accept as an adequate punishment for such a person whatever the rest of you have imposed.”

Several facts favour the latter structuring of 2:5–7 over the typical one. First, when ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέρους is related back to ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν, some very awkward syntax is immediately smoothed out.⁴⁴ It becomes unnecessary to suppose that Paul has inserted a pair of rhetorical qualifiers before finally getting around to supplying an object for an elided verb. Second, when ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέρους is related back to ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν, it becomes unnecessary to ask why Paul would disavow being made upset when he has very clearly been made upset. Instead, the entire expression οὐκ ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέρους can

λελύπηκεν ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέρους is taken as a statement.

⁴⁴ A very similar construction appears in 1:13. In that instance one finds the adjective ἄλλος, which frequently colligates with the use of ἀλλά here under consideration. That the adjective ἄλλος need not always be present may be seen from Mark 9:8 (οὐκέτι οὐδένα εἶδον ἀλλὰ τὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον μεθ’ ἑαυτῶν) and Did. 9:5 (μηδεὶς δὲ φαγέτω μηδὲ πιέτω ἀπὸ τῆς εὐχαριστίας ὑμῶν ἀλλ’ οἱ βαπτισθέντες εἰς ὄνομα κυρίου).

be taken to indicate that he has been made upset but is benevolently cutting short the duration of his anger. Third, while it is possible that ἀπὸ μέρους modifies an elided λελύπηκεν, meaning something like “he has made you all upset to a certain extent,” it is more likely that ἀπὸ μέρους has a temporal meaning here (i.e. ‘temporarily’). After all, the preceding co-text is very much preoccupied with Paul’s desire to resolve issues *prior* to his arrival in Corinth. Fourth, the suggestion that ἐπιβαρῶ is intransitive here and means something like “exaggerate” or “put things too severely” is weakened by the fact that no other instances of this meaning are attested.⁴⁵ But if ἐπιβαρῶ takes πάντας ὑμᾶς as its object, the phrase can be interpreted as having a common meaning that it has elsewhere. Paul is aware that he has imposed a burden on his readers by forcing them to exclude some person(s) from their fellowship, and he wishes to minimize that burden.⁴⁶

Accepting this breakdown of the crucial transitional statement in 2:5 opens up a new interpretive possibility as regards 2:5–13. As regards this point, there are three further considerations involving 2:5: (1) the meaning of τις; (2) the function of the conditional structure; and (3) the meaning of the ἵνα clause. Taking these in reverse order, I propose that the wording οὐκ ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέρους is akin to the wording οὐκέτι λύπην ἔχω (“I’ve stopped being upset”), since the temporal modifier ἀπὸ μέρους shifts the focus of 2:5 away from the *cause* of Paul’s being upset and onto the *cessation* of his being upset. In other words, even though Paul’s wording maintains the form

⁴⁵ See BDAG, 368, which observes that ἵνα μὴ ἐπιβαρῶ “seems to have the mng. ‘in order not to heap up too great a burden of words’=*in order not to say too much*, although there are no exx. of it in this mng.”

⁴⁶ See BDAG, 368, which states about ἐπιβαρῶ elsewhere in Paul’s letters that “Paul emulates civic minded pers. who did not wish the public to be burdened.” Cf. 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8.

employed in the opening protasis, wherein Paul is the one affected by the action of the verb, his statement nevertheless implies his own agency—because in the present context, whoever has made Paul upset has done nothing to bring about the cessation of his anger. But if Paul’s agency is implied in 2:5 even though he is not the grammatical subject of the verb *λελύπηκεν*, then the subsequent *ἵνα* clause may indeed be expressing Paul’s purpose in allowing his frustrations to endure only for a short while (“...so that I don’t burden all of you”).

So then, Paul is saying in 2:5 that the negative emotions underlying the cancellation of his planned visit (see 1:24–2:4) are only temporary. What about the conditional protasis in 2:5? It is abundantly clear from 1:13a–2:4 that an upset of some kind has been caused, so that the protasis must be construing an actual happening rather than a merely hypothetical possibility. Yet although most commentators interpret the protasis *εἰ τις λελύπηκεν* as entailing a single, specific offence, another plausible interpretation is also available: the protasis in 2:5 might be depicting a generic scenario that has been actualized at various times by various people. The hermeneutical key, therefore, is the pronoun *τις*. If the scenario depicted by the protasis *εἰ τις λελύπηκεν* construes a known situation involving a known individual, Paul’s readers will have interpreted *τις* as a specific, known individual (“a certain someone whose identity we all know”). What is more, the subsequent phrases *τῷ τοιοῦτῳ* and *ὁ τοιοῦτος* will have been similarly interpreted as oblique references to this specific “offender.”⁴⁷ If the protasis

⁴⁷ E.g. “[Paul] avoids naming the offender” (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 222); “Subsequent comments (vv. 6–8; 7:12) make it clear that Paul has a specific individual in mind, although the person is never named” (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 154); “The anonymous *τις* and the hypothetical construction indicate Paul’s consideration for the offender” (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:171). Unfortunately, commentators rarely attempt to explain why Paul would employ *ὁ τοιοῦτος* here in order to avoid naming “the offender” when

construes a generic situation, however, then the pronoun *τις* will have been applied broadly to any and every individual whose behaviour has upset Paul, and the phrases *τῷ τοιοῦτῳ* and *ὁ τοιοῦτος* will have been treated as references to those same individuals as a generic class.

Fortuitously, a similar construction appears in Gal 6:1, where Paul has in view the handling of church members who have gone astray: *ἐὰν καὶ προλημφθῆ ἄνθρωπος ἐν τινι παραπτώματι, ὑμεῖς οἱ πνευματικοὶ καταρτίζετε τὸν τοιοῦτον ἐν πνεύματι πραΰτητος*. Like *τις* in 2 Cor 2:5, the nominal group *ἄνθρωπος* in Gal 6:1 construes a participant that is most naturally interpreted as specific but unknown. In the Galatians passage, however, the conditional protasis unquestionably depicts a generic scenario that the reader is expected to apply to multiple real-world situations, with the anarthrous subject *ἄνθρωπος* serving to make the scenario broadly applicable. Moreover, because the scenario in the protasis of Gal 6:1 is interpreted generically, the subsequent phrase *τὸν τοιοῦτον* is quite naturally interpreted as a generic participant (i.e. “the one like the person depicted in the scenario”).⁴⁸ I suggest that here in 2 Cor 2:5–7, as in Gal 6:1, the identities of the offending individuals are either unknown or unimportant as far as Paul’s agenda is concerned. The difference is that Gal 6:1 has potential future offences in view, whereas 2 Cor 2:5–7 has actual past offences in view. In 2 Cor 2:5–7, therefore, Paul is assessing the

any anaphoric form would have accomplished the same purpose (e.g. *αὐτός*, *οὗτος*, etc.). Harris suggests that “although [the correlative adjective *τοιοῦτος*] often means ‘such a person’ (e.g., in 11:13), when it is articular it can function (as here) as a less definite term for *οὗτος*” (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 227). Yet at least two of the New Testament references that are typically thought to display this usage are plausibly interpreted as generic (1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 2:6–7), and two other references use the phrase for the purpose of accentuating something qualitative about a specific participant (Acts 22:22; 2 Cor 12:2–5).

⁴⁸ So the phrase *τὸν τοιοῦτον* is not anaphoric as a whole, even though the adjective *τοιοῦτον* is anaphoric (pointing back to the person who is caught sinning).

aftermath of an earlier correspondence in which he has appealed for sinners in the Corinthian community to be disciplined.⁴⁹

Before proceeding with an analysis of 2:8–13, one final detail in 2:6 needs to be considered. If multiple sinners are in view in 2:5–7, why does Paul refer to the punishment that is being carried out using the *singular* phrase ἡ ἐπιτιμία αὕτη? One possibility is that all of the offending individuals in Corinth have been subjected to an identical punishment. An alternative possibility is that the demonstrative is cataphoric, in which case various different punishments may have shared in common the quality of having been imposed ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων (“by the rest of you”).⁵⁰ But in any case, what is most interesting is the fact that αὕτη suggests a contrast between two punishments, with the opposing member of the contrast being some kind of alternative punishment that might have been imposed. Notwithstanding the common speculation that the punishment ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων was opposed by a minority of dissenters in Corinth, the implied alternative is almost certainly the punishment that Paul himself would have imposed (i.e. ἡ ἐπιτιμία ἢ ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ).

⁴⁹ Welborn (*Enmity*, 24) reports that this is the view of Sickenberger, but I cannot find any evidence of this. Rather, in my edition of the relevant commentary, Sickenberger writes regarding 2:5–11: “Jedenfalls sprechen gewichtige Argumente für die Identifikation des hier erwähnten Sünders mit dem Blutschänder” (Sickenberger, *Die beiden Briefe*, 101). Similarly, I cannot find any evidence for the idea that 2:5–8 speaks about a class of individuals anywhere in the work of Golla, whom Welborn also cites to this effect. Rather, Golla writes: “Vielmehr spricht manches dafür, daß in 2 Kor 2, 5–11 der in 1 Kor 5, 1–5 13 genannte und bestrafte Blutschänder gemeint ist. An beiden Stellen wird die Person u. a. mit dem Indefinitum τις...bzw. mit τοιοῦτος...bezeichnet” (Golla, *Zwischenreise und Zwischenbrief*, 68).

⁵⁰ Here Paul may mean something like: “With respect to such people I am willing to accept as adequate the following punishment: whatever has already been imposed by the rest of you.” See BDAG, 848 1.b.β.λ. Against Thrall’s claim that the meaning ‘the others’ “would be very odd after the ὑμᾶς of v. 5” (*Second Epistle*, 174 n.316), it can be noted that the meaning ‘the others’ is eminently sensible here if Paul is speaking about a small group of Corinthian converts who are being punished by the rest of his addressees. And so there really is a minority group in Corinth and a majority group. The majority are those doing the punishing (τῶν πλειόνων), while the minority are those being punished (τῶ τοιοῦτῳ).

Arguably, although Paul does not want to be regarded as authoritarian, he *does* want the Corinthians to fear his discipline, which is why he has described his earlier letter as sparing the Corinthians the unpleasant scene that would have unfolded had he arrived in Corinth upset. It would seem, however, that Paul's earlier letter was so aggressive regarding the threat of discipline that Paul must now placate his upset readers (1:24–2:4) and put appropriate limits on the punishments prompted by his earlier words (2:5–13). How does he perform the latter tasks without undermining the appropriate fear that has been instilled by his earlier letter? He does so by casting himself as a very commanding leader who has been made upset—but who is willing to do whatever is best for those who are under his charge. Thus Paul reigns in his negative emotions so as not to be burdensome (οὐκ ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέρους ἵνα μὴ ἐπιβαρῶ πάντα ὑμᾶς), pronounces that he will not enact further discipline personally but will instead regard whatever discipline has already been imposed by the community as sufficient (ικανὸν...ἢ ἐπιτιμία αὐτῆ ἢ ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων), and then proceeds to point out that he does not want to devour anyone by being excessively upset (μὴ πως τῆ περισσοτέρᾳ λύπῃ καταποθῆ ὁ τοιοῦτος).⁵¹ Each of these moves sustains the fear of discipline while soothing and healing wounded relations.

⁵¹ The possibility that τῆ περισσοτέρᾳ λύπῃ is a reference to Paul's emotions does not seem to have been considered, despite the fact that his emotions play a crucial role in the preceding co-text, where they are described using the root λυπ-. Paul is the one who was too upset to visit Corinth (2:1), and Paul is the one who has just agreed to cease being upset (2:5) and to encourage restoration (2:6–7), so it is only logical that the excess in view here is an excessive anger on Paul's part. By way of contrast, commentators consistently ignore the conflict that underlies 1:13b–2:13 and opt instead to relate τῆ περισσοτέρᾳ λύπῃ to the emotional state (typically *sadness* or *sorrow* or *grief* or *tristesse* or *Kummer*) of whomever is being punished (e.g. Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 447; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 92; Carrez, *Deuxième Épître*, 68; Wolff, *Zweite Brief*, 44–45; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 32; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:177; Welborn, *Enmity*, 50).

h. Appeal for Forgiveness and Extension of Forgiveness (2:8–10a)

Having assessed the situation in Corinth and conveyed his improved disposition towards those whose sin provoked his changed itinerary and his unhappy correspondence, Paul finally takes action and calls for the termination of church discipline (2:8). Interestingly, however, he does not employ an imperative form to do this. Instead, he employs the verb παρακαλῶ. He urges his readers to affirm love for those who have been disciplined, with the singular pronoun αὐτόν being an anaphoric reference back to the generic ὁ τοιοῦτος.⁵² Or perhaps, given the nature of the discipline that may be at issue, we might say that Paul urges his readers to hold an official love-feast for the restoration of those who have been excommunicated.⁵³ In either case, Paul shows his benevolent concern and thus enacts good Christian leadership. He does not seek the destruction of those who have gone astray; rather, he was only helping his obedient readers to reveal their true colours.

Paul next extends his forgiveness to anyone who has been disciplined: “The people whom you are forgiving, I myself also forgive.” It should be noted that in this

⁵² Because the anaphoric αὐτόν directs the reader to retrieve the semantics of the generic ὁ τοιοῦτος, the instruction in 2:8 is applicable to everyone in Corinth who has made Paul upset and consequently been disciplined. Thus the participant in 2:8 is generic in the same way as is the pronoun in Rom 14:3: ὁ δὲ μὴ ἐσθίων τὸν ἐσθίοντα μὴ κρινέτω, ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτόν προσελάβετο. See also Jas 5:15: καὶ ἡ εὐχή τῆς πίστεως σώσει τὸν κάμνοντα καὶ ἐγερεῖ αὐτόν ὁ κύριος. Welborn is thus mistaken when he cites the singular personal pronoun αὐτόν as an obstacle for the reading advocated here (Welborn, *Enmity*, 21).

⁵³ Thrall writes: “Most probably, the offender had been banned from participation in some congregational activities, and in particular from the Eucharist” (*Second Epistle*, 1:174). Similarly, Martin observes the possibility that 2:6 may refer to “a permanent exclusion from the church’s fellowship or its *agapē* meal” (2 *Corinthians*, 37; see also Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 161). Yet neither author mentions the possibility that the practice of the love feast might explain Paul’s use of the unusual expression κυρῶσαι εἰς αὐτόν ἀγάπην, which has caused interpreters some difficulty (e.g. “The notion of a legal ratification of love may seem paradoxical...” [Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:178]).

context ᾧ τι χαρίζεσθε is likely a generic participant. Paul is saying that he forgives that class of people whom his addressees forgive, with the singular number being motivated by all of the previous singular phrases in 2:5–9.⁵⁴ It should also be noted that, although this move employs a declarative clause, it is not merely an exchange of information. After all, in saying that he forgives these people, Paul is not merely giving information; he is doing something else besides. He is changing their social status vis-à-vis a church community that has punished them in obedience to a letter he himself wrote.

i. Explanation of Paul's Deference (2:10b–13)

Having extended forgiveness, Paul next proceeds to explain his offer of forgiveness with some additional information. Specifically, he clarifies that has just extended forgiveness in the sight of Christ on account of the Corinthians. Now, on the traditional reading, whereby Paul's forgiveness is a single act that applies only to "the offender," the protasis in 2:10b must be treated as a kind of renegeing. And so Paul is said to forgive but then immediately question whether it is really necessary for him to forgive, and this hedging is then related back to the clause οὐκ ἐμὲ λελύπηκεν, which is similarly interpreted as an attempt to downplay a past conflict.⁵⁵ By way of contrast, the present analysis permits a

⁵⁴ Generally speaking, relative clauses do not function like most other nominal group modifiers, in that one never finds the collocation ὁ ὅς (i.e. a "substantive" relative clause). Instead, relative clauses seem to possess in and of themselves the potential to realize either specific or generic participants. For instance, in Matt 10:37–39 we find embedded relative clauses functioning in parallel with articular nominal groups in order to construe generic categories of persons (e.g. ὁ φιλῶν υἱὸν ἢ θυγατέρα ὑπὲρ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔστιν μου ἄξιος· καὶ ὅς οὐ λαμβάνει τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ ὀπίσω μου οὐκ ἔστιν μου ἄξιος). Welborn is thus mistaken in citing the singular relative pronoun ᾧ as an objection to the reading being advocated here (Welborn, *Enmity*, 24).

⁵⁵ Furnish observes: "In this comment one see again how reluctant Paul is to acknowledge that the injury had been to him as an individual. At every turn and in every way he is extraordinarily insistent that the real danger had been not to himself but to the whole Corinthian church" (*II Corinthians*, 163). Furnish

far simpler reading: the conditional protasis in 2:10b depicts a generic scenario with multiple real-world applications because the generic participant ὃ τι χαρίζεσθε in 1:10a applies to multiple individuals in Corinth. Paul has said, “Those you forgive, I also forgive.” He now clarifies, “What I’ve forgiven, in each case that I’ve forgiven something, I’ve forgiven on account of you in the sight of Christ.”

What is the function of this clarification in 2:10b? Its function is to draw out and emphasize the priority that is implied already in 2:10a, wherein Paul’s personal forgiveness is made contingent on the Corinthians’ own *prior* forgiveness of the disciplined sinners in question. Paul will forgive, but he will forgive only those whom his readers have already forgiven, because it is the prerogative of the local community in Corinth to enact both discipline and restoration. This explains why Paul employs the conditional protasis εἴ τι κεχάρισμαι: he has extended forgiveness in 2:10a, but he cannot say for certain that everyone has been forgiven because the readers of 2 Corinthians must take the initiative in this respect. It also explains why Paul employs the phrase δι’ ὑμᾶς: Paul has extended forgiveness, but his forgiveness is contingent on the actions of his readers. If Paul has forgiven anyone, it is on account of his readers, because he has only agreed to forgive those whom they themselves forgive.

even engages in a bit of mirror reading here, inferring that “the opposite interpretation was being sponsored by someone else, very possibly the minority in Corinth who had not been in favor of the congregation’s disciplinary action” (*If Corinthians*, 163). Note, however, that the text actually says nothing anywhere about an “injury,” but speaks only about Paul being upset. And indeed, it speaks repeatedly and with great clarity about his being made upset. The tremendous amount of confusion that clouds 2 Cor 2:5–13 can also be seen in the fact that Martin reads 2:10 in a manner that is diametrically opposed to Furnish’s interpretation: “the personal pronoun in v 10 clinches the point that Paul himself was the object of this man’s outburst” (*2 Corinthians*, 37).

This reading of 2:10b has important implications for 2:11–13, because the satanic danger introduced in 2:11 is closely tied to 2:10b. Typically, scholars discuss the satanic danger of 2:11 with reference to 1:13b–2:10 as a whole, so that the scheming of Satan is said to have as its object either the creation of conflict or else the destruction of the offender, and forgiveness and reconciliation is said to disarm Satan’s scheme by means of reconciliation and restoration. These responses, however, mistakenly presume that 2:11 is communicating the purpose of the forgiveness that is enacted in 2:5–10a, when it is more likely communicating the purpose of Paul’s prioritizing of local leadership, which is implied in 2:10a but then drawn out and clarified in 2:10b. When the logic of the text is followed in the manner I have described above, it becomes clear that it is Paul’s apostolic strategy of *deference to local leadership* that opposes the devil ([κεχάρισμαι] δι’ ὑμᾶς... ἵνα μὴ πλεονεκτηθῶμεν ὑπὸ τοῦ σατανᾶ).⁵⁶ Which raises some interesting questions. In what way is this approach to community oversight a safeguard? And what does it safeguard?

To find an answer, we must look forward to the subsequent co-text of 2:12–13, which develops the claim that Paul is aware of Satan’s evil schemes. Frequently, these verses are said to initiate a new development (whether a new paragraph or an entirely new section of 2 Corinthians), but when treated this way they end up being somewhat awkward in their immediate environment. Either they conclude 1:13b–2:13 somewhat anticlimactically by returning to the earlier topic of Paul’s travels and by citing his

⁵⁶ This verse involves an interesting change from the first person singular to the plural. Whereas Paul offers forgiveness in the singular (κεχάρισμαι), he uses the plural when explaining that this forgiveness prevents exploitation (πλεονεκτηθῶμεν). Probably, the plural includes both Paul and his readers, because Satan’s schemes are dangerous to them both.

anxiety in Troas as yet another indication of his deep concern for the Corinthian situation,⁵⁷ or they break off suddenly because a literary fragment has been inserted before the original co-text of 7:5–16,⁵⁸ or they introduce a new discussion altogether.⁵⁹ When δέ in 2:12 is treated as signalling a further development with respect to the scheming mentioned in 2:11b, however, then 2:12–13 can be seen as a window into the apostolic agenda that shapes Paul’s conduct and ultimately underlies everything that is at stake in 1:13b–2:13. Specifically, these verses can be seen to imply that Satan’s strategy with respect to the Corinthian church is to ensure that problems in Corinth distract Paul from his evangelistic mission work.

The nature of Paul’s concern is as follows. He recently travelled to Troas with the goal of proclaiming Christ (ἐλθὼν δὲ εἰς τὴν Τρωάδα εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ). What is more, the Lord opened wide a door for him there (καὶ θύρας μοι ἀνεωργμένης ἐν κυρίῳ). Yet Paul was not at ease (οὐκ ἔσχηκα ἀνεσιν τῷ πνεύματι μου); rather (ἀλλὰ), he said his goodbyes and departed for Macedonia (ἀποταξάμενος αὐτοῖς ἐξῆλθον εἰς Μακεδονίαν)—because Titus did not show up as planned with news about Corinth (τῷ μὴ εὐρεῖν με Τίτον).⁶⁰ Although these verses provide evidence that Paul is personally

⁵⁷ Thus Furnish writes that “The apostle is not beginning a narrative in vv. 12–13 (which would then be suddenly ‘broken off’ and ‘continued’ only in 7:5ff.); rather, vv. 12–13 conclude his initial effort to ensure the Corinthians that he is by no means indifferent to them” (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 171), and Harris proposes that “This is the final section in Paul’s explanation of his recent conduct (1:12–2:13), and once again it focuses on his travel movements” (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 235).

⁵⁸ In the oft-cited words of Weiss, “This separation of what belongs together is unheard of and intolerable from a literary point of view, since 2:13 and 7:5f. fit onto each other as neatly as the broken pieces of a ring” (Weiss and Knopf, *Primitive Christianity*, 1:349).

⁵⁹ See Hafemann, “Paul’s Argument”; Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*; but cf. Hafemann, *Suffering and the Spirit*.

⁶⁰ In other words, “in Troas he curtailed a visit in spite of unique opportunities and because of

concerned about his readers, this is not their most immediate function. Rather, their immediate function is to articulate why Paul is so concerned that the Corinthian congregation take responsibility for itself both with respect to communal discipline and restoration. Why did Paul cancel the first of his planned visits and demand that the church in Corinth take immediate action towards unrepentant sinners? Why does Paul call for forgiveness but then insist that he will only extend forgiveness in accordance with a church-led initiative? Because he is trying to oppose a satanic strategy whereby his mission work is suffering, despite the Lord's gracious provision, because he is being distracted by issues in Corinth that are demanding his attention.

2. Summary

An analysis of the interpersonal moves and conjunctive relations in 1:3–2:13 reveals some very interesting patterns. First, the interpersonal core of the entire segment consists of the two opening statements in 1:3–7, which express Paul and Timothy's gratitude and hope (εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς; ἡ ἐλπίς ἡμῶν βεβαία ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν), with everything subsequent to 1:8 serving to support and develop these two opening moves. Second, the extended support material in 1:8–2:13 unfolds in three stages, with each new stage supporting the moves in the preceding stage: (1) a recounting of God's provision amidst recent difficulties, culminating in yet another expression of hope (1:8–11); (2) a brief justification of this hope that cites upright conduct both generally and towards the Corinthians in particular (1:12); and (3) an extended justification of the claim that Paul

inward apprehension" (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 240).

and Timothy have behaved well towards the Corinthians, throughout which Paul and Timothy discuss their conduct since their departure from Corinth.

Within the extended justification in 1:13–2:13, an analysis of identity chains reveals a significant shift at 1:13b, at which point Paul begins using the first person singular so as to exclude Timothy. First person plurals do appear sporadically between 1:13b and 2:13 and they continue to presuppose Timothy as an accessible referent.

Timothy is excluded so frequently in this section, however, that he cannot be regarded as someone who is taking part in whatever is being done in 1:3–2:13.

Probing 1:13b–2:13 still more deeply, a semantic domain analysis reveals that many terms in the passage relate to acts of leadership, and a cohesive harmony analysis reveals that some of these are used to speak about Paul's leadership actions (βούλομαι, ἔρχομαι, διέρχομαι, γράφω, παρακαλέω, ἐξέρχομαι), whereas others are used to speak about the Corinthians' own leadership actions (ἐπιτιμία, χαρίζομαι, παρακαλέω, κυρώω). Similarly, a semantic domain analysis reveals a number of terms related to evaluations or assessments, and a cohesive harmony analysis clarifies that some of these relate to assessments by Paul (ἐλπίζω, καύχημα, πεποιθήσις, πείθω, δοκιμή), whereas others relate to assessments of Paul (and Timothy) (ἐπιγινώσκω, καύχημα, μάρτυρα, γινώσκω).

A semantic domain analysis also reveals the importance of the fronted phrases ταύτη τῇ πεποιθήσει (1:15) and τῇ ἐλαφρίᾳ (1:17), which signal Paul's preoccupation with the strength displayed by his earlier leadership decisions, as well as the expression ἵνα... χάριν σχῆτε (1:15), which signals a related preoccupation with the benevolence expressed by earlier leadership decisions. These signals are important because, after

raising a question about his current plans (1:17b) and then upholding the general reliability of the Pauline mission (1:18–22), Paul focuses once again on the strength and benevolence of his leadership.⁶¹ He provides an extended discussion of his leadership that employs both “harsh” authoritarian terms (φείδομαι, κυριεύω, λύπη, λυπέω, επιβαρέω, καταπίνω, δοκιμή, ὑπήκοος) as well as “soft” relational terms (συνεργός, χαρά, εὐφραίνω, χαίρω, καρδία, δάκρυον, ἀγάπη, χαρίζομαι). In 1:13b–2:13, therefore, Paul is talking about his leadership as something that is both authoritative and forceful as well as collaborative and benevolent.

Lastly, an analysis of 2:5–10a reveals that there are some fairly complex relations being enacted in this section. Specifically, a cohesive harmony analysis indicates that there is a third person chain here and this chain refers to a generic group of individuals over whom Paul’s readers have ecclesial authority. So although Paul is interacting with his readers using second person items, he is preoccupied with a number of Corinthian believers who for some reason are discussed in the third person.

What exegetical implications follow from these observations? Generally speaking, 1:3–2:13 is best described as a complex and multifaceted response to recent developments that have taken place between Paul and the Corinthians. More importantly, the segment expresses Paul and Timothy’s confident opinion that they have an enduring

⁶¹ In this connection, it should be noted that Paul and Timothy have already employed related language in 1:3–11 in order to express some explicit self-assessments. They have experienced a difficult situation exceeding their own abilities (1:8), yet they have also received a divine encouragement that enables them to encourage others despite their troubles (1:4). So even though Paul characterizes himself as a strong leader in 1:13b–2:13, he and Timothy have already conceded that they are inadequate in themselves. As far as 1:3–2:13 as a whole is concerned, Paul and Timothy are equipped and capable only because of the power of God.

partnership with Corinth, a point that is made in the opening thanksgiving of 1:3–7 and then elaborated in 1:8–11. This confidence is elaborated in 1:12 by means of some short statements that justify Paul and Timothy's confidence in the face of criticisms of their conduct, and then again in 1:13–2:13, which responds to recent developments that have strained Paul's relations with Corinth.

These latter developments do not seem to have involved Timothy very much, with the exception of an initial remark that perhaps indicates a previous co-authored letter (1:13a). Paul alone was planning to visit Corinth *en route* to Macedonia. Paul alone wrote the letter that took the place of that visit and demanded church discipline. And thus Paul alone explains his decisions and instructs the Corinthians concerning the next steps they need to take. He asks his readers to forgive their fellows, and he himself extends forgiveness to those who are forgiven. It would seem, therefore, that Paul's earlier letter has prompted the expulsion of various people from the Corinthian congregation, and that he is now instructing his readers to restore them to fellowship.

A few exegetical implications are also noteworthy with regard to the immediate status of Paul and Timothy's relations with their addressees. First, the opening disposition in 1:3–11 is filled with expressions of hope. Paul and Timothy are *hopeful* as regards the Corinthians, knowing that the Corinthians are partners with them in their sufferings as well as fellow recipients of that divine encouragement which enables endurance (1:6–7). Also, Paul and Timothy are *hopeful* that the Corinthians will partner with them in the future by means of their prayers (1:10c–11). And Paul is *hopeful* that the Corinthians will persist in recognizing himself and Timothy, because he and Timothy will be a source of

pride for the Corinthians on the day of the Lord and vice versa (1:13b–14). Probably, Paul and Timothy want to be positive about their relations with Corinth, but they cannot ignore or downplay some immediate tensions.

Second, Paul frames himself as both authoritative *and* affectionate. He never for a moment surrenders the authority that he regards himself to possess over his readers, presenting his anger and his discipline as things to be feared and avoided. Yet he also makes it clear that he is not *merely* an authority figure (e.g. he avoided Corinth in order to spare his readers, he and Timothy are not lords, he wrote so harshly because he loves so deeply, etc.). This tension between authority and affection indicates that Paul is responding to two interrelated developments that each demand a very distinct response. On the one hand, people are questioning the strength of his leadership and raising questions about his recent “avoidance” of Corinth; on the other hand, his readers are feeling abandoned because of his absence and unfairly criticized because of his earlier letter.

Third, although Paul characterizes himself as an authoritative leader in relation to his readers, he expects them to take responsibility for themselves as regards the enactment of communal discipline. In the first place, this was the point of Paul’s earlier letter, which must have demanded that the Corinthians enact church discipline prior to his arrival (so as to avert an unpleasant reunion involving apostolic discipline). Yet this same expectation is evident in Paul’s insistence that he will only forgive those whom the
| Corinthians forgive. By acting upon the Corinthian situation in this way, Paul is enacting

authoritative leadership in a manner designed to help the Corinthian church to develop its own leadership.

CHAPTER 4: 2:14–5:21

Moving on from 2:13, my analysis continues to abstract *what is being done, who is/are taking part, and what is being talked about*, and it continues to do this by observing progressive moves, conjunctive relations, meta-commentaries, semantic domains, identity chains, and cohesive harmony. At 2:14, however, my analysis identifies the first of several structural boundaries within the letter body of 2 Corinthians. For this reason, the present chapter begins with a section that addresses my segmentation, explaining why the meanings beginning in 2:14 do not relate back to 1:3–2:13 as a simple continuation of that earlier segment.

Because SFL predicts that there will be structural transition points like this within most texts, my analysis will not immediately abandon the notion that 2:14 continues the same text begun in 1:1. Rather, my approach asks whether the apparent “break” at 2:14 can be interpreted as a point of intra-textual linguistic variation, in which case some of the contextual parameters abstracted from 1:3–2:13 will remain unchanged and others will be made more abstract so as to describe a more general situation with room for the new material beginning at 2:14.

Generally speaking, it is to be expected that the content following 2:14 will still construe a situation wherein Paul and Timothy are writing to the church in Corinth (together with all the saints in all Achaia). Also, it is to be expected that Paul and Timothy's leadership is being criticized broadly and that questions are being raised about the strength of Paul's leadership even within Corinth. Finally, it is to be expected that the two men will continue to construe themselves as being hopeful and confident with regard to their Corinthian partnership but also cognizant of a need to address criticisms of their conduct. Should any of these latter parameters fail to correlate with the new meanings beginning at 2:14, questions will need to be raised about the integrity of 2 Corinthians.

1. The Segmentation

Many words have been written about the relationship (or lack thereof) between 2:14–16b and the preceding statements in 2 Corinthians. Sometimes, interpreters attempt to establish a connection by pointing to the semantic domain PLACE, which appears in both 2:13 (Μακεδονία) and 2:14 (τόπος), suggesting that 2 Corinthians moves from a specific difficulty in Macedonia to more general apostolic difficulties.¹ But this small point of experiential continuity represents a very small amount of continuity as far as my analysis is concerned. Neither does the relation between 2:5–13 and 2:14–16b become any

¹ E.g. Harris, who writes: “Clearly Paul is moving from the specific (Titus, believers at Troas, Macedonia) to the general (‘always...in every place’), but what triggered the transition? It seems to have been the word Μακεδονία...as the place where Paul gained relief from his unnerving restlessness” (*Second Epistle*, 242). Although Harris also explains that Paul's mind has “leaped forward past the further frustrating delay in receiving news about Corinth,” this is a somewhat odd claim to make in light of the fact that the preceding co-text in 2:5–13 actually *presupposes* Paul's reception of good news from Corinth (i.e. Paul discusses the church discipline that has been carried out in response to his letter, and he mentions the cessation of his frustrations as a result).

stronger or any clearer when other points of experiential continuity are noted, involving the domains ABUNDANCE OR LACK (ικανός), TO HARM OR RESCUE FROM HARM (καταπίνω, σώζω, ἀπόλλυμι), TO KNOW OR NOT KNOW (γινώσκω, ἀγνοέω, γνῶσις), and TO SPEAK OR TO PROCLAIM (εὐαγγέλιον, λόγος, λαλέω). Despite these sorts of coincidental connections, there is no cohesive harmony between 2:14–16 and the immediately preceding co-text, and hence only very weak texture.²

A related problem stems from the fact that 2:14–5:21 cannot very easily be said to build on or progress the activity that Paul is accomplishing in the immediately preceding co-text. After all, 1:13b–2:13 discusses specific events or happenings related to Paul's partnership with the Corinthians, but 2:14–5:21 discusses the Pauline mission in much more general terms. Similarly, although Paul and Timothy make explicit references to their addressees in roughly 40% of the clauses in 1:13b–2:13, they do so in less than 10% of the clauses in 2:14–5:21 (a number that would decrease even further if references within meta-commentaries were excluded). And while the first person singular predominates in 1:13b–2:13, the first person plural returns in 2:14 and persists throughout 2:14–5:21. So there is not simply a lack of texture at 2:14; other linguistic patterns also indicate that Paul and Timothy are beginning to do something new. The appropriate question, therefore, is not how 2:14–5:21 continues 1:13b–2:13 directly, but whether it is possible to regard 2:14–5:21 as structurally integrated into a letter that begins with 1:1–2:13.

² In other words, when we examine how these domains interact with other domains or with identity chains, there are no consistent interactions.

The theoretical framework of this study predicts that there will be a decrease in texture between the different segments that make up the actual global structure of a text, but it would be highly unusual for a new segment of any size to display *no* continuity with its preceding co-text. It needs to be noted, therefore, that there are very clear connections between the opening statements in 2:14–16b and some earlier statements in 1:8–12 which precede Paul’s shift into the singular. And in addition, there are connections back to the opening statements in the thanksgiving of 1:3–7. First, in all three of these passages, Paul and Timothy employ the domains TO BE ABLE OR UNABLE and ABUNDANCE OR LACK in order to speak about themselves as suffering ministers. In 1:3–5 they observe that they are able (δύναμαι) to encourage people who share their sufferings because their ministry overflows (περισσεύω [2x]) not only with sufferings but also with encouragement; in 1:8 they report that they were burdened in Asia because their suffering temporarily exceeded (ὑπερβολή) their ability (δύναμις); and in 2:16c they inquire about the degree of ability (ικανός) that a minister requires in order to endure the positive and negative reactions that result whenever the gospel is proclaimed. Second, between 1:8–12 and 2:14–16b there are further connections: in both places Paul and Timothy speak about their experience of LIFE OR DEATH (ζάω, θάνατος [4x], νεκρός, ζωή [2x]); in both places they defend their conduct with reference to their TRANSPARENCY AND SINCERITY (ἀπλότης, εἰλικρίνεια [2x]); and in both places they speak about their ministry taking place in a broad geographical sphere (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ). Arguably, these connections establish a much closer relation between 2:14–16b and 1:8–12 (or even 1:3–12 as a

whole) than is established between 2:14–16b and 2:12–13 by the mere repetition of the domain PLACE.

So then, there are several close semantic connections between 1:3–12 and the opening verses of 2:14–5:21. These connections are not textural in the sense that 1:3–2:13 and 2:14–5:21 do not hang together as a simple whole because of them; they are, however, thematic connections that need to be explained, and they are most easily explained if both passages were activated by a single context of situation. In 2:14, Paul and Timothy are returning to some key meanings from 1:3–11 and 1:12. They have taken one route forward from 1:12 by addressing their conduct towards the Corinthians (1:12d–13a) and some of Paul’s recent interactions with Corinth in particular (1:13b–2:13). Having done this, however, the two men now wish to return to the broader perspective with which 1:12 begins. They are still concerned to elaborate the claims made in 1:3–11, which explains the continuity between 1:3–11 and 2:14–17, but they are returning to the more general perspective of 1:12a–c, which explains the continuity between 1:12 and 2:14–17.

2. The Analysis and Its Implications

a. Opposing Responses to Paul and Timothy (2:14–16b)

The statements in 2:14–16b immediately establish a new linguistic profile for 2:14–5:21 in that they do not describe bounded processes but instead establish logical relations of ascription. Paul and Timothy *are* the fragrance of Christ; to some people they *have* the scent of death, while to other people they *have* the scent of life. These verbless

observations are very different from the observations throughout most of 1:8–2:13. Paul and Timothy are neither describing their immediate circumstances nor making claims about any particular situation in which they have been involved. They are initiating a very general description of themselves as ministers, and they are doing so using the same sort of language we often find in Paul’s opening thanksgivings (e.g. verbless clauses, the semantic domain TO GIVE THANKS [χάρις], references to God and to Jesus Christ, etc.).³

Some of the things that Paul and Timothy choose to single out for attention in these opening statements include: (1) the fact that they have a highly visible public ministry (τῷ πάντοτε θριαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς...καὶ τὴν ὄσμὴν τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ φανεροῦντι δι’ ἡμῶν ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ); (2) the fact that people arrive at both positive and negative evaluations of their ministry (οἷς μὲν...οἷς δὲ...); and (3) the fact that their ministry leads both to death and to life (ἐν τοῖς σωζομένοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις; ὄσμη εἰς θάνατον...ὄσμη εἰς ζωὴν). Right at the outset of 2:14–5:21, therefore, Paul and Timothy are raising the issue of *how people respond to them as ministers of the gospel*. This issue is in some respects similar to what has already been addressed in 1:12–2:13, but here Paul and Timothy’s focus is on the reputation of the Pauline mission more broadly. Some of their hearers believe in the resurrected Messiah and receive eternal life; others reject the crucified pretender and perhaps even seek to kill his representatives.⁴

³ A classic article on the subject of the apparent thanksgiving in 2:14–16b is Thrall, “Second Thanksgiving.” Although it is outside of the parameters of the present study to discuss the register-specific structural potential of Paul’s letters, I should note that clauses like 2:14 are not restricted to the beginning of a letter body (e.g. Rom 6:17; 7:25; 1 Cor 15:57; 2 Cor 8:16; 9:15), even though such clauses do realize meanings that are characteristic of Paul’s opening thanksgivings.

⁴ Given that suffering is so predominant in 2 Corinthians and that the domain LIFE OR DEATH is so frequently tied to that suffering, it is worth considering whether the point of the phrases ὄσμη ἐκ θανάτου εἰς θάνατον and ὄσμη ἐκ ζωῆς εἰς ζωὴν might not extend beyond eternal death and life in order to encompass earthly reactions to Paul and Timothy’s ministry as well. Taking up the “smell” image first, I

b. The Question of Ministerial Adequacy (2:16c–17)

Taking up the opening observations of 2:14–16b, Paul and Timothy next employ a rhetorical question and introduce the topic of competency in 2:16c using the domain ABUNDANCE OR LACK (ικανός): “Who is able to handle the things that go along with being led in triumph and with making known the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ?” This notion of competency will be picked up again in 3:4, at which point Paul and Timothy will develop it further.⁵ In the meantime, however, Paul and Timothy proceed in 2:17 to clarify the nature of their question by mentioning that their ministry entails an extremely *bold* revealing, a rather *large* amount of difficulty, and *very* polarized reactions. Or at least, this seems to be the most plausible implication of the supporting statement introduced with γάρ in 2:17. Having asked who is able to handle the things that go along with Christian ministry, Paul and Timothy proceed to clarify that an unusual amount of competency is required by the Pauline mission, because the Pauline mission is not like

suggest that Paul and Timothy are very allusively observing several things whose relevance will become increasingly clear later on in 2:14–5:21. First, as ministers they publicly proclaim both Christ’s sacrificial death and his subsequent resurrection. In this way they both manifest the smell of the knowledge of Christ in every place and also become the fragrance of Christ’s sacrifice to God among all people. Second, although some of Paul and Timothy’s hearers accept only Christ’s crucifixion (i.e. they perceive death [2:16a]), others believe in Christ’s resurrection (i.e. they perceive life [2:16b]). And third, those who perceive only a crucified blasphemer or rebel are both destined for death and also prone to seek Paul and Timothy’s death, whereas those who believe in the resurrected Lord are both destined for life and also a source of life to Paul and Timothy. As for the very brief and enigmatic image wherein Paul and Timothy are said to be “led in triumph,” does this mean that the two men are victors or that they are captives? One possible answer to this question is *Yes*, since Paul and Timothy may be exploiting an ambiguous expression in order to draw out the same conflicting perceptions of their ministry that are contrasted in the subsequent “smell” image. Some of Paul and Timothy’s hearers will regard their ministry as a humiliating subservience to a defeated rebel, whereas others will regard the two men as authorized representative of a victorious Lord.

⁵ Hence the term ικανός in 2:16c and the related terms in 3:4–6 (ικανός, ικανότης, ικανόω).

most other ministries: “For (γάρ) we are not peddling the word of God like the rest of them. No, we speak with unmixed motives. We speak in Christ as men who have been sent from God and who expect to be called to account before God.”⁶

Here Paul and Timothy are persisting with the meanings introduced in 2:14–16b, since they are speaking about their ministry using the domain TO SPEAK OR TO PROCLAIM (λόγος, λαλέω). But they are also reintroducing the domain SINCERITY from 1:12 (εἰλικρίνεια). And perhaps more importantly, they are being a bit polemical, just as they were being apologetic in 1:12. Indeed, they are taking a jab at people whom they deem too soft to handle the difficult path taken by the Pauline mission, implying that the Pauline mission’s ministers are more bold in their proclamation than other ministers who are timid by comparison. Are Paul and Timothy slandering other Christian leaders? Not explicitly, perhaps, but 2:17 implicates at the very least a conflict of some kind between Paul and Timothy and other ministers. So then, we can fairly safely conclude that it is not only the perishing who have a negative view of Paul and Timothy’s ministry (2:14–16b)—their mission is receiving negative criticisms from other Christian ministers as well (2:17). In order to preserve this distinction, I will employ the distinct terms *persecutors* and *critics*. There is trouble that Paul and Timothy are experiencing at the

⁶ It must be asked: If the comments in 2:14–16b are intended to be applicable to all missionaries or apostles, why do Paul and Timothy proceed to make the off-hand remark in 2:17? The reading proposed here understands the comments in 2:14–16b to be a description of Paul and Timothy in particular, with the subsequent remarks in 2:16c–17 clarifying that the first person plurals should be understood to exclude their critics, who do ministry in an easier way that does not require as much competency as does the Pauline mission strategy. Indeed, the whole of 2:14–5:21 is best regarded as a characterization of the Pauline mission in particular rather than as a characterization of Christian ministry in general, since it functions as a response to other Christian ministers.

hands of non-Christians who *persecute* them, and there is also trouble that Paul and Timothy are experiencing in the form of Christian ministers who *criticize* them.

It is widely recognized, of course, that 2:14–5:21 is about Paul’s ministry.⁷ It is also sometimes recognized that Paul and Timothy have their critics in view throughout this part of their letter, such that their comments should be regarded as a defence of some kind.⁸ What I wish to emphasize here is the way that the logic of 2:14–17 establishes a connection between the criticisms that are being levelled at Paul and Timothy and the Pauline mission’s willingness to provoke persecutions. Paul and Timothy are more polarizing than other ministers (2:14–16b) because, as self-sufficient labourers, they are less likely to adjust their proclamation in order to gain a positive hearing (2:16c–17).

Notice in the first place where Paul’s focus truly lies. Harris paraphrases the question in 2:16c as: “Who is equal to this task of dispensing and being the fragrance of Christ, a task that has eternal consequences?”⁹ But while Harris is quite correct to note that Paul views the apostolic task as a great responsibility with eternal consequences, the preceding co-text has to do with earthly reactions to gospel proclamation (2:14–16) and the subsequent co-text develops the notion of ministerial adequacy with reference to confidence and boldness (3:4–12). In context, therefore, Paul’s question in 2:16c might

⁷ E.g. “Comments on Apostolic Service” (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, xii); “The Purpose Expressed in Mission and Ministry” (Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 51); “Der wahre Aposteldienst” (Wolff, *Zweite Brief*, VIII); “The Apostolic Ministry” (Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 7).

⁸ E.g. “Defence of the Apostolic Ministry” (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:xiii); “Paul Defends His Ministry Against Criticism” (Belleville, *Reflections*, 47); “Defense of the Ministry of the New Covenant” (Barnett, *Second Epistle*, vii).

⁹ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 252.

be better paraphrased: “Who is able to endure the polarized reactions that ensue whenever the knowledge of Christ is boldly revealed?”

Notice also the very pointed use of *οἱ πολλοί* in connection with conveying the message of God and speaking in Christ. Here we must be very cautious not to blunt the force of *οἱ πολλοί*, as though Paul and Timothy should be prevented from saying unpleasant things. Indeed, it must even be reckoned as a possibility that the reading of *πολλοί* is a very early blunting of an original *οἱ λοιποί* (found in P46 and D, among other places), since the latter reading is unquestionably the harder reading. When Metzger writes that “*οἱ λοιποί* seems to be too offensive an expression for Paul to have used in the context,” the question must be asked whether this was exactly the thinking that brought about the reading of *πολλοί*.¹⁰ Perhaps *οἱ λοιποί* is the original reading and Paul and Timothy are contrasting themselves with their fellow Christian ministers in a very polemical way. After all, is it not true that people tend to exaggerate and be imprecise when doing the sort of thing Paul and Timothy are doing here (i.e. reacting to criticism)? If Paul and Timothy are making a sweeping statement, it is probably unhelpful to worry about whether their claim is accurate in an absolute sense.¹¹

As a third consideration, I note that the negative connotations of *καπηλεύω* need not entail theological corruption on the part of Paul’s critics. Or at least, there are no

¹⁰ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 508.

¹¹ Harris argues that “it seems somewhat improbable that Paul would have charged that ‘the rest’ (*οἱ λοιποί* = all others in a particular category) were peddlers or hucksters of God’s word” (*Second Epistle*, 242). He is more persuasive when he argues that “Paul is not disparaging all other Christian evangelists and teachers.... But he is probably referring, without statistical precision, to some indeterminate but sizable number of teachers” (*Second Epistle*, 254).

indications of theological disagreement in the present context.¹² Instead, Paul and Timothy seem to be alluding to the somewhat distinctive strategy that they have chosen to pursue whereby they work harder than others by refusing to accept financial compensation or material support from the people to whom they are ministering. Moreover, given the preceding co-text in 2:14–16 (to which 2:17 is related by means of γάρ), Paul and Timothy seem to be invoking their practice of self-sufficiency in order to imply that the ministers who are criticizing their mission are actually less adequate as ministers. So Paul and Timothy are applying a negatively loaded term in order to describe a financial practice to which they have no objection *in principle*. And they are doing this in order to make themselves look better than their critics.¹³

Fourth, although the phrase ἐξ εὐκρινείας is often translated into English as *sincerely* or *with sincerity*, these English phrases unhelpfully evoke the possibility that Paul and Timothy are different from other ministers because they actually believe the things they proclaim. The noun εὐκρίνεια, however, means ‘to wrap up’, with the result that the phrase ἐξ εὐκρινείας has to do with the purity or with the “unmixedness” (LSJ) of Paul and Timothy’s proclamation. Probably, Paul and Timothy are able to *more freely* proclaim what they believe because they do not need to worry about earning a living

¹² A common explanation is that Paul has in view some kind of theological compromise or error, in which case he speaking not only about the practice of accepting payment but also about the fraud and trickery that was often associated with the figure of the greedy merchant (e.g. Harris, *Second Epistle*, 254). But cf. Hafemann, *Suffering and the Spirit*, 106–26.

¹³ It is important to clarify that Paul does not actually reject the validity of ministers receiving compensation; rather, he himself upholds the right of the preacher to receive payment for his preaching. “Paul is not so much highlighting a doctrinal issue, then, or questioning the right of the apostolic minister to be supported by the gospel...so much as he is criticizing a manner of apostolic ministry different from his own” (Matera, *II Corinthians*, 75).

from the gospel. In other words, as regards those things that they need to keep in mind when carrying out their ministry, Paul and Timothy have fewer things in the mix. Unlike other missionaries who might be tempted to avoid saying anything offensive because they need to feed their families, Paul and Timothy are single-minded in their focus.¹⁴

Supporting this interpretation are several facts: the preceding context has raised a question about ministerial adequacy on account of the mixed reaction that the gospel receives; in the closely related discussion in 1:8–12, εἰλικρίνεια is parallel with ἀπλότης, which can have the sense of ‘without reserve’ or ‘without strings attached’;¹⁵ and the notion that God is the person to whom Paul and Timothy must ultimately answer (ἐκ θεοῦ κατέναντι θεοῦ λαλοῦμεν) subtly suggests that their critics have their loyalties divided between heavenly and earthly patrons.

In 2:14–16b, therefore, Paul and Timothy advance the idea that the task of revealing the knowledge of Christ is a demanding task, since some people will respond positively but others will respond negatively. Then, in 2:16c–17, they introduce a controversy of a different sort entirely by insinuating that ministers who need to feed themselves and their families are less able to endure the violent reactions that sometimes follow when the gospel is proclaimed boldly and fearlessly. Why would Paul and Timothy contrast themselves with other Christian leaders in this way? We must presume either that they are being senselessly antagonistic or that other ministers are questioning

¹⁴ That such a thought might have occurred to Paul and Timothy in this context is undeniable, given Paul’s comments in 1 Cor 7. Apparently, given the persecution that surrounded Paul at every turn, he came to regard families as a liability. At the end of the world, who wants to worry about a wife and children (cf. Luke 21:23; 23:29)?

¹⁵ See BDAG, 104.

their adequacy and they are reacting to this criticism by drawing attention to some ways in which they are stronger or more daring than others.

c. Meta-Commentary: Not Self-Recommendation (3:1–3)

Using two rhetorical questions, Paul and Timothy next clarify that their words in 2:14–17 should not be misunderstood as a renewed attempt at self-recommendation. This little meta-commentary in 3:1–3 is very fortuitous, because the analyst of 2 Corinthians has been given a remarkable piece of evidence. In these verses, Paul and Timothy not only reveal an awareness of the fact that 2:14–5:21 is enacting a specific social activity, they also reveal an awareness of the fact that their remarks in 2:14–17 might actually misrepresent what they are doing. And so, by interrupting what they are doing in order to explicitly clarify for their readers what they are *not* attempting to do, Paul and Timothy are also assisting the modern discourse analyst, who might otherwise misconstrue the nature of the activity in which Paul and Timothy are engaging.¹⁶ Unequivocally, Paul and Timothy insist, they are not comparing themselves with other ministers in order to gain the support of their readers (3:1). Rather, they already have a partnership with the Corinthians on account of their earlier labour (3:2–3). Here again, therefore, Paul and Timothy are reinforcing the idea that an enduring relationship exists between themselves and their readers. They have the Corinthians written on their hearts in the sense that they

¹⁶ In all of this, it must be remembered that “what Paul and Timothy are doing by means of language” is a semiotic construct according SFL. And so the modern interpreter is free to conclude that 2:14–5:21 is an attempt to win over the Corinthians, provided that some explanation is given for why Paul and Timothy would deny doing what they are actually doing.

are very proud of their Corinthian ministry and are prone to boasting before others about what God has done among their Corinthian converts.

An important observation with regard to 3:1–3 is the fact that it is entirely unnecessary to create a historical reconstruction involving a dispute over letters of recommendation. After all, if Paul and Timothy’s words are designed to clarify what they are and are not attempting to do in the discussion at hand, then 3:1–3 should be explained first and foremost with reference to 2:14–17. So although many interpreters have derived from 3:1–3 the idea that Paul and Timothy are attacking other ministers who are self-recommending, or perhaps defending themselves against people who have taken issue with the way they either self-recommend or refrain from self-recommending, such mirror-readings are entirely speculative.¹⁷ It is enough to note that 2:14–17 sounds very much like a self-recommendation (although it is not intended in this way), and then to note that Paul and Timothy do not regard themselves as requiring letters of recommendation because the effectiveness of their ministry speaks for itself.¹⁸

¹⁷ Thrall observes, “A common understanding of the question is that self-commendation is seen as the equivalent of self-praise, and that Paul is obliquely countering adverse criticism to the effect that he indulges in this kind of self-promotion” (*Second Epistle*, 1:217–18). For his part, Matera proposes that “His question here...suggests that he is now under some pressure from the Corinthians to produce such letters, perhaps because intruding apostles have arrived with letters of recommendation and flattered the Corinthians by asking them for such letters” (*II Corinthians*, 76).

¹⁸ As for the word *πάλι* in 3:1, it need not be related to the contents of an earlier letter, since Paul and Timothy would presumably have recommended themselves on the occasion of their initial arrival in Corinth together with Silas (see Kennedy, *Second and Third Epistles*, 88; Belleville, *Reflections*, 86–87). And as for the elaborations in 3:2–3, they are best regarded as expressions of pride. Paul and Timothy take such pride in the Corinthians that they talk about them everywhere they go, with the result that the Corinthians themselves—being written on Paul and Timothy’s sleeves, so to speak—are a kind of letter of recommendation, since they are a vibrant community of spirit-filled people and thus a testimony to the fact that Christ is working through the Pauline mission.

d. Paul and Timothy's Boldness (3:4–12)

In 3:4, Paul and Timothy return to the matter of ministerial adequacy. Having exuded a great deal of self-confidence in 2:17 by implying that they are more adequate and more single-minded than other missionaries and hence better able to handle adverse reactions from their hearers, Paul and Timothy proceed to underscore in 3:4–6a that they possess such confidence (πεποιθήσιν τοιαύτην ἔχομεν), not because they have an inflated opinion of themselves or their abilities (οὐχ ὅτι ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν ἱκανοί ἐσμεν λογίσασθαί τι ὡς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν), but because they know themselves to be divinely commissioned ministers of a new covenant that is πνεύματος rather than γράμματος. Then, in 3:6b–11, Paul and Timothy draw a series of comparisons between the old covenant of the letter and the new covenant of the spirit, before summing up their argument in 3:12 with yet another reference to boldness (ἔχοντες οὖν τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα).¹⁹

In making the letter vs. spirit contrast, are Paul and Timothy still engaging in oneupmanship? Perhaps. It must be duly noted, however, that Paul and Timothy introduce the letter vs. spirit contrast in 3:6a in connection with different *covenants* rather than different *ministers*. And it must also be noted that when they contrast the new-covenant-spirit-ministry with the old-covenant-letter-ministry in 3:6b–11, they do not employ the

¹⁹ It is notable that the only explicit verbs found in primary clauses throughout 3:7–11 are ἐγενήθη and ἔσται. Also, throughout this section Paul and Timothy use a large number of metaphorical participants. So whereas most of 2 Corinthians so far has been about people and events, here the text includes some fairly abstract concepts (e.g. “the ministry of the Spirit,” “the ministry of righteousness,” “that which has been glorified,” “that which persists”). We also find several conditional structures that strengthen the pointed contrasts being drawn, and some future forms that are often (though not exclusively) regarded as examples of the so-called logical use. Overall, therefore, 3:7–11 is the most overtly conceptual or didactic part of 2 Corinthians thus far.

domain SERVANT to contrast different ministers, nor do they employ the domain ABUNDANCE OR LACK to speak about ministerial adequacy.²⁰ In view of these details, I suggest that 3:4–12 is not contrasting Paul and Timothy with other Christian ministers; rather, Paul and Timothy are grounding their boldness in their having been appointed and equipped by God for a new covenant ministry, with the implicit point being that *all* Christian ministers have been appointed and equipped to boldly proclaim that the new enduring covenant of Christ (τὸ μένον) is superior to the non-enduring covenant administered by Moses (τὸ καταργούμενον).²¹ The polemical edge to 3:4–12, in other words, is that other Christian ministers are less bold in proclaiming the superiority of the enduring covenant of Christ over the non-enduring covenant administered by Moses.²²

²⁰ Paul and Timothy do instantiate the domain TO SERVE (διακονία [4x]) and they do speak about the glory or reputation possessed by different ministries using the domain HONOUR OR SHAME (δοξάζω [2x], δόξα [8x]). Moreover, amidst the continuity established by these domains, they draw a contrast by means of the domains LETTER (γράμμα) and SPIRIT (πνεῦμα), the domain NEW OR OLD (καινός; cf. παλαιός in 3:14), and the domain TO REMAIN OR TO CEASE TO BE (καταργέω [3x], μένω). Yet the resulting contrast is between two different covenant-ministries rather than between the different ministers of a single covenant.

²¹ I point this out because the statements in 3:6b–11 are sometimes discussed as though they are intended to compare Paul and Timothy’s ministry with Moses’ ministry. For example, Hafemann observes that Paul’s claims are “shocking in their magnitude, since they place him on a par with...Moses” (*Suffering and the Spirit*, 217). This is not, however, the way the text actually progresses. The tempering observation in 3:5 serves to deflect attention away from Paul and Timothy and onto the covenant they proclaim. And Paul’s subsequent comments are entirely about covenants administered rather than about ministers. Notice also that Paul does not speak about the glory upon his own face but only about the glory that radiates from Jesus’ face (3:18; 4:4, 6).

²² A specific pointer in this direction is the domain ABUNDANCE AND LACK (ικανοί, ικανότης, ικάνωσεν), which indicates a return to the question of 2:16c (ικανός), which was prompted by the polarized reactions discussed in 2:14–16b. Note also that the domain TO PUT STOCK IN SOMEONE OR SOMETHING (πεποιθήσις, ἐλπὶς), which brackets Paul’s discussion in 3:4–12, appears in 3:4 together with a demonstrative reference back to 2:14–3:3 (i.e. “such confidence”). Finally, it may be that 3:6 implies a contrast between Paul’s life-giving Christian ministry (τὸ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ) and the antagonistic efforts of loyal followers of Moses who are trying to kill him in order to silence him (τὸ γράμμα ἀποκτενεῖ). Such a reading would not necessarily deny that theological ideas are inherent in Paul’s *lethal vs. life-giving* contrast, but it would seek first-and-foremost to situate the contrast within the preceding discussion of the reactions Paul and Timothy receive when they proclaim the gospel.

And this connects directly back to 2:14–17, which depicts other Christian ministers as hesitant to provoke hostility.

e. Explanation of Opposing Reactions to Paul and Timothy (3:13–18)

According to current scholarly consensus, 3:13 continues to discuss Paul and Timothy's confidence. And so Paul and Timothy are alleged to have omitted some syntactic element which must therefore be supplied from 3:12, whether *χρώμεθα* or something else.²³ This reading regards 3:12 and 3:13 as two adversative statements conjoined using *καί*. Both are allegedly about Paul and Timothy's conduct, with a contrast being made between Paul and Timothy's boldness and an allegedly lesser boldness evident in Moses' actions in Exod 32–34 (however those actions are understood).²⁴ This reading, however, misses the flow of the passage and consequently misrepresents Paul and Timothy's understanding of the Exodus story.

The statement in 3:13, I suggest, is not presenting a contrast with 3:12; rather, 3:13 represents a new development in which Paul and Timothy begin to explain the negative reactions they so frequently arouse. Why are so many Jews failing to respond positively to the Pauline mission's proclamation? Seizing upon the veil worn by Moses as a useful illustration, Paul and Timothy propose that the real problem is a spiritual blindness on the part of the people of Israel. Although Moses' facial radiance was

²³ See, e.g., Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 471; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:255 n.449.

²⁴ Virtually all commentators and translations see an adversative relationship here, although an explicit adversative (*ἀλλά*) does not appear until v. 14. See Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 96–97; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:255. For a survey of various attempts to explain or justify Moses' use of the veil, see Harris, *Second Epistle*, 297–98.

patently obvious, the people of Israel turned away from it—and so Moses came to wear a veil. And these things Paul and Timothy regard as illustrative for the present time, in the following manner. On the one hand, many of their fellow Jews are turning away from the glory of God on the face of Jesus just as their forefathers turned away from the glory upon Moses's face. The glory of God is openly revealed, but a spiritual hardness causes people to turn away. On the other hand, many of Paul and Timothy's fellow Jews are failing to read Moses properly, such that they fail to see that the scriptures point towards the arrival of a new covenant—and in this they are like their forefathers who could not stare intently at Moses but could look at him only through a veil.

This proposed reading greatly clarifies 2:14–5:21 and thus has the potential to clarify our understanding of Paul's theology and his interpretation of the Jewish scriptures. Yet it depends on a very simple observation. In 3:7, Paul and Timothy mention that Moses would at times wear a veil over his face, with the point being that Moses' radiance—which must have been very great if he needed to wear a veil—pales in comparison with the surpassing radiance that emanates from the face of Jesus (see 3:18; 4:4, 6).²⁵ Then, when Paul and Timothy mention Moses' veil again in 3:13, they introduce the idea of a lack of perception. They are *not*, however, indicating that Moses veiled himself in order to hinder Israel from perceiving the τέλος of the Mosaic ministry. Quite to the contrary, *they are denying this* and insisting to the contrary that the problem was

²⁵ I note that Paul nowhere speaks explicitly about glory emanating from the faces of new covenant ministers. Rather, the contrastive parallel with Moses is Christ—in whose face can be seen the glory of God. Moses represents the old covenant, and Christ represents the new. It is possible that 3:18 extends the facial glory to Christian believers, but this passage may be speaking only about new covenant ministers *contemplating* the Lord's glory (see BDAG, 535).

Israel's inability to be perceptive: "It is not as though Moses was in the habit of putting a veil over his face in order to stop the Israelites from looking. Rather, they were imperceptive."²⁶

Grammatically speaking, this reading differs from the consensus reading in that it does not posit any elided content in 3:13. Instead, the phrase οὐ καθάπερ is treated as similar to the idiomatic expression οὐχ ὅτι ('it's not that'), with the result that οὐ καθάπερ is taken to mean something like the English *it's not as though*. An immediate advantage of reading the text in this way is that a natural contrast is established between 3:13 and 3:14, so that the function of ἀλλά is greatly clarified.²⁷ Moses was not attempting to obscure the glory of God; rather, he was dealing with hardened people who had already shown themselves to be disobedient and unable to gaze upon God's glory. Similarly, the allegedly disjunctive καί in 3:13 need no longer be regarded as disjunctive, because Paul and Timothy are not contrasting their own ministry with the ministry of Moses but simply adding a new idea that further expands on the content of 3:4–12. This reading also has the benefit of eliminating any need to discuss why Paul and Timothy would make an explicitly unfavourable contrast between themselves and Moses, since such a contrast is even more unlikely than the already surprising contrast found in 2:17.²⁸

²⁶ See esp. Job 17:7 LXX, where πωρόω is used to describe Job's eyes growing dim.

²⁷ Thrall writes: "The opening ἀλλά, however, presents a minor problem. It normally functions as a strong adversative particle, but it is not obvious here what it relates to" (*Second Epistle*, 262).

²⁸ Thrall inquires with respect to 3:14a:

Is there, perhaps, a correction of what might seem, in v. 13, to be a disparaging view of Moses? Moses's action might appear intentionally deceptive, *but* the Israelites' lack of perception was due to their own hardened minds. But this does less than justice to the purposive πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι of v. 13, and in any case the line of thought in vv. 12–13 demands that some element of

Notice that the logical development of Paul's argument becomes very simple to follow when 3:13 is read in the manner I am suggesting. First, in 3:4–12, Paul and Timothy explain that they are bold and outspoken because (like all Christian ministers) they have been appointed to proclaim an amazing new covenant. Second, in 3:13–15, Paul and Timothy explain why their proclamation of that new covenant provokes rejection and suffering. The key statements in 3:13–15 can be broken down as follows, with ellipses filled in:

1. καὶ οὐ καθάπερ Μωϋσῆς ἐτίθει κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου (3:13)
2. ἀλλὰ ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν (3:14a)
3. ἄχρι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης μένει (3:14b)
4. μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον [ἐστίν] ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται [ἡ παλαιὰ διαθήκη] (3:14c)
5. ἀλλ' ἕως σήμερον ἡνίκα ἂν ἀναγινώσκηται Μωϋσῆς, κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν κεῖται (3:15)

In essence, the negative statement about Moses in 3:13 is merely a foil for the positive point made about the hardening of Israel in 3:14a, which is where the true focus of 3:13–15 lies.

If the point of 3:13 is to present Paul and Timothy's unveiled ministry as superior to Moses' veiled ministry, why do Paul and Timothy say *twice* in 3:14b–15 that the veil remains? Why do they relate the veil imagery to contemporary Israel's failure to read the Scriptures rightly, instead of applying it to their boldness by stating that they themselves

disparagement must attach to Moses's conduct (*Second Epistle*, 263).

I would suggest that Thrall has perceptively grasped the true nature of Paul's argument, yet dismissed her insight because of the problematic grammar in 3:13. Once it is seen that the purposive πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι is being denied, her objections fall away and her original insight emerges as compelling.

wear no veil?²⁹ These details are surprising on the traditional reading. They make perfect sense, however, if Paul and Timothy are treating the Exodus narrative as a paradigmatic example of Israel's hardness towards divinely appointed prophets and proclaimers—including not only Moses but also themselves.³⁰ What is more, 3:4–15 fits much better with 2:14–17 if the point of 3:13 is that *Moses should not be blamed* for Israel's inability to perceive the τέλος of the non-enduring covenant he administered.³¹ On this reading, Paul and Timothy are defending the always controversial Pauline mission by pointing out that imperceptive Israelites turned away from the glory on Moses' face. And they are defending their use of the scriptures by treating the veil worn by Moses as illustrative of contemporary Israel's inability to perceive the true meaning of the Law (i.e. Moses). Thus the veil with which Paul and Timothy are *most* concerned is the one that lies over the hearts of their contemporary Israelites, who do not read Moses rightly, and who consequently react negatively whenever the Pauline mission declares that ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται ἡ παλαιὰ διαθήκη.

²⁹ Belleville argues that “two different rather than similar veils are being referred to. In v. 14v it is ‘the same veil’ that Moses placed over his face, whereas in v. 15 it is merely ‘a veil’—the anarthrous construction serving to distinguish this veil from the Mosaic veil in vv. 13 and 14b” (Belleville, *Reflections*, 238). I would prefer to say that “the same veil” becomes “a veil” because “the same veil” is a shorthand way of saying “a veil of the same sort” (i.e. a spiritual hardening).

³⁰ Cf. Rom 9:1–5, where many scholars see a similar comparison being made between Paul and Moses. Like Moses, Paul would be willing to be cut off for the sake of the people of Israel, who are (at least in part) hardened and disobedient.

³¹ Basically, the purpose of 3:13 is to put the relevant facts in their proper order, a strategy of which Paul seems to have been quite fond (e.g. Rom 4:10; 5:13–14; Gal 3:17). Moses did not employ a veil to prevent the Israelites from gazing in a sustained manner (ἀτενίσαι) at the glory of the old covenant; rather, the Israelites had already turned their faces away by the time Moses took up his veil. Consequently, Moses cannot be blamed for Israel's failure to perceive the τέλος of his covenant's glory; rather, that inability derives from a spiritual condition that preceded Moses' use of the veil.

Having established that the imperception of Israel is to blame for the controversy surrounding the Pauline mission, Paul and Timothy proceed in 3:16–18 to speak about the spiritual perception that is possible in Christ. Sustaining the imagery of the preceding context, this relief is described partly as an unveiling, with the scriptural insight being that Moses himself was not prone to the hardness of Israel but was able to look upon the divine glory with an unveiled face whenever he went in to speak with the Lord.³² Spiritual relief is also associated with *freedom*, however, and presumably a *softening* of some kind is also in view, since spiritual renewal reverses the hardening spoken about in 3:14. Together, these diffuse images convey the idea that a spiritual experience of some kind is needed on the part of people who have been hardened or blinded or veiled or held captive. And such an experience Paul and Timothy claim to have experienced, with the result that they—like Moses—gaze upon the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces. They have become perceptive and they now see what their persecutors still do not see: namely, the glory of God radiating from the face of Christ.

f. Paul and Timothy's Perseverance (4:1–15)

With some forceful statements in 4:1–2, Paul and Timothy sum up the immediate relevance of what they have been saying about Israel's hardness and its remedy, emphasizing two things: (1) the open and revelatory nature of their proclamation; and (2) their refusal to feel ashamed. Paul and Timothy do not let embarrassment lead to reticence or silence (*ἀπειπάμεθα τὰ κρυπτά τῆς αἰσχύνης*; cf. Rom 1:16). They do not fit

³² As is now widely recognized, Paul and Timothy are alluding to Exod 34:34 in 3:16.

themselves into whatever shape will increase people's confidence in them (μὴ περιπατοῦντες ἐν πανουργίᾳ), nor do they exploit underhanded methods designed to make the word of God more palatable to people (μηδὲ δολοῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ). Notably, these observations employ two of the most prominent domains in 2:14–5:21: TO MAKE KNOWN OR REVEAL (κρυπτός, φανέρωσις) and HONOUR OR SHAME (αἰσχύνη).

Looking at 4:1–2 interpersonally, it can be seen that Paul and Timothy describe their conduct in negative terms, a detail which confirms that the whole of 2:14–4:2 hangs together as a piece. Like the statements in 2:16c–17, the statements in 4:1–2 are meant to imply that other Christian leaders are conforming their ministry to the expectations and interests of their imperceptive audiences instead of boldly proclaiming the controversial and counter-cultural truth. Whereas Paul and Timothy proclaim the glorious superiority of the new covenant, despite the hostilities this message provokes, other ministers are (allegedly) embarrassed by the gospel and are consequently taking inappropriate measures in order to ensure that their ministries are less offensive to Torah-observant Jews (cf. Gal 2:11–14; 6:12). Are Paul and Timothy inadequate as ministers? No. They are *more* adequate than other ministers inasmuch as they boldly proclaim the superiority of the new covenant despite the negative reactions this message provokes.

In 4:3–6, Paul and Timothy continue to apply the insights of 3:7–18 to their own ministry, making explicit in the process a number of details that were implicit in their earlier discussion. First, it is not Paul and Timothy's glory that exceeds the glory of Moses, but the glory of God that is reflected in the face of *Jesus*. Paul and Timothy are mere servants, and they would never dare to proclaim themselves lords (4:4–5). In

context, this observation deflects attention away from the negative evaluations of Paul and Timothy that are being voiced by other Christian leaders, while simultaneously implying that those critics have an inappropriate understanding of Christian leadership. Second, the god of this age is responsible for the fact that unbelievers are blind to the glory of Christ (4:4), and God is directly responsible for the illuminating work that results in proper perception (4:6). Here again, attention is deflected away from the idea that Paul and Timothy's gospel proclamation is ineffective. It is not Paul and Timothy's fault that people reject and oppose their message; rather, the unbelieving world lies under the power of an evil deception that can only be overcome with divine assistance.

The basic idea of 4:3–6—that God is the one who makes the evangelist's proclamation effective—is succinctly expressed in 4:7. Then, 4:7–15 takes all the things that have been discussed in 2:14–5:21 and applies them directly to the violent controversies that surround the Pauline mission. The passage opens with the domains TO BE ABLE OR UNABLE (δύναμις) and ABUNDANCE OR LACK (ὕπερβολή), which have already been used in 2:16c–17 and 3:4–6a to discuss what makes a Christian leader adequate. Also notable are the domains TO MAKE KNOWN OR TO REVEAL (φανερώω [2x]) and TO SPEAK OR TO PROCLAIM (λαλέω [2x]), both of which are used throughout 2:14–5:21 to speak about the transparency of Paul and Timothy's revelatory ministry. Also present, however, are the related domains TO CAUSE OR EXPERIENCE TROUBLE OR RELIEF (θλίβω, στενοχωρέω, διώκω), TO HARM OR RESCUE FROM HARM (καταβάλλω, ἀπόλλυμι), and LIFE OR DEATH (νέκρωσις, ζωή [3x], θάνατος [2x], ζάω, θνητός). Taken together, these domains reveal that Paul and Timothy are still preoccupied with the strength it takes to

endure the persecutions that result when the gospel is proclaimed in a bold and unrestrained manner—the very ideas with which 2:14–5:21 opens (cf. 2:14–16b).

According to 4:7–15, Paul and Timothy are physically battered, but they refuse to stand down. Instead, they confidently trust in their own future resurrection, recognizing that their weak and fragile bodies will be raised with Jesus. What is more, they regard this demonstration of trust to be an integral part of the minister's task. After all, it is by confidently enduring the same opposition Jesus endured—even to the point of death—that the Christian minister reveals the resurrected life of Jesus. Given the overarching context of 2:14–5:21, there is almost certainly an undeniable apologetic element to these statements, with the likely point being that the Christian minister's reputation must never be established with reference to physical strength or weakness.³³ It is also possible that this rejection of physical strength as a significant criterion is somehow tied to public speaking. Even though they are physically weak and unimpressive, Paul and Timothy's faith compels them to speak so that grace will overflow to others (4:13–15); yet their weak speech provokes violence, which aggravates the physical weakness (4:7–12). As already mentioned in 2:14–15, those who perceive *only* the death of Jesus, being blind to the resurrection life of Jesus, will sometimes try to bring about the death of his servants. But this cycle provides an opportunity for others to see the resurrection of Christ in the faith of his dying servants.³⁴

³³ Notice that in 4:15 Paul attests to the other-oriented nature of his labours when he writes τὰ πάντα δι' ὑμᾶς. The effect of these words, in the midst of 2:14–5:21, is to highlight that Paul's provocative preaching has the positive effect of saving people, even if it also has the provocative effect or arousing controversy. As Paul's converts in Corinth can attest, he is not needlessly provocative; rather, his gospel is reconciling people to God.

³⁴ The theological reflections on leadership in these verses are well-handled by Savage, *Power*,

g. Paul and Timothy's Eschatological Priorities (4:16–5:11a)

Although the domain ABUNDANCE OR LACK appears in 4:17, it is not related to the adequacy of the Christian leader and hence does not establish continuity between 4:7–15 and 4:16–5:11a. A good deal of texture is created, however, by the domains TO EXPERIENCE TROUBLE OR RELIEF, TO HARM OR RESCUE FROM HARM, and LIFE OR DEATH, which pertain to Paul and Timothy's sufferings. Also, Paul and Timothy employ the now familiar domain HONOUR OR SHAME (δόξα), along with the domains TO BECOME DISCOURAGED (ἐγκακέω [2x]) and TO BE BOLD OR FEARFUL (θαρρέω [2x]), in order to emphasize their fortitude and the honour it is producing for them. Finally, the domains TO BEHAVE (περιπατέω) and TO DO OR NOT DO (πράσσω) are used to talk about the way Paul and Timothy conduct themselves—a detail that harkens back to the apologetic statements in 1:12. There is, therefore, little question as regards the continuity of these verses with respect to the wider context of 2:14–5:21. Paul and Timothy are still discussing how they conduct themselves as ministers, with the more specific issue at hand being how they remain motivated and faithful despite their physical weaknesses. Because the crucified Christ has been raised, Paul and Timothy are able to remain bold even as death approaches.

164–86: e.g. “The great irony is that it is precisely in submitting to the suffering meted out by the powers of the old age that Paul is able to repulse those very powers (verses 8–9). Living as he does at the intersection of two ages he endures the ‘dyings’ of the old in order to receive the ‘life’ of the new (verses 10–11)” (p. 176). Later, when I discuss chs. 10–13, the immediate relevance of these reflections to the Corinthian situation will become more clear.

The ideas in 4:16–5:11a are interesting for a variety of reasons—not the least of which is the way that they illuminate the basis of the confidence discussed earlier—but what is more important for the context of situation of 2 Corinthians is the way that Paul and Timothy begin to speak in 5:6–11a. They try to please their Lord (φιλοτιμούμεθα...εὐάρεστοι αὐτῷ εἶναι), and they do this because they know that everyone will stand before the judgement seat of Christ. These observations are very similar to the offhand remark in 2:17, in which Paul and Timothy disclaim any need to please people with their preaching, insisting that they speak in the sight of God. In 5:6–11a, therefore, Paul and Timothy are not *merely* concerned with eschatology and evangelism. They are still responding to criticisms of their ministry, and their response is still, in effect, that the Pauline mission has no need of a good earthly reputation. As servants of Christ who are mindful of eschatological judgement, Paul and Timothy are concerned to persuade people (ἀνθρώπους πείθομεν).³⁵ They are not, however, people-pleasers; to the contrary, the evaluation about which they care comes from God (θεῷ δὲ πεφανερῶμεθα).³⁶ It is not much of a stretch to conclude from this that Paul and

³⁵ Thrall notes that ἀνθρώπους πείθομεν “is not his usual terminology for speaking about his evangelistic work” (*Second Epistle*, 402), and that a similar expression is used with regard to critics of the Pauline mission in Gal 1:10. Here, however, the expression is functioning very differently than in Gal 1:10, even though the contexts are very similar. In the Galatians passage, Paul denies that he is a people pleaser (εἰ ἔτι ἀνθρώποις ἤρεσκον, Χριστοῦ δοῦλος οὐκ ἂν ἦμην). Similarly, in 2 Cor 5:9, Paul insists that his priority is to please God (φιλοτιμούμεθα...εὐάρεστοι αὐτῷ εἶναι). In both texts, therefore, Paul’s point is that faithfulness to God is more important than a good reception or reputation. But whereas Gal 1:10 contrasts persuading people with persuading God (ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν), 2 Cor 5:11 speaks about persuading people while being manifest to God (ἀνθρώπους πείθομεν, θεῷ δὲ πεφανερῶμεθα). So both texts are stressing the integrity of Paul’s proclamation as more important than its reception, but the expression ἀνθρώπους πείθω entails something different in Gal 1:10 than it does in 2 Cor 5:11. In the context of Gal 1:10, the phrase entails pleasing people as opposed to God; in 2 Cor 5:11, however, the phrase is qualified as something that must be carried out in such a way that pleasing God remains paramount.

³⁶ Several commentators have noted that the verb πεφανερῶμεθα in 5:11 cannot be a reference to ecstatic demonstration, since it picks up on φανερωθῆναι in v. 10 (Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 164; Thrall,

Timothy's ministry is *not* pleasing everyone, and that the whole point of 2:14–5:21 is to deny that this is a problem.

h. Meta-Commentary: Not Self-Recommendation but Partnership (5:11b–21)

In 5:11b–15, Paul and Timothy interrupt what they are doing in order to clarify what they are doing, just as they did in 3:1–3. And once again, their remarks provide the modern analyst with some helpful assistance, confirming a number of details about 2:14–5:21 that have thus far been based only on inferences. First, Paul interjects with a personal remark, expressing his hope that the Corinthians have been correctly discerning what he and Timothy have been doing (ἐλπίζω δὲ καὶ ἐν ταῖς συνειδήσεσιν ὑμῶν πεφανερῶσθαι). The repetition of φανερόω between 5:11a and 5:11b, together with the presence of καί, has sometimes caused interpreters to treat 5:11a as the beginning of a new paragraph, so that 5:11a and 5:11b are treated together. More likely, however, the repetition of φανερόω between 5:10 and 5:11a is more significant, with 5:11b being a typical Pauline transition.³⁷

Next, Timothy is brought back into the discourse and the two men together clarify that they are helping the Corinthians know how best to respond to criticisms of the Pauline mission. Notably, this is the first *explicit* indication in 2 Corinthians that Paul and Timothy are being criticized, although this situational detail has been predictable from the language used in certain key passages. Also notable is the fact that Paul and Timothy

Second Epistle, 1:402).

³⁷ Note the use of ἐλπίζω δέ and the leveraging of ἐπιγινώσκω in 1:13b. Note also the use of καὶ and the leveraging of παρακαλέω in 6:1.

explicitly characterize their critics as shallow people who are overly concerned with appearances. This detail may shed light on such passages as 1:17a and 4:7, if Paul's physical appearance is in view. Alternatively, however, the phrase ἐν προσώπῳ may indicate only that Paul and Timothy regard their critics as people-pleasers who are worried about offending people (cf. 2:17). Either way, the point is that it is not Paul and Timothy who are weak or timid; rather, it is other Christian leaders who are losing heart, becoming embarrassed, and advocating the use of adaptive strategies that will make the gospel more palatable (4:1–2).

Finally, in 5:13–15, Paul and Timothy reveal that the criticisms being levelled against them have to do with their leadership abilities, a detail that has been predictable at points (e.g. 1:17a) but not explicit. The language used here (εἶτε ἐξέστημεν θεῷ εἶτε σωφρονοῦμεν ὑμῖν) is sometimes related to ecstatic experiences, but in the context of a segment dealing with criticisms of Paul and Timothy's leadership, the domain WISDOM OR FOOLISHNESS (ἐξίστημι, σωφρονέω) is more likely evoking Greco-Roman ideals concerning leadership.³⁸ In addition, although these condensed statements have been punctuated in different ways and although the datives have been interpreted in various different ways, it is preferable to take the two datives θεῷ and ὑμῖν as parallel, given the condensed form of the two clauses and their seemingly parallel structure. And in the context of a meta-commentary designed to reiterate that Paul regards his partnership with Corinth as secure despite the efforts of his critics, it is preferable to take the dative ὑμῖν

³⁸ After hypothesizing this on the basis of my analysis of 2 Corinthians, I was pleased to receive confirmation of this point from a paper given at the 2012 SBL Annual Meeting by C. Andrew Ballard ("Tongue-Tied and Taunted").

as having the associative meaning “with you,” if at all possible. I suggest, therefore, that the most contextually sensitive reading of 5:13 is as follows: “If we are acting insensibly, we are doing so with God; if we are acting sensibly, we are doing so with you.”

If 5:13 is understood in this way, then the verse expresses a stark opposition:

“Either you’re with us, or you’re against God...who is with us even if you are not.”

Moreover, the verse ties this opposition to the assessment of Paul and Timothy’s behaviour that is being voiced by other Christian leaders, such that the Corinthians are construed as either aligning with Paul and Timothy’s critics or aligning with God. But of course, the whole thrust of the meta-commentary is to cast the Corinthians’ loyalty to the Pauline mission as something unquestionable. As in 3:1, so also here, the clause οὐ πάλιν ἑαυτοῦς συνιστάνομεν ὑμῖν denies outright the possibility that Paul and Timothy are in the position of needing to secure a partnership with Corinth. And so 5:13 may not support 5:12 by elaborating on the response that needs to be given to Paul and Timothy’s critics, as though the two men are briefly defending themselves in 5:13. Rather, the γάρ in this verse can be understood in relation to the presumption of partnership in the previous verse, such that Paul and Timothy are explaining their confident expectation of support. “We are assuming that you are our partners and that you will fight back against these shallow criticisms with the help we are now giving you (5:12). After all (γάρ), if you regard us as acting insensibly, then you regard God as acting insensibly along with us; whereas if you regard us as acting sensibly, then you will act sensibly alongside us (5:13).”

Next, in 5:14–15, the conjunction γάρ introduces a statement about the love of Christ that explains how it is that the Pauline mission and the Corinthian church are *held together* (συνέχω). The authors and readers of 2 Corinthians are held together by the love of Christ (ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ), having in common two crucial beliefs: (1) the death of Christ is an equalizing force in the world, since Christ died for everyone; and (2) receiving the resurrection life of Christ entails dying to oneself and living for Christ. In other words, it is not just that Paul and Timothy are willing to endure rejection and even death on account of the gospel (2:14–5:11a). In addition to this, they take it for granted that their readers will similarly endure rejection and even death (scorning the world and its attacks), since they have come to share in the gospel and hence are united with Paul and Timothy by the love of Christ (5:11b–15; cf. 1:6–7).

Unquestionably, 5:16–21 is dominated by the first person plural, like most of 2:14–5:21. An analysis of identity chains, however, must move beyond this grammatical observation in order to assess the identities of the participants in question, and on this point there are two distinct possibilities. On the one hand, the first person plurals may be referentially equivalent to the others in 2:14–5:13, referring to Paul and Timothy, in which case the ὥστε in 5:16 signals a return to the mainline of 2:14–5:11a and 5:16–21 can be regarded as a climactic summary of Paul and Timothy’s ministry. On the other hand, the first person plurals may be referentially equivalent to ἡμᾶς in 5:14, referring to Paul, Timothy, *and* the Corinthians (σωφρονοῦμεν ὑμῖν... ἡ γὰρ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνέχει ἡμᾶς... ὥστε ἡμεῖς οὐδένα οἶδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα). In this case, the ὥστε in 5:16 continues the meta-commentary begun in 5:11b by drawing a conclusion from 5:12–15.

The fronted pronoun ἡμεῖς in 5:16 conveys both a strong unity between the Pauline mission and its Corinthian partners as well as an implied opposition to critics of the mission who dare to assess people κατὰ σάρκα, and 5:16–21 as a whole functions as a climactic presentation of the Pauline mission—within which the Corinthian church plays a crucial role.

Two minor details make me favour the second of these two readings, whereby the first person plurals in 5:13–21 are meant to include the Corinthians. The first of these is the phrase ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν (‘from now on’) in 5:16, which is difficult to explain if only Paul and Timothy are in view. Why would Paul and Timothy need to put a stake in the ground with regard to their assessments of others? If the Corinthians are being included as part of the Pauline mission, however, then the move becomes a strategic one. The Corinthians’ worldly assessments of Paul and Timothy are placed in the past, and both authors and readers are brought together with fresh resolve.

A second detail that favours the second of the above readings involves the identity chains formed in 5:18–19. In v. 18, God is described as reconciling “us” (ἡμᾶς) to himself and as giving “us” (ἡμῖν) the ministry of reconciliation. Then, in v. 19, God is described as reconciling the world (κόσμον) to himself, not counting “their” (αὐτῶν) sins against “them” (αὐτοῖς) and entrusting to “us” (ἡμῖν) the message of reconciliation. As Porter observes, “Verse 19 appears to be a restatement of v 18,” so that the particles ὡς ὅτι should be regarded as epexegetic.³⁹ But how are we to explain the restatement here? Porter proposes that “Paul uses the repeated lines to aid in defining what antecedent lines

³⁹ Porter, *Καταλλάσσω*, 132.

mean,” suggesting that Paul “realizes he is utilizing a lexical item which is being applied in a new way for his readers” (i.e. καταλλάσσω).⁴⁰ Maybe so, particularly as regards the new content in the clause μὴ λογιζόμενος τὰ παραπτώματα. It remains, however, to explain the shift from the simple first person to a contrast between first and third person, since Paul could easily have written ὡς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ ἡμᾶς καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ, μὴ λογιζόμενος ἡμῖν τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν. Here again, a ready explanation is at hand if the first person plurals in 5:14–21 are drawing the Corinthians under the wing of the Pauline mission, since the first vs. third person contrast in 5:19 then serves to underscore the opposition that Paul is reinforcing between the Corinthians and the world.⁴¹ As the climactic pronouncements in 5:20–21 indicate, Paul and Timothy are trying to draw their readers into the strong missional thrust of 2:14–5:21, so that the Corinthians will stand against the onslaught of the world—even if the world takes the form of Christian ministers with worldly standards—and yet proclaim, even amidst the world’s onslaught, that reconciliation with God is available in Christ.⁴²

As a whole, therefore, 5:11b–21 constitutes an extended meta-commentary wherein Paul and Timothy clarify how they understand *what is being done* in 2:14–5:21 and *who is/are taking part*. With regard to the former, 5:11b–15 explains that 2:14–5:21 presupposes a partnership between Paul, Timothy, and the Corinthians over and against

⁴⁰ Porter, *Καταλλάσσω*, 129.

⁴¹ See Porter, *Καταλλάσσω*, 139–40, citing Plummer and Barrett: “His use of the first person plural verb includes his Christian readers with himself in calling them all ambassadors on behalf of Christ.”

⁴² Porter, *Καταλλάσσω*, 140: “Rather than being addressed to the readers of the epistle, the direct speech in v 20b is addressed to those to whom the Corinthian believers are ambassadors, i.e. those whom they are calling to reconciliation.”

critics of the Pauline mission, since the only alternative is that the Corinthians have come to regard God as insensible and have abandoned the gospel. Then 5:16–21 presumes the Corinthians as partners and underscores how the Pauline mission operates. The Pauline mission refrains from evaluating others in accordance with fleshly standards (v. 16a); it forgets whatever believers may have been in their former lives and instead regards them as new creations (vv. 16b–17); it keeps in mind that the world stands opposed to God, but also that God has reconciled the world to himself in Christ and that Christians are to proclaim this message of reconciliation to the world (vv. 18–21). These are the overriding convictions of the Pauline mission, and policies are not going to change simply because other Christian leaders find the mission embarrassing.

3. Summary

A semantic domain analysis shows very little experiential continuity between the text preceding and following 2:14. A cohesive harmony analysis shows no cohesive harmony across 2:14. An analysis of identity chains shows a transition back to the first person plural at 2:14. And it is difficult to see how the moves following 2:14 can be said to continue *in any direct manner* what was being done just prior to 2:14, since the conjunction $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ does not seem to establish a conjunctive relation between 2:14 and the moves in the immediately preceding text. It would seem, therefore, that there is no direct line of development at this point in the canonical text of 2 Corinthians.

At the same time, however, a cohesive harmony analysis demonstrates the presence of cohesive harmony between 2:14–16a and 1:3–12, so that there is a great deal

of continuity between *what is being talked about* in the key opening moves of 1:3–2:13 and *what is being talked about* in the opening moves of 2:14–5:21. Both passages are talking about Paul and Timothy’s travelling ministry, their leadership abilities, their stressful difficulties, and their blameless conduct. Also, the two meta-commentaries in 3:1–3 and 5:11b–21 explicitly describe a situation like that encoded in 1:3–2:13: Paul and Timothy’s leadership is being criticized, yet they remain hopeful and confident with respect to their Corinthian partnership. So although the meanings following 2:14 cannot be seen as a direct continuation of the specific behaviour enacted in the immediately preceding text, there is linguistic warrant for the hypothesis that 1:3–2:13 and 2:14–5:21 are construing the same context of situation.

As regards the analysis of 2:14–5:21, a key observation is the resumption of the first person plural. Paul excludes Timothy from his remarks in 1:13b–2:13, presumably because he is supporting the general defence in 1:12–13a with reference to specific events that did not involve Timothy, but he then reverts to the default pattern of including Timothy at 2:14 and persists in this throughout 2:14–5:21 (with the exception of the second meta-commentary in 5:11b–15, which contains a single slip into the first person singular). Notably, however, this resumption of the inclusive reference pattern found in 1:3–2:13a coincides with the return to experiential meanings found in 1:3–2:12 (see above). It would seem, therefore, that the text is returning to an earlier pattern of meanings following the lengthy support material in 1:13–2:13.

What is being done in 2:14–5:21? A linguistic analysis of the progressive moves in the section reveals that they are giving information about Paul and Timothy’s ministry.

This information seems to be of a general rather than a specific nature, since the present indicatives that predominate throughout 2:14–5:21 are not describing specific things that Paul and Timothy are in fact doing or experiencing at the time 2 Corinthians is being written. Also, drawing upon the more specific information available in the meta-commentaries in 3:1–3 and 5:11b–15, it is possible to state that Paul and Timothy are providing general information about themselves so that the Corinthians can better respond to critics of the Pauline mission.

Using a semantic domain analysis and an analysis of cohesive harmony, it can be demonstrated that there are close experiential connections between the information intended as a response to critics in 2:14–5:21 and the justification of Paul and Timothy's leadership conduct found in 1:12–2:13. While introducing the earlier of the two passages, Paul and Timothy boast about themselves (1:12) and Paul expresses the hope that there will be mutual boasting between the Corinthians and the Pauline mission on the day of the Lord (1:13b–14). Then in 2:14–5:21, Paul and Timothy explain that they are not asking the Corinthians to evaluate their conduct, but rather giving the Corinthians the resources they need in order to be able to boast about the Pauline mission (5:12). So even though both 1:3–11 and the meta-commentaries in 2:14–5:21 clarify that Paul and Timothy are confident with respect to their partnership with Corinth, both 1:12–2:13 and the meta-commentaries in 2:14–5:21 suggest that the Corinthians are not adequately boasting about Paul and Timothy. Evidently, the Corinthians are not evaluating Paul and Timothy in the way the two men want to be evaluated, and the moves in 2:14–5:21—like

the moves in 1:12–2:13—are designed to provide an alternative assessment of the Pauline mission which will instil pride in its efforts and inspire public support for its leaders.

As regards the matter of how people are evaluating Paul and Timothy's ministry, a semantic domain analysis and a cohesive harmony analysis are once again helpful. It is apparent from certain domains in 1:13a–2:13 that the strength of Paul's leadership has been called into question and that Paul is intent on casting himself as a strong leader who is nevertheless personally concerned for his readers (see Chapter 3 above). Yet many words from the same domains are used in 2:14–5:21 in order to cast Paul and Timothy as strong leaders, and in every single place where the Corinthians are mentioned, explicit remarks are found concerning Paul and Timothy's non-selfish conduct or their personal feelings towards the Corinthians (3:2–3; 4:5, 12, 15; 5:13–15). It would seem, therefore, that just as 1:13–2:13 enacts moves that might change the Corinthians' evaluation of Paul and Timothy's leadership from "weak and harsh" to "strong and caring," so also does 2:14–5:21. The difference is only that 1:13–2:13 does so by talking about Paul and Timothy's dealings with Corinth (especially Paul's recent handling of Corinthian immorality), whereas 2:14–5:21 does so by talking about Paul and Timothy's evangelistic ministry more generally.

What are the exegetical implications of these analytical observations? The most important one, which I have attempted to highlight throughout this chapter, pertains to the relationship that exists between criticisms of Paul and Timothy's church leadership underlying 1:13–2:13 and criticisms of Paul and Timothy's mission underlying 2:14–5:21. The content of 1:13–2:13 implies that Paul is (or at least, is in danger of being)

regarded as a poor leader for failing to visit Corinth so as to personally discipline his immoral converts. Also, he is (or is in danger of) being regarded as a harsh leader on account of his earlier letter and on account of his decision to burden his readers with a task he himself should (allegedly) have performed. Yet although these specific criticisms might be regarded as a sufficient explanation of 2:14–5:21 were the segment concerned *only* to present Paul and Timothy as strong and caring leaders, we must reckon with two *additional* facts: Paul and Timothy present themselves as stronger than other Christian leaders (2:17), and this information is ultimately directed at people outside of Paul and Timothy's readership who are assessing both themselves and the Pauline mission using inappropriate standards (5:12–15).

Two exegetical inferences can be made at this point. First, the things in 2:14–5:21 which display Paul and Timothy's strengths are probably things that (according to Paul's thinking, at least) set the Pauline mission apart from its critics. Second, the specific criticisms of Paul's decisions implied by 1:13–2:13 have probably been aggravated in the course of interactions between the Corinthian church and certain Christian leaders who are generally critical of the Pauline mission. Taking these inferences together, I have proposed a unified situation for 1:3–5:21 wherein other Christian ministers are calling Paul and Timothy poor leaders, and Paul and Timothy are calling other Christian leaders un-Christian on account of their worldly standards and self-centred arrogance.

Given 2:14–5:21, it would seem that other ministers are critical of the Pauline mission on account of the way it provokes hostility towards the Christian movement, especially from Jewish observers. As for Paul and Timothy's response, I have argued that

they align themselves with Moses, arguing that the most important “veiling” in the Sinai account is not the external one that obscured Moses’ face but rather an internal one. This internal “veil” is the spiritual imperception of the Israelites, which made them unable or unwilling to gaze upon the divine glory on Moses’ face—thus necessitating the physical veil in the first place. Moreover, this internal “veil” persists into Paul’s own day, as is evidenced both by Israel’s failure to perceive the divine glory manifested on the face of Christ and by Israel’s persistent failure to see Moses clearly (i.e. to interpret the Law correctly). At the same time, Paul and Timothy argue extensively that the pattern of the gospel itself entails that present shame and suffering must precede future resurrection and glory, such that any expectation to the contrary is out of keeping with the expectations that derive from a correct understanding of the gospel. Moreover, any attempt to avoid shame or suffering is immediately suspect as an attempt to evade or obscure the cross, and any sense of embarrassment with regard to the work of the Pauline mission is suspect as an accommodation to worldly and hence un-Christian standards of evaluation.

It would seem, therefore, that other Christian ministers in Corinth are undermining the Pauline mission by criticizing its evangelistic ministry and by instigating or aggravating criticisms of its church leadership, and the Corinthian believers are not responding in full support of their founders. Paul and Timothy, therefore, are acting within a relationally tense situation. They need to justify the conduct of the Pauline mission, yet they cannot afford to give the impression that their partnership with Corinth is insecure or that the Corinthians are in a position to choose which leaders they wish support. So, dismissing the idea that they need to gain or earn the support of the

Corinthians, Paul and Timothy instead frame 2:14–5:21 as something that is being enacted within an existing and inalterable partnership. The information they are giving is not a defence; it is ammunition that can be used to repel the onslaught of those who are attacking the Pauline mission.

CHAPTER 5: 6:1–7:16

The two preceding chapters have begun the process of abstracting a context of situation from the language used in 2 Corinthians, arguing that some key contextual parameters remain constant across all of 1:3–5:21 even though there is a textual transition of some kind at 2:14. This chapter will continue to discuss the results of my linguistic analysis by identifying a semantic shift at 6:1. It will then discuss the subsequent text, showing how an analysis of progressive moves, conjunctive relations, meta-commentaries, semantic domains, identity chains, and cohesive harmony helps to shed light on *what is being done, who is/are taking part, and what is being talked about*. As before, this discussion will mostly make suggestions regarding the exegetical implications of my analysis, with the goal being to demonstrate that an awareness of global patterns can have a productive influence on the way specific details are interpreted.

Since the heart of this study is the literary integrity debate, the essential question throughout this chapter is whether 6:1–7:16 can be treated as realizing the same context of situation as 1:3–5:21. It is important to remember, however, that SFL predicts semantic discontinuity in texts of any reasonable length, because most contexts will require intra-textual variation on account of the need to do various different things or to talk about

various different things in the course of enacting some overarching behaviour. The question as regards 6:1–7:16, therefore, is whether its language can be said to construe the same context of situation as 1:3–5:21, even if new things are being done and new things are being talked. We are asking, therefore, whether the Christian leadership being enacted in 6:1–7:16 coheres with a context in which Paul and Timothy’s leadership is being criticized by other ministers and even questioned by some of their own converts on account of the Pauline mission’s controversial reputation and on account of Paul’s recent handling of immorality in Corinth, and in which Paul and Timothy refuse to concede any wrongdoing or any real insecurity concerning the status of their Corinthian partnership, choosing instead to construe themselves as having strong relations with their readers.

1. The Segmentation

Of all the segments that I have identified in 2 Corinthians, none has been partitioned internally more than 6:1–7:16. Breaks have been posited at 6:14, 7:2, and 7:5, with 6:14–7:1 being regarded by some scholars as a non-Pauline fragment. I will argue in this chapter, however, that the entire segment hangs together.

Before getting to this, however, it needs to be explained why I have chosen to begin a new chapter at 6:1. Certainly, my semantic domain analysis has not turned up signs of experiential discontinuity. To the contrary, there are numerous points of overlap between the phenomena construed in 2:14–5:21 and the phenomena construed in the opening verses of 6:1–7:16. For instance, the domains TO SERVE (διακονία), SERVANT (διάκονος), and TO SPEAK OR PROCLAIM (λόγος) reappear, because there is an ongoing

interest in Christian ministry. The domains TO CAUSE OR EXPERIENCE TROUBLE OR RELIEF (θλίψις, κόπος, ανάγκη, στενοχωρία, πληγή), TO HARM OR RESCUE FROM HARM (σωτηρία [2x], παιδεύω, θανατόω), LIFE OR DEATH (ἀποθνήσκω, ζάω), TO ENDURE (ύπομονή), and TO FEEL HAPPY OR UPSET (λυπέω, χαίρω) continue because of an ongoing interest in the trouble Paul and Timothy face as ministers. The domains TO BE ABLE OR UNABLE (δύναμις) picks up on the notion that divine assistance is needed for perseverance, and the domain HONOUR OR SHAME (δόξα, ἀτιμία) construes opposing evaluations of Paul and Timothy's ministry. Finally, the domains SINCERITY (ἀνυπόκριτος) and TRUTH (ἀλήθεια) are used in order to emphasize the blameless nature of Paul and Timothy's conduct.

Given all these experiential connections, it would seem that many of the same things are *being talked about* both before and after 6:1, which explains why commentators typically group 6:1–10 together with the preceding co-text.

As regards *what is being done* and *who are taking part*, the situation is quite different, in that an analysis of progressive moves and identity chains exposes a significant transition at 6:1. Whereas there are only statements and rhetorical questions throughout 2:14–5:21, there is an exhortation in 6:1 and then a series of additional exhortations in the subsequent passage. These exhortations take various forms (6:1, 13, 14, 17 [3x]; 7:1, 2), but they have in common the fact that Paul and Timothy are asking the Corinthians more-or-less directly for something non-linguistic (i.e. changed behaviour). Inasmuch as this demand for changed behaviour can be regarded neither as a continuation of *what was being done* in 2:14–5:21 (i.e. giving information that can be used in response to criticisms of Paul and Timothy) nor as a continuation of the meta-

commentary that concludes that segment (5:11b–21), it is necessary to conclude that Paul and Timothy are beginning to do something new in 6:1.

Further support for this conclusion comes from an analysis of identity chains, which reveals a point of chain disjunction at 6:1. In the case of the concluding remarks of 2:14–5:21, the first person plurals refer to both the authors and addressees of 2 Corinthians, since everything from 5:14 onward presents the authors and addressees of the letter as being bound together by shared convictions over and against both worldly critics and a world in need of redemption. Putting this in SFL terms, the two distinct participant chains involving σωφρονοῦμεν and ὑμῶν in 5:13 are conjoined at 5:14 and then they remain conjoined until 5:21.¹ In the case of 6:1, however, it is impossible to regard the first person plural παρακαλοῦμεν as a continuation of that conjoined identity chain. Or at least, it becomes impossible to do so when the pronoun ὑμᾶς is finally supplied at the very end of the verse, with the result that chain disjunction occurs at 6:1 as Paul and Timothy’s inclusive “us” gives way to “we” exhort “you.”²

Without implying that there is a complete semantic “break” at 6:1, therefore, I propose that there is a structural transition at this point as a new segment of 2 Corinthians begins. Paul and Timothy are no longer giving a response to criticisms of the Pauline

¹ Crucially, this established pattern is one of the reasons why the second person plural imperative in 5:20b should not be interpreted as a reference to the addressees of 2 Corinthians. The Corinthians are involved in a conjoined identity chain that runs from 5:14 right up to the projecting verb δεόμεθα, so that they cannot be the addressees of the projected discourse.

² Thrall similarly observes a shift at 6:1 on account of its focus on the Corinthians, although she speaks about it differently because she does not regard 5:14–21 as depicting a unified partnership between the authors and addressees of 2 Corinthians. Observing that the second person plural verb καταλλάγητε occurs in direct discourse, she writes, “Careful consideration of 6.1 will show that it is at this point, and not before, that the Corinthians are drawn into the picture” (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:438).

mission with the presumption that they are writing to supporters; rather, they are exhorting their Corinthian supporters to conduct themselves in a certain way.

2. The Analysis and Its Implications

a. Opening Appeal (6:1)

As noted above, there is experiential continuity between the language of 2:14–5:21 and the language used following 6:1. This continuity will be understood in different ways, however, depending on how the relevant passages are understood to function within 2 Corinthians as a whole. Drawing upon some patterns exposed by my linguistic analysis, I have argued that 5:14–21 supports 5:13 by clarifying what it means for the Corinthians to be sober-minded together with Paul and Timothy. It means to die to oneself, to reject worldly standards of evaluation, and to proclaim forgiveness to a world estranged from God. I have also argued, however, that 6:1 marks a shift in 2 Corinthians, with the exhortation in this verse being the first of a series of exhortations directed at the Corinthians.

Reading 6:1 within this broad framework, several details are illuminated. First, the fronted participle *συνεργοῦντες* picks up the social relation of partnership depicted in 5:11b–21 and employs it as a frame for the progressive move enacted in 6:1.³ This

³ It is often said that Paul and Timothy are describing themselves as co-workers of one another, or perhaps of other ministers, or perhaps even of God (see the comments in Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:451), but none of these readings adequately motivates the participle. Why would Paul and Timothy bother to make the idea of partnership explicit if the first person plural already refers to themselves as co-workers (perhaps with additional co-workers as well)? Or would they really refer to God as a co-worker, having just depicted themselves as his ambassador (*πρεσβεύομεν*)? More likely, the participle *συνεργοῦντες* picks up on the idea of a partnership between the authors and addressees of 2 Corinthians, which in turn functions to dispel the idea that Paul and Timothy regard themselves as lords over the church in Corinth (1:24; 4:5). As

suggests both continuity (in that the participle draws upon the preceding meta-commentary) as well as discontinuity (in that the participle serves to contextualize something new).

Second, the repetition of *παρακαλέω* suggests a close connection between the appeal in 5:20–21 and the appeal in 6:1, in which case we have still more continuity. Moreover, the *καί* in 6:1 probably serves to reinforce this continuity by connecting the second appeal back to the first. In addition to the appeal in 5:20–21, Paul and Timothy *also* make the appeal in 6:1.

Third, although the former appeal is directed at the world, the latter is directed at the Corinthians. And notably, this crucial point of discontinuity is reserved for the end of the clause in order to produce a striking effect. The Corinthians have been cast as partners in the Pauline mission (“Together we plead on behalf of Christ: ‘Be reconciled to God’”), but this simply means that they will be confronted as partners (“Working alongside [you], we also urge that the grace of God not be received in vain—by you”).⁴

Together, these details indicate that the meta-commentary in 5:11b–21 is being exploited as a launching point for the moral exhortation that is at the heart of 6:1–7:16. Granting that the Corinthians are partners in the Pauline mission, then they themselves proclaim reconciliation to a world opposed to God. They recognize that forgiveness has

partners with the Corinthians, they are prepared to shoulder certain leadership responsibilities, but the Corinthians must learn that they will need to shoulder some responsibilities themselves, including a basic and essential responsibility for the purity of their congregation.

⁴ As Thrall observes, “The *καί*, ‘also’, preceding *παρακαλοῦμεν* indicates that this is not merely a repetition of his plea in 5.20. He is making a further, different point, and the final emphatic *ὑμᾶς* shows where the difference lies” (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:451). Or as Plummer paraphrases, “But there is more to be said than this (*δὲ καί*):... we entreat that *you* do not accept the grace of God in vain” (Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 189).

been extended to misbehaving people, but also that this forgiveness has as its aim the transformation of sinful people into the righteousness of God. And so, although Paul and Timothy are now extending to their partners both a warning and an unpleasant exhortation, this should be understood as a natural extension of the gospel proclamation in which both parties are involved.⁵ Those who proclaim the gospel ought to live in accordance with the gospel.⁶

b. A Scriptural Promise of Divine Assistance (6:2)

Concerning 6:2, Martin writes:

6:2 appears as a parenthesis breaking Paul's train of thought.... This break alerts us to the fact that Paul is presently to diverge from his theme of reconciliation to a new theme of commending himself to the Corinthians as one worthy of God's ministry and worthy of their love.⁷

Since the connection between 6:1 and 6:2 is clarified by means of γάρ, however, the most sensible approach is to explore how the quotation in 6:2 serves to support the exhortation in 6:1. Frequently, commentators who take this approach end up remarking on the eschatological nature of Paul's gospel, with associations then being drawn back to Paul's

⁵ *To the world*, the Pauline mission make the following appeal: 'Be reconciled to God.' Yet Paul and Timothy *also* offer the following exhortation *to their partners in Corinth*: 'Don't receive the grace of God in vain.' As a minister of the gospel, Paul was continually taking care lest he himself should fail after preaching to others (e.g. 1 Cor 9:24–27), and so it is probably with this concern in mind that he warns the Corinthians here.

⁶ Here again, Thrall correctly observes that "Most probably, he fears lest they should fail to understand and practise the full moral consequences of their new state of being" (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:451).

⁷ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 160–61. Martin also refers back to the alleged restoration of "the offender" in 2:8–11 as a "parable of reconciliation," and suggests that "reconciliation should take place between Paul and the church" (*2 Corinthians*, 167).

remarks about evangelistic proclamation in 5:20–21.⁸ An alternative approach is taken here, whereby the scripture citation in 6:2a is related *solely* to the appeal in 6:1, with the idea being that everything prior to 6:1 has already faded into the background on account of the fact that Paul and Timothy are beginning to do something new. According to this reading, the most salient thing about the cited Isaiah text is the promise of divine assistance, and the orientation of the quotation is towards the Corinthians and *not* towards Paul and Timothy. Basically, the Isaiah passage cited in 6:2a serves as a promise that God will help the Corinthians in their struggle to not receive God’s grace in vain. And the comment in 6:2b reassures the Corinthians that they can count on God’s help, because the promise of divine assistance given through Isaiah applies to the present time.⁹

c. Paul and Timothy’s Paradigmatic Example (6:3–10)

Paul and Timothy’s preoccupation with divine assistance continues without interruption into 6:3–10, where they celebrate all the ways they endure and prosper as ministers despite their unceasing troubles. Unfortunately, commentators routinely misunderstand

⁸ Barrett, for instance, suggests that the point of the Isaiah passages is that “since the coming of Christ God is waiting to accept men, to reconcile them to himself (v. 20), and all that is needed is for men to accept his offer, that is, to accept his grace (verse 1)” (*Second Epistle*, 183).

⁹ Granting that the Isaiah quotation in 6:2 serves as a promise of divine assistance for those of Paul and Timothy’s readers who will heed the appeal in 6:1, it remains significant that Isaiah 49 seems to have functioned for Paul as something like a “personal life verse.” (See the discussion of Jackson, who writes: “Isa 49 is obviously important for Paul” [*New Creation*, 126].) The text preceding the words cited in 2 Cor 6:2 speaks about a divine call (49:1–2) directed at a servant (v. 3) who will suffer discouragement (v. 4a) but who will ultimately trust God for a future reward (v. 4b)—a description with which Paul seems to have identified. Moreover, the text continues with an extension of the servant’s ministry to the Gentiles and to the ends of the earth (v. 6) as well as a prediction that the servant will stand before rulers (v. 7). So Isaiah 49 is a text that has encouraged Paul, but *here* it is functioning in 2 Cor 6:2 as an encouragement to the Corinthians. Thus Paul and Timothy are drawing upon the encouragement that they themselves have received from God in order to encourage their readers—a practice that matches 1:3–7 precisely.

the point of this section because its language so closely resembles the language found in 2:14–5:21. For example, Martin writes that “In 6:3, he begins his apology, which is his defense of his ministry, by showing that there is no reason for the Corinthians...to have received the grace of God in vain. His ministry is faultless.”¹⁰ Using very similar language, Thrall claims that Paul “Again...embarks on a defence of his own conduct and circumstances, perhaps because he fears that if criticism of himself should increase in Corinth the church may cut loose from his apostolic guidance.”¹¹ Yet the suggestion that Paul and Timothy are suddenly defending or recommending themselves to the Corinthians is very problematic. Not only does this suggestion run afoul of the tendency of 2 Corinthians to emphasize the strong and enduring nature of the Pauline mission’s partnership with Corinth (e.g. 1:7, 10b–11; 13b–14; 3:1–3; 5:11b–12), it also negates the important interpersonal shift that has taken place with the command in 6:1 and the subsequent promise of assistance in 6:2.

Instead of regarding 6:3–10 as a regression to the activity of 2:14–5:21, I propose to treat these verses as having a completely different function. In short, I propose that Paul and Timothy are neither defending their behaviour nor recommending themselves in 6:3–10. Rather, they are setting forth their own experience as an inspirational example of what is possible with divine assistance.¹²

¹⁰ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 160–61.

¹¹ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:450. Hafemann similarly insists that “we must realize that this passage is an essential restatement of his apology for his apostolic ministry” (*2 Corinthians*, 273).

¹² Thrall writes: “Again we encounter the problem of Paul’s apparent inconsistency in respect of self-commendation, something which in 4.2 he says he practices but which he rejects in 3.1 and 5.12” (*Second Epistle*, 1:456). But in truth there is no inconsistency at all. On the one hand, Paul and Timothy do not “reject” self-recommendation in 3:1 and 5:12; they merely deny that they are concerned to recommend themselves to the Corinthians at the present time. And on the other hand, in 6:3–10 Paul and Timothy

Accepting that the appeal in 6:1 is the reason for *both* the Isaiah quotation in 6:2 and Paul and Timothy's reflections on endurance in 6:3–10, what do we learn about Paul and Timothy's agenda in this segment of 2 Corinthians? The proposal I wish to put forward here is that the Corinthians are being confronted with a choice between obedience, which entails earthly trouble and heavenly reward, and disobedience, the consequences of which are left implicit. And even more specifically, I wish to suggest—on the basis of the numerous parallels that exist between 2 Cor 6:1–7:2 and 1 Cor 8:1–11:1—that at least some of the Corinthians are still being tempted to avoid the social consequences that would ensue if they made a public declaration of their new faith by refusing to associate with anything overtly idolatrous. Of particular note are the following similarities: Paul's fear that his readers' faith will be in vain (6:1; cf. 1 Cor 10:1–12); his encouragement that God will assist them (6:2; cf. 1 Cor 10:13); his observation that living for the eschaton entails a willingness to de-prioritize temporal benefits and rewards (6:3–10; cf. 1 Cor 8:1–13; 10:23–30); and his decision to put himself and Timothy forward as positive role models (6:3–10; cf. 1 Cor 9:1–27; 10:31–11:1).

merely describe themselves engaging in self-recommendation, without thereby engaging in self-recommendation directly (*contra* Thrall: "it is verbal self-commendation, and of a very exalted nature" [Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:456]). Matera (*II Corinthians*, 160) makes a similar error when he argues that 6:4 "explicitly calls the Corinthians to be reconciled with their apostle" and that "Paul hinted at the need for such reconciliation in 3:1." Actually, 6:4 describes certain typical behaviours whereby Paul and Timothy recommend themselves to all people, and 3:1 *denies* that Paul and Timothy need to recommend themselves to the Corinthians. Moreover, the language of reconciliation is applied in 2 Corinthians *only* to God and the world.

d. The Corinthians' Problem (6:11–13)

When 6:3–10 is read as a renewed defence along the lines of 2:14–5:21, then 6:11–13 is interpreted as an attempt to improve troubled relations with Corinth. A good example of this can be seen in the reading of Furnish, who suggests that “the apostle seems to be aware of certain criticisms of his ministry which are abroad in Corinth, perhaps to the effect that he has been neglectful of the believers there...insensitive to their feelings...unloving in the way he has acted toward them,” and who reads 6:11–13 against the backdrop of an alleged “concern for an improvement in relations with the church in Corinth.”¹³ While I do not wish to deny that there are troubled relations between Paul and Corinth, it is not the case that Paul is trying to establish mutual affection between himself and Corinth in 6:11–13 (or at least, not directly). Rather, he is asking the Corinthians to obey the exhortation in 6:1 by following the example in 6:3–10 (which in turn attests to the validity of the promise cited in 6:2).

Consider the expression τὸ στόμα ἡμῶν ἀνέφωγεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς in 6:11, which is usually rendered along the following lines: “We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians.” According to Meyer, Paul must be referring back to the previous passage: “Only in an arbitrary and violent manner can we reject the reference to vv. 3–10, where such a luxuriance of holy *grandiloquentia* has issued from his mouth.”¹⁴ Other commentators

¹³ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 367–68.

¹⁴ Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 551.

take a more cautious approach and extend the reference further back,¹⁵ or sometimes forward to the subsequent co-text as well.¹⁶ But the statement does not need to be interpreted as a meta-commentary. After all, Paul has just been describing his and Timothy's apostolic ministry using language very similar to what is found in 2:14–5:21, wherein he repeatedly stresses that he and Timothy are bold in their speech and divinely enabled to endure the consequent suffering. Perhaps the remark in 6:11 encompasses all of Paul and Timothy's communications with the Corinthians from the time of their initial proclamation of the gospel? If so, then 6:11a would be closely in line with 6:3–10, except that Paul would now be focusing on his and Timothy's dealings with the Corinthians in particular.¹⁷ Paul and Timothy have always spoken boldly and transparently to the Corinthians, despite the various difficulties this has created for them. At no time have they allowed their own personal desires for acceptance to dictate their gospel proclamation or to blunt the potentially offensive edge of their ministry.

The next statement, ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν πεπλάτυνται, is often translated “We have opened wide our heart to you.” Thrall remarks that “the phraseology is unusual,” and then discusses two possible parallels. The first of these (Deut 11:16) she correctly dismisses as a poor parallel, since the expression is used to describe a heart that becomes puffed up with pride. Yet she prematurely dismisses her second example (Ps 118:32 LXX), arguing

¹⁵ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:468.

¹⁶ Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 203.

¹⁷ Thus the progression from 6:3–10 to 6:11a is very similar to the progression from 1:12a–c to 1:12d–13a, in that there is a movement from general ministerial conduct to conduct involving the Corinthians specifically.

that where the psalmist speaks about an enlarged understanding, Paul speaks about enlarged affections.¹⁸ Two errors have been made here, I suggest. First, Thrall has presumed that 2 Cor 6:11–13 is about mutual affection, whereas the immediate context is concerned with the need for bold obedience and with the divine assistance that is available to those who suffer because of their obedience. Second, Thrall has misunderstood what is entailed by the expression ἐπλάτυνας τὴν καρδίαν μου in Ps 118:32 LXX.¹⁹ Consider the verse in context:

My soul clung to the ground;
 quicken me according to your word.
 I told of my ways, and you hearkened to me;
 teach me your statutes.
 Your statutes' way make me understand,
 and I will ponder in your wondrous works.
 My soul was drowsy from exhaustion;
 confirm me in your words.
 Injustice's way put far from me,
 and by your law have mercy on me.
 Truth's way I chose;
 your judgments I did not forget.
 I clung to your testimonies;
 O Lord, do not put me to shame.
 I ran the way of your commandments,
 ὅταν ἐπλάτυνας τὴν καρδίαν μου. (NETS)

In context, the psalmist is discussing the fact that God's instructions have encouraged him in a time of difficulty and discouragement, enabling him to act obediently. The idea of an enlarged heart in Ps 118:32, therefore, is not merely about an enlarged understanding. Rather, it speaks to the need for a divine encouragement that enables obedience in the

¹⁸ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:469.

¹⁹ Numerous commentators cite the passage, although without noting the connection between a full heart and the capacity for obedience. E.g. Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 203; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 489 n.12. Martin even suggests that “the recall is more in language than in meaning” (*2 Corinthians*, 186).

midst of difficulty. Not only is this notion extremely prominent in 2 Corinthians generally, it is directly relevant to what Paul and Timothy are doing in 6:1–13. I suggest, therefore, that the metaphorical statement ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν πεπλάτυνται means something along lines of *We have been inwardly strengthened* or even *We have been encouraged*.²⁰ Having exhorted the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain (6:1), having cited a scripture passage that promises divine assistance to suffering servants (6:2), and having illustrated with reference to their own ministry that God truly does sustain those who trust in him (6:3–10), Paul and Timothy next point out that they have always spoken boldly to the Corinthians. Reiterating the overarching message of 2:14–5:21, they observe that they have been granted an infilling that has enabled them to speak boldly (6:11).²¹

²⁰ Although Paul's second statement reads ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν πεπλάτυνται in the majority of manuscripts, a notable variant occurs in P46, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, among other places. Harris calls this variant, which reads ἡ καρδία ὑμῶν πεπλάτυνται, "impossible in the context" (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 487), Martin says that it "makes little sense" (Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 160), and Bruce calls it "manifestly unsuitable to the context" (Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 213). I would argue, however, that when the expanded heart is regarded as an image pertaining to someone who has been encouraged (perhaps so as to enable obedience amidst difficulty), then it becomes possible to regard ἡ καρδία ὑμῶν πεπλάτυνται as a very reasonable reading, even if it may not be original. Effectively, Paul and Timothy would be saying, "We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and you have been encouraged." This coheres nicely with the way Paul and Timothy frame 2 Corinthians in the opening verses of 1:3–7, where they mention the Corinthians receiving their encouragement. It also follows nicely from the discussion of Paul and Timothy's ministry in 6:3–10. Ultimately, the reason that the reading ὑμῶν is problematic (and hence a probable copying error) is because it problematizes the phrase τὴν αὐτὴν ἀντιμισθίαν (see below).

²¹ Webb similarly challenges Thrall's reliance upon Deut 11:16, citing Isa 60:4–5 as a better parallel with 2 Cor 6:11–13 (*Returning Home*, 150–54). But although the expression has the same meaning in Isa 60:4–5 as it does in 1 Cor 6:11, whereby it is used "positively of a receptive person, with an open and receptive heart towards something or someone else" (*Returning Home*, 152), the co-text of Ps 118:32 involves encouragement *amidst* suffering (like the co-text 2 Cor 6:11), whereas the co-text of Isa 60:4–5 involves encouragement *after* suffering. So although Ps 118:32 and Isa 60:4–5 are both relevant parallels, there is a somewhat closer connection with Ps 118:32.

Possible support for this intertextual connection appears in a commentary on Ps 118 LXX by Origen, where Origen cites both 2 Cor 4:8 and 6:12. The text reads:

Πορεύεται ἐν πλατυσμῷ, κἄν θλίβηται, ὁ λέγων· «ἐν θλίψει ἐπλάτυνας μοι», καὶ πάλιν· «ἐν παντὶ θλιβόμενοι, ἀλλ' οὐ στενοχωρούμενοι»· καὶ τοιοῦτός ἐστι διὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ λόγου γινομένην αὐτῷ εὐρυχωρίαν, ἀλλοτριάν τοῦ ἀμαρτάνοντος. Ἄπερ ἐπιστάμενος ὁ Παῦλος περὶ μὲν ἑαυτοῦ

Moving on to 6:12, we find two closely paired statements: οὐ στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν ἡμῖν, στενοχωρεῖσθε δὲ ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ὑμῶν. Typically, interpreters conclude that Paul is here concerned with affection and with the status of his relations with Corinth, an idea that is somewhat understandable, given that in 6:11–13 Paul uses a number of terms from the domain WIDE OR NARROW (ἀνοίγω, πλατύνω [2x], στενοχωρέω [2x]) together with a number of terms from the domain INNER BEING (καρδία, σπλάγχνον). So when Paul and Timothy’s open speech in 6:11 is treated as a sign of the *affection* they have for the Corinthians, and when the expression ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν πεπλάτυνται in 6:11 is said to express the great size of that *affection*, it is only natural to read 6:12 along similar lines.

φησι Κορινθίους· «οὐ στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν ἡμῖν», πρὸς δὲ Κορινθίους· «στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ὑμῶν.» Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὁ φαῦλος στενοχωρεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν κατὰ κακίαν ἔργων, ἀλλ’ οὐ τοιοῦτος ὁ φάσκων· ‘καὶ ἐπορευόμην ἐν πλατυσμῷ’· καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν διηγούμενος τοῦ πορεύεσθαι ‘ἐν πλατυσμῷ’, φησί· ‘ὅτι τὰς ἐντολάς σου ἐξεζήτησα’, μεγαλοψύχως ἀπὸ νεαζούσης ἕξω πάντα μεταχειριζόμενος.

Even when pressured, the person who says “amidst pressure, you make space for me,” and again, “we are pressured, but not constricted”—such a person walks “in spaciousness.” And this is possible because of the expansiveness that comes to such a person from the Word, which differs from the expansiveness of sinners. Paul, understanding these things, says to the Corinthians concerning himself, “You are not constricted in us,” but concerning the Corinthians [he says], “You are constricted in your emotions.” For bad people are constricted within themselves from their wicked deeds, but such is not the case for the person who asserts, “and I would walk in spaciousness.” And describing the reason for this walking “in spaciousness,” he says, “because I sought your commandments,” unsparingly practicing everything from the training of my youth. (Greek text from Harl and Dorival, *La chaîne palestinienne sur le psaume 118* [Origène, Eusèbe, Didyme, Apollinaire, Athanase, Théodoret]; translation mine).

Also noteworthy is the discussion in 2 Clem 9, which addresses the need for obedience and moral purity yet also employs many of the same meanings that are found in 2 Cor 6:1–7:2, including: (1) an appeal for moral purity; (2) an indication that time is running short; (3) an orientation towards the heart as the ultimate source of true obedience; (4) an identification of the church as God’s temple; (5) a description of obedience as a fair exchange (ἀντιμισθίαν) for the reward that God provides (τὸν μισθόν); and (6) the idea that God will receive obedient people as sons and daughters. The most relevant parts of this passage are as follows:

δεῖ... ἡμᾶς ναὸν θεοῦ φυλάσσειν τὴν σάρκα... ἡμεῖς ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ σαρκὶ ἀποληψόμεθα τὸν μισθόν... ὡς ἔχομεν καιρὸν τοῦ ἰαθῆναι, ἐπιδῶμεν ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεραπεύοντι θεῷ, ἀντιμισθίαν αὐτῷ δίδόντες. ποίαν; τὸ μετανοῆσαι ἐξ εὐλικρινοῦς καρδίας. δῶμεν οὖν αὐτῷ αἶνον αἰώνιον, μὴ ἀπὸ στόματος μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπὸ καρδίας, ἵνα ἡμᾶς προσδέξῃται ὡς υἱούς.

Taking seriously the exhortation in 6:1, however, as well as the promise of divine assistance in 6:2, the example of endurance amidst difficulty in 6:3–10, and the reading I have just proposed for 6:11 (wherein Paul is speaking about the inner strength that has enabled him and Timothy to speak boldly to the Corinthians despite the likelihood that this frankness will offend them), it is preferable to read 6:11–13 as part of an extended attempt to encourage a behaviour that will result in some kind of suffering.

Undoubtedly, given the repetition of στενοχωρεῖσθε and the switch in polarity, there is a close relation between the two statements in 6:12. Presuming that Paul wants to improve relations with Corinth and that he is therefore speaking about the need for mutual affection, commentators generally propose that there is a contrast here between Paul's demeanour and the demeanour of his readers. And so Harris translates the alleged contrast in this way: "There is no restriction in our affection for you, but there is in yours for us."²² Notice, however, that Harris has drawn a contrast that is not indicated in the Greek. Instead, we find that the repeated verb στενοχωρέω is in both instances a second person plural, which indicates that the contrast here is between two different processes affecting the Corinthians.²³ Contrary to popular opinion, therefore, the point of 6:12 is not

²² Harris, *Second Epistle*, 487.

²³ Interestingly, a number of ancient Greek commentators switch Paul's second person verb to a first person verb when paraphrasing this passage, which confirms that this is the grammatical contrast that we would expect to see if a contrast were being made between Paul's emotions and the Corinthians' emotions. A search in the TLG corpus turns up the following results: Ἐγὼ μὲν, φησὶν, οὐ στενοχωροῦμαι, πάντας ὑμᾶς ἔνδον ἔχων, ὑμεῖς δὲ, φησὶν, ἐν τῷ ἔχειν με ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχθοις ὑμῶν στενοχωρεῖσθε (*Catena in epistulam ii ad Corinthios* [catena Pseudo-Oecumenii]); Εἰπὼν οὐ στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν ἡμῖν διδάσκει τοῦτο ἀντὶ τοῦ οὐ στενοχωροῦμεν ὑμᾶς τῇ σωτηρίῳ διδασκαλίᾳ (Severianus Orat. et Scr. Eccl., *Fragmenta in epistulam ii ad Corinthios* [in catenis], p. 294 line 10); Οὐ στενοχωρούμεθα ἐν τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀγάπῃ, φησὶν ὁ Ἀπόστολος Κορινθίους, ὑμεῖς δὲ στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχθοις ὑμῶν (Gregorius Nyssenus Theol., *In Basilium fratrem*, §24 line 31).

to contrast Paul and Timothy with the Corinthians, but to contrast two possible things that might be affecting the Corinthians.

Next, let us consider the term στενοχωρέω itself. The first entry in BDAG provides the definition “to confine or restrict to a narrow space, crowd, cramp, confine, restrict.” Then, recognizing that the term is very commonly used to describe an emotional state, BDAG provides a second entry with the definition “to be in a circumstance that seems to offer no way out, be distressed.”²⁴ For its part, LSJ proposes simply “to be straitened, confined,” but then adds “metaph., to be anxious, in difficulty.” Given these widely attested meanings, three things make me suspicious about the traditional reading of 2 Cor 6:12. First, no lexicographer or commentator has yet been able to cite a single Greek example that parallels the metaphor traditionally perceived in 2 Cor 6:12.²⁵ Second, Paul consistently uses στενοχωρέω and related terms elsewhere to describe difficult experiences (Rom 2:9; 8:35; 2 Cor 4:8; 6:4; 12:10), pairing the word with such terms as θλίψις, θλίβω, διωγμὸς, κίνδυνος, ὕβρις, and ἀνάγκη. Third, in the preceding context, Paul has been discussing just these sorts of difficulties (6:3–10), and he has spoken about an enlarging of the inner person that helps to alleviate the anxiety created by external pressures (6:11). It is likely, therefore, that 6:12 is contrasting two different pressures (potentially) affecting the Corinthians: *You aren't being adversely constricted in this way but rather in that way.*

²⁴ BDAG, 942.

²⁵ BDAG simply glosses 6:12 as “you are not restricted in us (i.e. they are not boxed off in a narrow area of Paul's affection; s. vs. 11),” providing no justification for this reading (BDAG, 942–43).

Drawing these insights together, I propose that Paul is deliberately exploiting the semantic range of στενοχωρέω in order to contrast two possible explanations for the Corinthians' hesitancy to obey his and Timothy's earlier instructions. In other words, he is saying something like *You aren't being (overly) restricted; you are being (overly) timid.* In the first half of this contrast, Paul considers and rejects the suggestion that his and Timothy's apostolic instructions are unnecessarily restrictive, with the obvious case in point being their idol food prohibition (see 1 Cor 8:1–11:1). Then, in the second half of this contrast, Paul characterizes the hesitancy of the Corinthians as the result of an inner weakness that is causing them to cave in under pressure, such that they are anxious rather than confident. In both halves of the contrast the Corinthians are central, because Paul is concerned with their attitude towards obedience. And in both halves the preposition ἐν is used to identify some environment within which a restriction is being felt, with the result being a rather effective exploitation of the spatial imagery entailed by στενοχωρέω.²⁶ The Corinthians may claim that they are being unfairly restricted by Paul and Timothy, but really they are just inwardly anxious and in need of a divine encouragement that can be mediated through Paul and Timothy's ministry and that can enlarge their heart so that they will be able to imitate Paul and Timothy's example.²⁷ Thus a very loose paraphrase

²⁶ Thus I am not suggesting that ἐν is being used to introduce an active agent *per se*, but rather that it is being used together with the spatial verb in order to describe two environments of compression. In the sphere of their relations with Paul and Timothy (i.e. as partners in the gospel) the Corinthians are not unfairly restricted, yet in the sphere of their own emotions they are unreasonably restricted (i.e. they are hesitant).

²⁷ Granted, Thrall cites BDAG to the effect that "in biblical Greek" the term σπλάγγνον is used "mostly as the source and seat of love" (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:470). Yet LSJ states that the term is used "esp. of anger," but then also "generally, of anxiety...of love...of pity." So although affection or compassion are frequently the default meanings for biblical scholars because of the parameters of the biblical corpus, a broader consideration of Greek literature would apparently suggest anger and anxiety as

might be: “You aren’t being restrained by us (i.e. when we instruct you to desist from certain culturally popular behaviours), but you are being restrained by your own timidity (i.e. when you are more concerned about the social consequences of righteousness than you are about God’s call to live righteously).”²⁸

In 6:13, Paul follows up his assessment of the Corinthians’ hesitancy with a direct appeal, urging them to permit their own hearts to be enlarged so that they too (note the adverbial καί) might be enabled to obey God’s commands (πλατύνθητε καὶ ὑμεῖς). Typically, scholars treat the phrase τὴν αὐτὴν ἀντιμισθίαν in this verse as though it can somehow mean ‘*the same thing as a recompense*.’ And so we find translations and comments like “a recompense in/of (like) kind” (Hughes, Barrett, Furnish), “a comparable recompense” (Harris), and “a fair exchange” (Barnett)—all of which employ an indefinite phrase and thereby permit the inference that Paul is *introducing* the idea of an exchange here in 6:13 because he wants the Corinthians to return his affections. Similarly, in their discussions of αὐτὴν, scholars suggest that Paul is asking for *the same love* in return. Thus Harris argues that “τὴν αὐτὴν points to similarity or equivalence (‘the same,’ ‘of the same kind’), rather than fairness; Paul is asking for repayment of the same coin, namely complete candor and warm love.”²⁹ And Martin writes “Paul is appealing to

the most commonly implicated emotions.

²⁸ Thus Barrett is completely correct in saying that “Paul means that any narrowness lies not in his approach to them but in their response to him” (Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 192). But Harris is mistaken when he asserts that “The whole paragraph relates to unreciprocated affection” (*Second Epistle*, 490). The issue on the table throughout 6:1–7:2 is obedience rather than affection. Affection enters the picture only in 7:3.

²⁹ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 490–91.

the Corinthians, requesting that they return what he has given them, namely, love.”³⁰ And Furnish writes that it means “with the same widening as recompense.”³¹

Despite the frequency of these claims, however, it is unpersuasive to read τὴν αὐτὴν ἀντιμισθίαν as though it means “the same affection as a recompense.” Essentially, this reading *presumes* that Paul is speaking about the importance of mutual affection between himself and his readers, with the consequence that τὴν αὐτὴν ἀντιμισθίαν is presumed to involve a reciprocal exchange of identical affections.³² But while the phrase τὴν αὐτὴν ἀντιμισθίαν does convey the idea that some payment or reward is given in fair exchange for something else, the article and the so-called intensive pronoun indicate that *the exchange in view* is identical with *some other exchange* already mentioned.³³ What exchange is this? It is the exchange mentioned in 6:2 and 6:11 wherein those who do as God commands are encouraged and sustained by God (cf. 1:3–12). The exchange that Paul has in view, therefore, is not an exchange of affection between himself and his readers, as though the point of 6:1–13 were the restoration of strained relations. Rather, the exchange in view is tied very closely to the opening command in 6:1 and the subsequent promise of divine help in 6:2.

³⁰ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 186–87.

³¹ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 361.

³² Indeed, Moule is explicit that this is what appears to be happening: “it looks like a subtle blend of τὸ δὲ αὐτό, *in the same way*, and κατ’ ἀντιμισθίαν, *by way of recompense*” (*Idiom Book*, 160). Similarly, Thrall writes that “the two ideas of recompense and identity are conflated: ‘recompense in kind’” (*Second Epistle*, 471).

³³ In other words, the meaning of the phrase is not “giving and receiving the same in return” but “the same reciprocal giving and receiving.” The former idea might be able to stand alone (if it were a viable reading of the phrase), but the latter requires that another exchange of the same kind is somewhere mentioned in the surrounding co-text.

e. The Appeal Proper (6:14–7:1)

Given this reading 6:1–13, wherein Paul and Timothy are not defending themselves or appealing for affection but rather urging their readers to undertake a costly obedience of some kind, the transition into 6:14–7:1 becomes much less abrupt and much easier to explain. Indeed, I would go so far as to claim that it requires no real comment at all. It is only when 6:1–13 and 7:2 are misunderstood as continuing the agenda of 2:14–5:21 that the material in 6:14–7:1 becomes disruptive.³⁴ When 6:3–10 is handled as a defence, and when 6:11–13 and 7:2 are regarded as appeals for improved relations amidst a crisis of loyalty, it is inevitable that 6:14–7:1 will be handled as a digression, or as an interpolation, or as the work of a shoddy redactor. But when 6:1–13 is read as an appeal for obedience directed at reluctant readers, the alleged abruptness of 6:14 disappears entirely and the commands in 6:14–7:1 become fully predictable as an elaboration of the opening appeal in 6:1. Given such a reading of 6:1–13, the reader feels in 6:14–7:1 that Paul and Timothy have finally gotten to their real point.

Supposing I am correct in this, then what are Paul and Timothy asking of the Corinthians? Hafemann, who valiantly tries to integrate the exhortations of 6:14–7:1 with an alleged appeal for improved relations in 6:3–13 and 7:2 and with the defence in 2:14–5:21, suggests that they are calling for the severing of all ties with other Christian leaders in Corinth. And so Hafemann rejects the idea that the unbelievers mentioned in 6:14–7:1

³⁴ Furnish, for instance, writes that “It is uncertain how the appeals of 6:14–7:1 relate to the clearly primary appeal expressed in 6:11–13, and then again in 7:2–3. Most commentators agree that the intervening material is at least to some extent disruptive” (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 368).

are pagan Corinthians, as well as the suggestion that they are the “strong” believers allegedly mentioned in 1 Cor 8:1–11:1:

Both of these interpretations can succeed...only if 6:14–7:1 is distanced from its *current* context, in which Paul has been fighting for the legitimacy of his apostolic ministry and in which there has been no previous mention of the earlier problems facing the Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians the issue is not the relationship between Christians and the unbelieving world, nor is Paul concerned here, as he was in 1 Corinthians, with the Corinthians’ participation in the temple cults and idolatry of Corinth. Rather, if read from the perspective of its own immediate context, Paul’s command in 6:14 is the specific application of his more general command in 6:13. ‘Not to be yoked together with unbelievers’ (6:14) is one way in which the Corinthians are to ‘open wide [their] hearts’ to Paul.³⁵

While Hafemann makes the very good point that 6:14–7:1 should be read in its immediate context, very little in 6:1–13 indicates a concern with Corinthian loyalty or a preoccupation with false apostles. To the contrary, Paul and Timothy have in view the way that the unbelieving world responds to those who follow Jesus, and their point is that the Corinthians need to “come out” from that unbelieving world nonetheless. Not only does this fit well with Paul and Timothy’s use of the words πιστός and ἄπιστος in 6:14–15, it also coheres with their use of the domains TO BE PARTNERS OR TO COLLABORATE (ἑτεροζυγέω, μετοχή, κοινωνία), AGREEMENT (συμφώνησις, συγκατάθεσις), PORTION (μερίς), and TO BE AMONG OR TO BE SEPARATE (ἐνοικέω, ἐμπεριπατέω, ἀφορίζω)—all of which involve the notions of commonality and togetherness. The Corinthians are feeling unfairly restricted by Paul and Timothy’s unceasing demand for separation from idolatry (6:12), but the two men refuse to back down. Pointing to the fact that they themselves are

³⁵ Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 279–80.

strong enough to endure countless difficulties (6:3–10), they urge the Corinthians to follow their example (6:11, 13).

Concerning the Exodus motif that Paul employs in 6:14–7:1, only two things are noteworthy here. First, the scriptural quotations in 6:16–18 all involve an exchange. People obey the call of God by emerging out of an ungodly society, and in return they receive a relationship with God together with the benefits entailed by such a relationship. In this way, the scriptural quotations in 6:16–18 pick up on the exchange mentioned in 6:1–13. Second, Paul is hardly the first person to invoke the Exodus story as an illustration of God’s provision for those who obey God’s commands, as can be seen from Ps 80 LXX:

In affliction (ἐν θλίψει) you called upon me, and I rescued you (ἐρρυσάμην σε);
 I hearkened to you in a secret spot of a tempest;
 I tested you at a water of contention.
 Hear, O my people, and I am testifying against you;
 O Israel, if you would hear me!
 There shall be no recent god among you,
 nor shall you do obeisance to a foreign god.
 For I am the Lord your God,
 who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
πλάτυνον τὸ στόμα σου, καὶ πληρώσω αὐτό.
 And my people did not hear my voice;
 and Israel paid no attention to me.
 And I sent them away in accordance with the practices of their hearts;
 they shall walk in their practices.
 If my people had heard me,
 if Israel had walked by my ways,
 in no time I would have humbled their enemies,
 and on those that afflict them I would have put my hand. (NETS)

In this passage we can observe many of the ideas that permeate 2 Cor 6:1–7:2. God calls his people out of an ungodly society and then commands their obedience and exclusive loyalty. For their part, God’s people must choose whether to heed God’s voice by

abandoning their idols in order to worship and obey God alone. But if they heed God's call, they will be rescued from their enemies and supplied with all of their needs; they need only to open their mouth and God will fill it.

It is not my intention to argue that Ps 80 LXX was in Paul's mind when he wrote 2 Cor 6:1–7:2; nor is it my intention to argue that the phrase *πλάτυνον τὸ στόμα σου* from Ps 80:11 LXX parallels the wording *τὸ στόμα ἡμῶν ἀνέωγεν* in 2 Cor 6:11 (it does not). I do propose, however, that in Ps 80 LXX the psalmist is doing something closely related to what Paul is doing in 2 Cor 6:1–13. Most importantly, both authors are evoking the Exodus story as proof that God provides for those who separate themselves from the society in which they live in order to follow the One True God.³⁶ Regarding the relevance of this call for social withdrawal (i.e. separation from idolatry), Barclay's astute observations concerning 1 Corinthians are well worth quoting at length:

It is clear that Paul is somewhat uneasy about the degree of integration which the Corinthian Christians enjoy. To be sure, contacts with 'outsiders' are to be expected, and indeed welcomed, as opportunities for witness (9.19–23; 10.32–33; 7.16?).... Nonetheless, he has a much more sectarian and separatist expectation of the social standing of the church than the Corinthians.... In the Corinthians' easy dealings with the world Paul detects a failure to comprehend the counter-cultural impact of the message of the cross (1.18–2.5); the wisdom of the world to which they are so attracted is, he insists, a dangerous enemy of the gospel.... In fact there is good evidence to suggest that the Corinthian Christians were quite conscious of their difference from Paul on this matter. Paul's remarks about his earlier letter (5.9–13) indicate that the relationship between believers and non-believers had already been a contentious issue between them.³⁷

³⁶ It also noteworthy that the psalmist cites Israel's negative example as a deterrent, just as Paul himself does in 1 Cor 10:1–22.

³⁷ Barclay, "Thessalonica and Corinth," 58–60.

Here in 2 Cor 6:1–7:2, Paul and Timothy are yet again attempting to persuade their “difficult” Corinthian converts to understand that God will indeed receive them as his people, and will walk among them, and will call them sons and daughters—but only if they will participate in a moral Exodus out of their pagan society. God is reconciling people to himself and granted them righteousness, and he promises to hear the cries of his suffering servants, but God’s provisions are part of an exchange that involves human obedience. And that obedience has social implications in the context of an ungodly and defiled society.

f. A Brief Denial of Wrongdoing (7:2)

Moving on to 7:2, we find the second person imperative clause χωρήσατε ἡμᾶς. These words are normally translated according to the sense ‘to have space or room for receiving or holding something’, a sense which seems to have arisen from the most congruent meaning of χωρέω, which is ‘to leave a space’.³⁸ Paul’s command, on this reading, is a continuation of the appeal for mutual affection that so many interpreters see in 6:11–13 (i.e. “Make room for us inside yourselves, in your hearts”). This interpretation, however, both misunderstands 6:1–13 and isolates 6:14–7:1 as an interruption.³⁹ Here I propose an alternative reading that rejects the alleged continuity between 6:13 and 7:2 by rejecting the idea that the spatial dimension of χωρέω should be related back to the spatial imagery

³⁸ Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 674.

³⁹ Thus Harris states that “Paul reiterates the request made in 6:13b...now making explicit that it is for him (ἡμᾶς) that the Corinthians need to make space in their affections. By this repetition the apostle tacitly acknowledges that he has digressed in 6:14–7:1” (*Second Epistle*, 516).

in 6:11–13.⁴⁰ Adopting instead the sense ‘to be able to accept a message and respond accordingly’ (cf. Matt 19:11–12), I propose that the command in 7:2 urges the Corinthians to understand and accept people whom they are having a hard time understanding and accepting—namely, Paul and Timothy.⁴¹ According to this reading of 7:2, the Corinthians are resisting Paul and Timothy somehow, and this resistance is somehow related to the Corinthians’ unwillingness to separate themselves from idolatry.

What is the significance of the subsequent three clauses? One way of understanding their relevance is to see them as a summary of the argument made in 1 Cor 8:1–11:1, where Paul underscores the importance of acting in a manner designed to avoid offending or harming others.⁴² This would mean that 7:2 contains a brief restatement of the example already presented in 6:3–4. Paul and Timothy have refrained from doing wrong (οὐδένα ἠδικήσαμεν), from ruining anyone (οὐδένα ἐφθείραμεν), and from putting themselves ahead of others (οὐδένα ἐπλεονεκτήσαμεν)—with the implication being that the Corinthians should do likewise.⁴³

Alternatively—and more convincingly—one can explain the relevance of 7:2 by regarding the three parallel clauses as a response to the charge that Paul and Timothy are harming and ruining their converts by demanding too much of them. This approach picks

⁴⁰ Pace Harris (*Second Epistle*, 516): “Justification for supplying ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν with χωήσατε [sic] ἡμᾶς may be found in 6:11–12 and 7:3.”

⁴¹ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 373.

⁴² For a demonstration of this emphasis in 1 Cor 8:1–11:1, see Land, “Stumbling Block.”

⁴³ On this reading, the aorists can be taken either as past-referring (i.e. to Paul and Timothy’s founding visit to Corinth) or non-past-referring (i.e. the two men refrain from doing these things as a general rule).

up on the resistance and discontentment underlying 6:12–13 and regards the three clauses in 7:2 as a second response to the charge implied therein. Are Paul and Timothy being unfairly restrictive? No, they are not (6:12). Have they done wrong to the Corinthians (ἡδικήσαμεν)? Have they ruined the Corinthians, whether in financial or social terms (ἐφθείραμεν)? Have they demanded of the Corinthians an obedience contrary to the beneficent concern expected of good leaders (ἐπλεονεκτήσαμεν)?⁴⁴ No, they most assuredly have not (7:2). Rather, they have been asking for purity from idolatry that *God* demands, and they are quite prepared to mediate the divine encouragement and empowerment that enables God’s children to endure the difficulties that follow from costly obedience.

g. Meta-Commentary: Not Harsh and Judgemental (7:3–4)

With the explicit meta-comments in 7:3–4, I propose, we come to the beginning of an extended section of 2 Corinthians that does not enact a first-order behaviour but rather clarifies the context of situation of 6:1–7:2. In other words, the function of 7:3–16 as a whole is analogous to the function of the preface ὡς τέκνοις λέγω in 6:13: it clarifies what is being done and/or the social relations that are relevant to what is being done. This is partly signalled by the slip into the first person singular, which occurs with some regularity when Paul switches into a second-order clarification with respect to the text he

⁴⁴ BDAG, 824, says of the one who is πλεονέκτης that “In Hellenic society this was a violation of the basic principle of proportion and contrary to the idea of beneficent concern for the citizenry.” The term, in other words, can be used to describe a leader *who demands too much* from his subjects (cf. 9:5), an idea of immediate relevance to the discussion of idolatry in 6:14–7:1.

is composing on behalf of both himself and Timothy (cf. 5:11b; 6:13; 8:3, 8, 10; 9:1–5).⁴⁵ It is also apparent from the experiential content of 7:3–4, which clarifies Paul’s disposition towards the Corinthians. He is not intending to come across as judgemental (7:3).⁴⁶ To the contrary, his boldness towards the Corinthians is matched by an unshakeable pride in them (7:4a–b).⁴⁷ He has been greatly encouraged, and he is feeling very happy despite the troubles he and Timothy have been experiencing (7:4c–d).

By means of 7:3–4, therefore, Paul clarifies his understanding of the context of 6:1–7:2, rejecting the idea that he is condemning his readers. But what does this denial imply about 6:1–7:2? It implies that the wording of 6:1–7:2 is open to mis-construal in the same sort of way that 2:14–5:21 is open to mis-construal. Yet in what way is 6:1–7:2 likely to be misconstrued? I propose that, just as the description of the Pauline mission in

⁴⁵ Thrall tries to explain the sudden appearance of the first person plural in the phrase ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν, concluding “Perhaps here we do have to allow that he includes some associate(s)” (*Second Epistle*, 482 n.2075). I would rather say that Paul maintains the plural in the phrase ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν because it occurs in a statement about something external to the writing process, even though he has just slipped into the singular to speak about the composition and/or meaning of 2 Corinthians. After all, it is much easier to speak about external reality on behalf of others than it is to speak on behalf of others about speaking on behalf of others.

⁴⁶ Paul supports the denial that he is speaking with a critical spirit with reference to some earlier indication that he and Timothy have the Corinthians in their hearts (προεῖρηκα... ὅτι ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν ἔστε εἰς τὸ συναποθανεῖν καὶ συζῆν). Setting aside the commonly made suggestion that Paul has 6:11b–12a in mind (since those verses are not about his and Timothy’s affections), a large number of texts are potentially in view. First and foremost, there are passages like 1:3–7; 2:1–4; 2:12–13; 4:10–15; 5:13–15, since all of these passages regard Paul and Timothy’s suffering as an indication of their love for the Corinthians. Most likely, however, Paul has in view 3:1–3, which explicitly states that Paul and Timothy have the Corinthians in their hearts in the sense that everyone can see how proud they are of the church in Corinth. But cf. Thrall who suggests that “Paul is simply making use of a current motif to underline his own affection for his readers” (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:484).

⁴⁷ On the meaning of παρρησία here, see Vegge, *Reconciliation*, 187–88. Most commentators incorrectly take the term to be an expression of confidence because of the subsequent noun καύχησις, but the point here is to offset Paul’s frank speech with his confidence. He is so free in speaking with the Corinthians (in a manner than might be misconstrued as condemnatory) because he is so obviously proud of them.

2:14–5:21 sounds a lot like self-promotion (even though it is not self-promotion), so also the exhortation in 6:1–7:2 makes it sound as if Paul and Timothy’s Corinthian readers are defiling themselves through idolatrous associations (even though they are not doing any such thing).

This is perhaps a very odd proposal, at first glance, but it makes sense in light of the preceding analysis. Paul has instructed his readers to purify themselves from idolatry at least once prior to 2 Corinthians, because the text implies that this instruction has been resisted by at least some members of the Corinthian congregation (6:12; 7:2).⁴⁸ Finally, we know that Paul has just instructed his readers to restore certain people who were punished in response to an earlier letter (2 Cor 1:23–2:13). Putting these details together, I conclude that 6:1–7:2 should not be mis-construed as condemning Paul’s readers, because Paul knows that his readers have shown their obedience by punishing those *other members of the church* who were resisting his instructions. Rather, 6:1–7:2 should be received as a general warning necessitated by the fact that Paul wants those punished believers restored to the community.

⁴⁸ Moreover, we have a direct window into this resistance in 1 Cor 8:1–11:1, wherein Paul explains his position on idol food (8:1–12), refutes the allegation that he is demanding more from his readers than he demands from himself (8:13–9:23), and then explains the vital importance of avoiding idolatry (9:24–10:22).

h. Elaboration of Paul and Timothy's Disposition (7:5–7)

As the particle γάρ suggests and as numerous experiential connections confirm,⁴⁹ the discussion that ensues in 7:5–16 relates back to 7:3–4 by confirming and explaining how Paul's earlier emotions have turned into relief at seeing Titus's joy and at hearing good news from Corinth.⁵⁰ I propose, therefore, that 7:3–16 as a whole does not contribute *directly* to the moral exhortation of 6:1–7:2, even though it is functionally *integrated* into that exhortation inasmuch as it seeks to clarify the context that is relevant to it (much like the earlier meta-commentaries in 3:1–3 and 5:11b–15 and 6:13). If 7:3–16 is an integral

⁴⁹ In addition to the semantic domains already noted in the literature, I point to the following signs of continuity between 7:3–4 and 7:5–16: (1) the terms κατάκρισιν and παρηρησία sum up not only a possible misconception of 6:1–7:2 but also the demeanour that seems to have characterized Paul's earlier correspondence; (2) by affirming an enduring Paul-Corinth partnership (ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν ἔστε εἰς τὸ συναποθανεῖν καὶ συζῆν) and by mentioning his pride in the Corinthians (πολλή μοι καύχησις ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν), Paul is already confronting and soothing the indignation he mentions subsequently; (3) by means of the stative verb πεπλήρωμαι in 7:4, Paul reveals that he is already thinking about the recent events discussed in 7:5–16, since it is these events that have brought about the state of encouragement he now enjoys.

⁵⁰ Welborn ("Broken Pieces," 579) writes:

The divergent interpretations of the scholars have their origin in the ambiguity of the particles themselves. In the present combination, γάρ is normally the connective, and καί means 'also', 'even', or 'in fact'. The particle γάρ has two basic uses: confirmatory and explanatory. To be sure, these uses are closely related. But the difference in meaning is significant enough to allow for divergent interpretations. Those who defend the canonical text prefer the explanatory use: καὶ γάρ establishes a logical connection between the last sentence of 7.4 and the apostle's account of the arrival of Titus (in 7.5–6) by supplying the reason for Paul's comfort in affliction. Weiss and his followers, on the other hand, perceived that Paul's purpose was confirmatory: καὶ γάρ reaffirms the anxiety Paul felt and described in the preceding verse (2.13), by continuing the terse account of his agitated search for Titus.

For his part, Welborn follows the interpretation of Weiss and argues that "the common usage was confirmatory and causal; the particles affirm the truth of a statement by adducing a motive or describing an action. It is not possible to discover such a relation between 7.5 and 7.2–4" ("Broken Pieces," 581). Yet even accepting Welborn's description of the particles, it remains unclear why there cannot be just such a relation between 7:5–16 as a whole and the statement in 7:4c, since 7:5–16 both confirms and explains a change in Paul's disposition.

part of 6:1–7:16, however, how is the interpreter to explain the numerous connections that exist between 1:3–2:13 and 7:5–16? Both sections are dominated by statements, a high proportion of which involve Paul and his addressees, and a large number of those statements employ first person singular references. Moreover, there are a number of semantic domains shared between the two sections, including TO CAUSE OR EXPERIENCE TROUBLE OR RELIEF (ἀνεσις, θλίβω, ἀναπαύω), LIFE OR DEATH (θάνατος), TO HARM OR RESCUE FROM HARM (σωτηρία), TO ENCOURAGE (παρακαλέω [4x], παράκλησις [2x]), INNER BEING (πνεῦμα, σπλάγχνα), PLACES (Μακεδονία), TO MOVE TOWARDS OR AWAY FROM SOMEWHERE (ἔρχομαι, παρουσία [2x]), TO BOAST (καυχάομαι, καύχησις), TO WRITE (γράφω), OBEDIENCE OR DISOBEDIENCE (ὑπακοή), and TO FEEL HAPPY OR UPSET (λυπέω [6x], λύπη [2x], χαίρω [4x], χαρά, ὀδυρμός).

Given these connections, it is quite appropriate to explore the various possible relations that might exist between 1:3–2:13 and 7:5–16. It need not be concluded, however, that the two passages were originally contiguous.⁵¹ To the contrary, this hypothesis is somewhat problematic. In 1:13b–2:4, Paul explains how he understands recent developments involving himself and Corinth. Then, in 2:5–13, he addresses the situation by calling for restoration and by extending forgiveness to those who are restored. And finally, in 7:5–16, he speaks about the improvement that has taken place in his (and Timothy’s) disposition on account of the Corinthians’ obedient reception of Titus.⁵²

⁵¹ For a recent advocate of this hypothesis, see Welborn, “Broken Pieces.”

⁵² It has already been pointed out in the literature that the shift from singular in 2:12–13 to plural in 7:5 stands against the notion that the two passages were originally contiguous (e.g. Harris, *Second Epistle*, 13). It is also important to note, however, that the change has implications for our understanding of

While it is remotely possible that these three passages were continuous within a single text, in this case we would expect 7:5–16 to have followed 2:4, with the instructions of 2:5–13 coming *after* a description of Paul’s improved disposition. By way of contrast, a progression from 1:3–2:13 to 7:5–16 is rather awkward. It requires that Paul makes a brief and lacklustre comment about his change of mood in 2:5 and then instructs his readers to restore whomever has been punished—only to suddenly provide an extended clarification of his improved mood. Why would Paul delay the information contained in 7:5–16 instead of placing it in its natural sequence at 2:5? More likely, the cautiously defensive attitude that permeates all of 1:13b–2:13 explains Paul’s reserve in 2:5, and the need to dispel negative perceptions surrounding 6:1–7:2 explains the comparatively gushing remarks in 7:3–16. I suggest, therefore, that 1:8–2:13 and 7:3–16 are independent discussions of recent events that have affected Paul’s relations with his converts in Corinth, with the linguistic similarities between the two passages deriving from the fact that they are talking about the same historical developments.

Timothy’s movements. Since Timothy is not mentioned in 2:12, he was probably not with Paul in Troas, which is why he is not mentioned in 2:13 when Paul narrates his voyage from Troas to Macedonia. Since Timothy is mentioned in 7:5, however, it can be concluded that he made his own journey to Macedonia and consequently experienced trouble there together with Paul. Against the possible objection that the plural in 7:5—if inclusive of Timothy—would entail that the two men entered Macedonia together, I note the perfective aspect of ἐλθόντων ἡμῶν εἰς Μακεδονίαν. The use of the perfective aspect probably conveys that Paul and Timothy experienced stress (οὐδεμίαν ἔσχηκεν ἄνεσιν ἢ σὰρξ ἡμῶν) *after* arriving in Macedonia, in which case it is inconsequential to 7:5 whether or not the two men arrived in Macedonia together at the same time. It is thus unnecessary to clarify, as Hall does, that “If Timothy came to meet Paul off the boat from Troas, they would enter Macedonia together” (*Unity*, 104). It is enough to say (as Paul does) that Paul and Timothy, after they had (both) arrived in Macedonia, were “totally stressed out.”

i. Paul's Earlier Anger and Its Positive Effect (7:8–10)

With this historical relatedness in mind, let us proceed to consider Paul's remarks in 7:8–10. In these verses, Paul makes three points: (1) he is aware that he has upset the Corinthians with an earlier letter (βλέπω...ὅτι ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἐκείνη...ἐλύπησεν ὑμᾶς); (2) yet he does not regret his earlier actions (οὐ μεταμέλομαι); (3) because by making the Corinthians upset he has brought about a change of mind or attitude (ἐλυπήθητε εἰς μετάνοιαν).⁵³ Because these remarks follow immediately upon the heels of 7:5–7, which relates Paul and Timothy's joy at receiving good news from Titus, it can be confidently presumed that Titus personally delivered the letter in question on the occasion of a visit to Corinth and then returned to Paul with good news. And so Paul is construing a scenario in which he has been made happy by hearing about the Corinthians' response to an earlier letter, even though that response involved their getting upset with his letter and consequently with him.

Now, generally speaking, it is supposed that Paul's earlier letter made its readers upset only initially, with their initial reaction eventually giving way to repentance.⁵⁴ This hypothesis does not, however, adequately account for a number of details in 7:3–16. In point of fact, it cannot even account for the simple fact that Paul has chosen to re-open the matter of his earlier correspondence, having already explained himself in 1:23–2:4.

⁵³ Notice that Timothy has departed from view again, as in 1:13b–2:13, because he was not personally involved in the events at issue.

⁵⁴ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 534–38.

Why would Paul make not one but two attempts to explain his earlier letter if his readers' negative reaction to that letter was only a momentary reaction that quickly gave way to repentance? It *must* be the case that hard feelings remain. And indeed, notwithstanding the fact that Paul speaks in glowing terms about the good news he has received from Titus, there are signs that frustrations remain high.

In 7:3–16 we once again find a high concentration of items from the domain TO FEEL HAPPY OR UPSET, just as in 1:24–2:13. Yet whereas 1:24–2:13 says only that Paul was upset, 7:3–16 makes it explicit the Corinthians have been made upset (ἐλύπησα ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ; ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἐκεῖνη...ἐλύπησεν ὑμᾶς), confirming what is hinted at in 2:4.⁵⁵ Moreover, at no point does Paul explicitly indicate that his readers have ceased being upset. Quite to the contrary, the mere presence of 7:3–16 in 2 Corinthians indicates that they remain upset. So even though Paul has avoided Corinth so as not to get into an unpleasant confrontation with his converts, his strategy of long-distance correction has made them upset nonetheless.

Notably, this has important implications for the phrases ἡ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη and ἡ τοῦ κόσμου λύπη in 7:10, which are consistently treated as though they relate to a repentant sorrow on the part of the Corinthians. It is much more likely, given what Paul actually says in 1:23–2:4 and 7:8–9, that the phrases ἡ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη and ἡ τοῦ κόσμου λύπη represent alternative construals of *Paul's* emotions. After all, the question at issue in

⁵⁵ The λυπ- terms in 7:5–16 are typically translated using words derived from the English *sad* or *sorrow*, so that the Corinthians are said to have been *saddened* or *caused sorrow* (e.g. Matera, *II Corinthians*, 171–72; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 532). This, however, misrepresents Paul's language. By using words like λύπη and ἐλύπησα, Paul is not describing a precise emotion, but merely describing an emotional upset in a vague and imprecise manner. And so whether the Corinthians have been grieved or infuriated is something that must be carefully discerned from context.

1:23–2:4 is whether Paul should have communicated his frustrations in writing or made a personal visit. Should Paul regret the letter he wrote to Corinth ἐν λύπῃ?⁵⁶ According to 7:10, he should not, because the emotions conveyed in his earlier letter were emotions fully in accordance with God’s own evaluation of the situation (ἡ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη).⁵⁷ Indeed, this is why Paul’s letter has produced repentance in the Corinthians and has left Paul with no regrets (ἀμεταμέλητον).⁵⁸ By way of contrast, the kind of emotional upset that is characteristic of the world (ἡ τοῦ κόσμου λύπη) produces only death—sometimes quite literally!

j. The Emotional Reaction Provoked by Paul’s Anger (7:11)

Since ἡ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη does not refer to a repentant sorrow in 7:10, the emotions listed in 7:11 cannot be depicted as products of the Corinthians’ repentant sorrow. Rather, the point of 7:11 is that the various emotions listed in 7:11 have been provoked *by Paul* and

⁵⁶ Paul states in 2:1 that he decided not to visit while upset (τὸ μὴ πάλιν ἐν λύπῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλθεῖν), which implies that he was upset when he wrote the earlier letter at issue.

⁵⁷ It might be argued, of course, that the repetition of κατὰ θεὸν and μετάνοιαν establishes a tight connection between vv. 9 and 10, such that the phrase ἡ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη should be related to the second person subject of the thrice repeated verb ἐλυπήθητε in v. 9 rather than to Paul. But this objection overlooks the connections that exist in 2 Corinthians between Paul’s being upset (λύπη), his making the Corinthians upset (λυπέω: active), and the Corinthians being made upset (λυπέω: passive)—a progression that can be very clearly seen in 2:1–2. Once it is recognized that Paul’s λύπη is what makes the Corinthians undergo the experience of being made upset (λυπέω: passive), then it follows naturally that Paul is in fact the implied agent in the thrice repeated ἐλυπήθητε in 7:9 (cf. the two active instances of λυπέω in v. 8, one of which has Paul as its agent and the other of which has his earlier letter as its agent). But if Paul is the implied agent in the three instances of ἐλυπήθητε, the parallels between vv. 9 and 10 hold even if the λύπη in v. 10 is Paul’s.

⁵⁸ The fact that this interpretation accounts for the adjective ἀμεταμέλητον is enough to secure its place as the best one, in my opinion, given that the alternative explanations are quite unpersuasive (e.g. “they repent, and without regret, since they comprehend the evil they have done” [Matera, *II Corinthians*, 175–76]).

by his earlier letter in particular. It can hardly be otherwise, given that the phrase τὸ κατὰ θεὸν λυπηθῆναι relates back to the five occurrences of λυπέω in 7:8–10 wherein Paul and his letter are said to have provoked the Corinthians. So although Paul *does* describe the result of his letter as μετάνοιαν, this is by no means his full assessment of its result, as though the extended description of the Corinthians' emotions in 7:11 represents a subsidiary description of the fruits of repentance. Contrary to what Hughes suggests, what Paul observes in 7:11 is that the Corinthians *have* been “provoked” by his earlier letter towards “self-vindication” and “embittered recrimination.”⁵⁹

As evidence that the Corinthians have not surrendered their earlier contentiousness, I present the domains that are used in 2:1–13 and 7:5–16 to describe the response of the Corinthians' to Paul's correspondence: TO FEEL HAPPY OR UPSET (ὄδυρμός, λυπέω [6x]), TO DESIRE (ἐπιπόθησις [2x]), TO BE EAGER OR ZEALOUS (ζήλος [2x], σπουδή [2x]), TO BE BOLD OR FEARFUL (φόβος), TO RETALIATE (ἐκδίκησις), TO BE INDIGNANT (ἀγανάκτησις), TO SPEAK WELL OR BADLY OF SOMEONE (συνίστημι), and TO DEFEND (ἀπολογία). The English labels I have applied to these domains are perhaps more troublesome than helpful, but when the domains in question are taken together in context, they suggest that the emotional reaction of the Corinthians to Paul's letter has not exactly been convivial. Indeed, if anything can be gleaned from the emotions and actions that Paul names, it is that the Corinthian have reacted *strongly*. They have displayed earnestness (σπουδήν), zeal (ζήλον), and longing (ἐπιπόθησιν)—yet in a manner characterized by indignation (ἀγανάκτησιν), defensiveness (ἀπολογίαν), panic (φόβον),

⁵⁹ Hughes, *Second Epistle*, 269.

and retaliation (ἐκδίκησιν). These are hardly the terms one would use to describe a warm response, or a humble change of heart, or an eager longing to experience healing and reconciliation.

At this point, the objection is likely to be raised that I am missing the point of 7:11 by failing to recognize that the emotional reaction Paul describes was enacted in punishment, in which case the message of 7:11 is that the Corinthians have been indignant and retaliatory *on Paul's behalf*. Harris, for example, proposes that “Their ‘indignation’ (ἀγανάκτησις) was probably twofold—at the wrongdoer, for his action, which they now saw as a brazen challenge to Paul’s authority; and at themselves, for their failure to defend their spiritual father after he had been denigrated in their hearing.”⁶⁰ It cannot be so easily denied, however, that the Corinthians’ indignation was directed at Paul, given the hint in 2:4 and the explicit assertion in 7:8–9 that his letter upset them. The Corinthians may have obeyed Paul’s written instructions by imposing church discipline, but nothing anywhere in 2 Corinthians indicates that they are pleasantly disposed. Instead, the odd mixture of terms in 7:3–16 indicates that they have experienced an intense and complex reaction to Paul’s chosen course of action, feeling disappointed and hurt (at Paul’s decision not to visit), defensive and panicked (in response to his strong words about the impurities in Corinth), yet also indignant and vindictive (toward Paul, for accusing them of being irresponsible while simultaneously extending his already too-long absence).⁶¹ As Paul himself summarizes things, the

⁶⁰ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 542.

⁶¹ Here Barrett’s comments are particularly interesting. He writes: “They now defended themselves...and showed a desire for vengeance (ἐκδίκησις); this begins with a desire to clear themselves of a charge, but almost amounts to a counter-charge” (Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 211–12). This is exactly

Corinthians have promoted themselves as being entirely innocent of any wrongdoing, such that they have attempted to wash their hands of the whole affair (ἐν παντὶ συνεστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς ἀγνοοὺς εἶναι τῷ πράγματι).⁶²

k. The Positive Consequences of Paul's Anger (7:12–16)

Turning from the Corinthians' emotional reaction to their practical reaction, it needs to be underscored that they obediently carried out the punishments for which Paul's letter apparently called (2:5–13; 7:14–15). I have already noted that in 2:6 we find the domain TO CENSURE OR SANCTION (ἐπιτιμία), and that the church discipline entailed by this domain is described in 2:9 as evidence of obedience, using the domains EVIDENCE (δοκιμή) and OBEDIENCE AND DISOBEDIENCE (ὕπηκοος). Similarly, in 7:15 Paul frames the Corinthians' obedience (ὕπακοή) as the proof of his boast to Titus, meaning that they have received Titus with an attitude of fear and trembling (and presumably carried out church discipline

right. Paul has written to his Corinthian community and criticized his converts on a number of points. The Corinthians have punished various church members in response, but they have also become indignant towards Paul for implicating them in the sins of others while failing to exercise the kind of personal oversight that might have avoided the whole affair.

⁶² For his part, Hughes suggests that Paul must mean in 7:11b:

either that they... were innocent in that they had had no share in the impurity that had been committed—though they were to blame for not having taken immediate disciplinary action against the offender—or that *now*, having taken action and having shown godly sorrow, the past was put right and they were in a state of purity so far as this affair was concerned (Hughes, *Second Epistle*, 275).

Probably, however, Paul's remark means neither of these things. Supposing that the expression συνεστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς pertains neither to events preceding Paul's earlier letter nor to the subsequent carrying out of church discipline but instead to the emotional reaction of 7:11a, then Paul is saying only that his readers have expressed outrage at some of the accusations made in his earlier letter and have declared their innocence of any wrongdoing. For other (more complex) attempts to explain the blamelessness mentioned in 7:11, see Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 223; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 212; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 236; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:495; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 543–44.

under his direction). Taking this obedient enactment of discipline together with the outrage and indignation, it is possible to explain the rather unwieldy and textually unstable phrase that concludes 7:12 as involving the ellipsis of τῆς σπουδῆς following ὑπέρ. In this case the phrase conveys, perhaps with a bit of self-deprecating sarcasm, that the Corinthians have proven, in the sight of God, that their own diligence exceeds even Paul and Timothy's diligence (τὴν σπουδὴν ὑμῶν τὴν ὑπὲρ [τῆς σπουδῆς] ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς)—a probable nod in the direction of the Corinthians' frustrations concerning Paul and Timothy's lengthy absence from Corinth.⁶³

In the end, it is the Corinthians' enacted obedience that permits Paul to be so irenic in 7:3–16—not their emotional reaction. As a Christian leader for whom a major concern is the holiness of the church, Paul rejoices in the fact that the Corinthians have, under the direction of Titus, dealt with those who were defiling their congregation. He rejects the notion that his addressees have suffered any loss by means of his letter (ἐν μηδενὶ ζημιωθῆτε ἐξ ἡμῶν) and he refuses to regret his actions (οὐ μεταμέλομαι), because his provocation of the Corinthians has brought about a repentant obedience (ἐλυστήθητε εἰς μετάνοιαν). His statements, however, presume that the Corinthians have obediently restored the purity of their community *despite* their objections to Paul's way

⁶³ Alternative explanations of this difficult phrase typically rely upon the idea that the Corinthians are positively disposed towards Paul. Harris, for instance, argues that "It was only 'in the sight of God' that the Corinthians came, and would come, to a realization of their deep-seated devotion to their father in Christ" (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 546). Thrall similarly writes that "The effect of the letter... was to make the Corinthians aware of their true feelings for Paul, i.e. their goodwill, even their devotion, towards him" (*Second Epistle*, 496). Against these explanations, I note that obedience should not be conflated with devotion, and that the context makes it more likely that σπουδὴ here entails the former. I also point out a problem recognized by Thrall herself. If Paul's prime concern is that the Corinthians have come to realize their deep-seated devotion to him, then the passage strikes "a somewhat egocentric note" (*Second Epistle*, 496). Yet if the reading I am proposing here is correct, then Paul is actually being slightly self-deprecating, a stance that fits much better with the purpose of 7:3–16.

of handling things. And *this* is why Paul so carefully and irenically clarifies in 7:3–16 that 6:1–7:2 does not stem from a critical and displeased attitude. In truth, Paul is greatly relieved that Titus has succeeded in purifying the church, and his concern is now directed towards what will happen when the punished believers are restored and re-admitted into fellowship.

At this point, we finally come to the phrases τοῦ ἀδικήσαντος and τοῦ ἀδικηθέντος in 7:12. Many readings begin with these phrases, with the result that the entire discussion is interpreted through the lens of a single pressing question: What was the nature of the specific offence that is at issue in 7:3–16? If there was no specific offence, however, nor yet a specific offender, how should the phrases be understood?

Here several details are vital. First, the articles in these phrases derive from the constraining phrase τῷ πράγματι in 7:11c. So the implied question is: *with respect to the affair at issue*, was Paul's letter written in the interests of the wronged party or in the interests of the party in the wrong? For this reason, the interpreter's understanding of "the affair" at issue will play a prominent role in any interpretation of the phrases τοῦ ἀδικήσαντος and τοῦ ἀδικηθέντος. If it is regarded as an incident involving two specific individuals, then the phrases will be interpreted accordingly. If, however, it is regarded as a more complex and involved affair, other interpretive possibilities will be considered.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ It has been suggested, for example, that the nominal groups here do not refer to single individuals but are rather generic or collective in meaning. Thus Sickenberger writes: "Es erscheint nach dem Zusammenhang auch hier eine zu enge Interpretation zu sein, wenn man unter der „Angelegenheit“ nur das Ärgernis des Blutschänders oder, bei anderer Auffassung von 2, 5–11..., das eines Beleidigers Pauli versteht" (Sickenberger, *Die beiden Briefe*, 122), concluding that "„der Unrecht getan Habende usw.“ generisch oder kollektiv zu nehmen und auf alle betreffenden Personen zu beziehen" (*Die beiden Briefe*, 123; cf. Golla, *Zwischenreise und Zwischenbrief*, 73). This is an interesting suggestion, but it has largely been ignored, mostly because of prior conclusions about the affair at issue, but perhaps also because the perfective singular participle lends itself less to a generic or collective interpretation than does the

Second, the affair at issue in 7:11c has provoked a conflict between Paul and his readers, because they have differences of opinion with regard to what has happened and how the whole affair should have been handled. Thus assigning the two roles mentioned in 7:12 would have been problematic even for Paul himself (much as it has proven to be problematic for his later interpreters)—because both Paul and his readers regarded themselves as having been wronged in the course of recent events. Moreover, I have proposed that Paul’s readers are not the only ones within the Corinthian community who have taken issue with Paul in the course of the affair at issue. At the very minimum, therefore, we must account for at least three different perspectives on the relevant affair, because no fewer than three distinct individuals and/or groups were involved: Paul, his readers, and the recently punished sinners.⁶⁵

Third, as is indicated by the fact that both of the phrases at issue are placed within the scope of the negative particles οὐ and οὐδέ, the expected answer to the implied question *Was Paul’s letter written in the interests of the party in the wrong or in the interests of the party wronged?* is simply *No*. Paul did not write in the interests of someone in the wrong, nor in the interests of someone feeling personally wronged. This is a very important detail, because it raises the possibility that Paul is not presuming a particular interpretation of recent events (i.e. his own interpretation) as is consistently

imperfective singular participle.

⁶⁵ There is also a fourth group implicated in the affair (i.e. Paul’s critics), but they do not appear explicitly anywhere in 7:5–16 and I have not found them to be important for the interpretation of the phrases being discussed here.

assumed. Given that the two relevant clauses in 7:12 are negated, the possibility exists that Paul is in fact rejecting two different interpretations of recent events.

Fourth, Paul and Timothy have already denied in 7:2 that their prohibition of idol food is harmful and hypocritical (οὐδένα ἠδικήσαμεν). It is probable, therefore, that Paul's negation of the phrase τοῦ ἀδικήσαντος is an indirect way of re-stating that earlier defence: Paul did not write as the wrongdoer in the whole affair of the recently punished sinners, because—contrary to their charges against him (cf. 1 Cor 9:3)—he never did them any wrong. The “wrongdoer” of 7:12, therefore, is Paul. Yet the point is that Paul has *not* done wrong.

Fifth, Paul has acknowledged the Corinthians' insistence that they have done nothing wrong (7:11). Moreover, he has tied his current statements back to this protestation of innocence by means of ἄρα.⁶⁶ It is probable, therefore, that Paul's negation of the phrase τοῦ ἀδικηθέντος is an indirect way of granting the Corinthians their defence: Paul cannot have written as someone who has been wronged in the affair of the recently punished sinners, because—notwithstanding the tone of Paul's earlier letter, in which he chastises his converts for listening to his arrogant critics instead of heeding his instructions (e.g. 1 Cor 4:14–6:20)—the Corinthians have done him no wrong. The

⁶⁶ As particle ἄρα indicates, the statement in 7:12 derives in some way from the content of 7:11. But since the Corinthians' outcry must have followed the writing of Paul's letter, historically speaking, 7:12 is not conveying how Paul understood his purposes at the time he wrote the letter. Rather, they represent his current re-assessment of the earlier letter in view of the protestations of innocence recounted in 7:11. In other words, Paul is revising his assessment of events in light of the report he has received from Titus. As Harris observes, “this creates a logical anomaly, for Paul's purpose in writing is here stated as the consequence of the outcome of the letter” (*Second Epistle*, 545).

“wronged person” of 7:12, therefore, is Paul. Yet the point is that Paul has *not* been wronged.

Taking these points together, we have a highly strategic manoeuvre by means of which Paul is trying to dispel lingering frustrations and move *everybody* past the need to assign blame.⁶⁷ If the Corinthians will grant Paul’s argument that he has handled the matter of the immoral and impure believers adequately by means of his prior correspondence (7:2, 8–10; cf. 1:23–2:4), then Paul will grant that the Corinthians did no wrong by permitting the situation in Corinth to reach the point where such a letter was necessary (7:11). In other words, although the phrases in 7:12 suggest that with regard to the affair issue (τῷ πράγματι) somebody has done wrong (τοῦ ἀδικήσαντος) and somebody has been wronged (τοῦ ἀδικηθέντος), the interpersonal meanings in 7:12 indicate that Paul is *rejecting* this assessment in place of an alternative assessment. He is willing to let go of his complaint and make peace with the Corinthians—provided they too are willing to abandon their complaint. He is willing to accept their obedience despite their indignation, provided they are willing to accept his earlier letter as a sign of his love.

⁶⁷ There is thus a subtle tension between Paul’s initial construal of the punishments as a sign of his readers’ repentance (7:9) and his subsequent construal of them as a sign of their diligence (7:12)—with the difference being that the latter construal (graciously) accepts the plea of innocence mentioned in 7:11.

3. Summary

Although many interpreters posit a transition of some kind at 6:1, this transition is typically regarded as a minor transition within a larger segment that includes 2:14–5:21.⁶⁸

My linguistic analysis has turned up some patterns which suggest otherwise, however.

In the first place, an analysis of progressive moves reveals that there is a concentration of exhortations in 6:1–7:2 (6:1, 13, 14, 17 [3x]; 7:1, 2), such that the section may in fact be paraenetic. Following through on this possibility, I have argued that these exhortations are at the heart of *what is being done* and that the other moves should be understood accordingly. The statements in 6:2–10 serve to promise divine assistance and then exemplify that assistance, and the statements in 6:11–12 and 7:2 respond to objections raised against similar exhortations given in the past. Nothing in 6:1–7:2, therefore, speaks to relational tensions between Paul and Timothy and their Corinthian addressees.

An analysis of progressive moves and conjunctive relations is also significant for 7:3–16. The opening moves in 7:3–4 reflect back upon 6:1–7:16, clarifying how Paul understands his own speaking, such that these initial verses (at least) can be regarded as a meta-commentary. The subsequent moves in 7:5–16, however, are introduced with γάρ, and they can be understood as an extended attempt to further clarify the interpersonal

⁶⁸ Garland deems this larger section to be 1:8–7:16 (Garland, *2 Corinthians*). Belleville and Matera deem it to be 1:12–7:16 (Belleville, *Reflections*; Matera, *II Corinthians*). Martin deems it to be 2:14–7:16 (Martin, *2 Corinthians*). Thrall deems it to be 2:14–7:4 (Thrall, *Second Epistle*). And Bruce deems it to be 2:14–7:1 (Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*).

disposition that is relevant to 6:1–7:2. Overall, therefore, 7:3–16 function as yet another meta-commentary.

An analysis of identity chains indicates that Paul neglects to include his co-author Timothy in a brief parenthetical meta-commentary in 6:13 (ὡς τέκνοις λέγω) as well as throughout much of the extended meta-commentary in 7:3–16 (πρὸς κατάκρισιν οὐ λέγω...). Brief slips into the singular are frequent in meta-commentaries, but the variation between first person singular and plural items within 7:3–16 requires some kind of explanation. Here I have proposed that Paul excludes Timothy whenever he is speaking about something that did not involve him (e.g. the earlier letter or the sending of Titus), but nevertheless feels free to presuppose his presence as co-author when speaking about something that did involve him (e.g. the troubles in Macedonia and the reception of news from Titus).

Lastly, an analysis of semantic domains and cohesive harmony reveals a great deal of experiential continuity between 1:3–2:13 and 7:5–16, such that the two sections are talking about related phenomena. It need not follow that the two were originally continuous, however, provided that there is a plausible explanation for why Paul would choose to speak *again* about his recent interactions with Corinth.

It is at this point, I suggest, that it becomes essential to recognize the function of 7:3–16 as a clarification of the context relevant to 6:1–7:2. From the exhortation in 6:1–7:2, it would seem that Paul and Timothy are concerned about the holiness of their Corinthian community. Specifically, they seem to be concerned that at least some of their converts are refusing to sever ties with their pagan society. From the meta-commentary in

7:3–16, however, we learn that Paul does *not* assess his readers as being impure, as though the point of 6:1–7:2 were to condemn them (yet again) and to call (yet again) for immediate action. To the contrary, Paul knows that his readers have just imposed stern punishments against the most obviously defiled members of their congregation. What is more, he knows that they have vehemently denied any personal culpability as regards the defilements introduced by those who have been expelled, promoting themselves as entirely *pure* (ἀγνοῦς [7:11]).

The obvious question at this point is why Paul and Timothy would urge holiness in 6:1–7:2 if their readers have just cleansed their community and if they are already feeling unfairly criticized. Why not praise the Corinthians for their obedience and then leave things at that? As regards this point, it must be remembered that Paul has just reinstated the excommunicated sinners (cf. 2:5–13), so that the Corinthians will once again need to be careful about taking responsibility for the purity of their congregation.⁶⁹ If the Gentile believers once again defile the church in Corinth, the Pauline mission's reputation (as well as the church's reputation among Jews generally) will suffer further degradation—a matter of no small significance if the Pauline mission is being attacked by other Christian leaders along precisely these lines. It must also be remembered from 1:3–2:13 that the Corinthians have only taken responsibility for the enactment of church discipline in response to Paul's written instructions, and that they seem to have regarded

⁶⁹ What is more, we need not suppose that Paul and Timothy's appeal for holiness in 6:1–7:2 is directed at their Gentile converts alone. It may also be that Paul and Timothy are speaking partly for the benefit of any Jewish readers or onlookers who may be fed up with the Pauline mission's failure to adequately control the impurities of its Gentile converts and hence unlikely to approve of Paul's decision to restore the offending idolaters.

this responsibility as something of a burden (2:5). Presuming that Paul is uncompromising in his belief that his readers need to take *communal* responsibility for the purity of their congregation, it is conceivable that he and Timothy might risk offending their readers in order to stress the importance of such a vital matter.

Is Paul uncompromising with regard to the role he expects the Corinthians to play in maintaining the purity of their congregation? In response to this question, I note that although Paul is cautious and irenic in 7:3–16, he is not really sympathetic.⁷⁰ He expresses his pleasure at the Corinthians' longing to see him, without apologizing for his absence (7:7, 11). He projects a hypothetical scenario indicating that he may have temporarily regretted upsetting his readers, without admitting outright that he should have behaved differently (7:8, 12). He describes his readers' defensive and indignant insistence that they themselves are pure, without actually stating that he himself regards them as pure (7:11). He tries to move his readers past the assignment of blame, but then immediately highlights the positive effect of his letter as proof that his strategy has been proven effective (7:12–15). An apology would probably have helped Paul's relations with Corinth, but he cannot quite bring himself to apologize. And so he dances around an apology, coming close but never conceding that he has done anything regrettable—because he refuses to give up on his conviction that it is not *his* responsibility to maintain the purity of the church in Corinth but rather the responsibility of the church itself.

⁷⁰ Signs of caution are also evident within 6:1–7:2 itself. For example, a brief meta-comment in 6:13 clarifies that Paul is speaking as a father to his children. The terms of address used in 6:11 and 7:1—but especially the second of these (*ἀγαπητοί*)—convey a sense of personal concern and personal interest. And the use of a first person hortatory subjunctive communicates a sense of personal involvement (7:1).

How exactly do Paul and Timothy's critics factor into all of this, if at all? This is a complicated question. On the one hand, it is implied by certain statements in 6:1–7:16 that people have criticized Paul and Timothy's leadership. These people have vehemently insisted that they are being ruined (perhaps socially and/or financially) by Paul and Timothy, whose leadership they have described as unfair on account of the fact that more is being demanded than is being given (7:2). What is more, these people have tried to persuade the wider Corinthian church that Paul and Timothy's instructions are too restrictive (6:12; cf. 1 Cor 8:1–11:1). On the other hand, I have argued that these people are most likely the immoral church members who have recently been expelled from the Corinthian church, such that they cannot be equated with the other Christian leaders who are criticizing the Pauline mission.

What did the other Christian leaders who were criticizing Paul and Timothy think about the church members who were criticizing Paul and Timothy? This is an absolutely essential question, but one that is not explicitly addressed by 6:1–7:16. For now, therefore, the most that can be said about the other Christian leaders who are criticizing Paul and Timothy's leadership is that they are watching with interest as the Pauline mission attempts to keep its Gentile converts under control.

CHAPTER 6: 8:1–9:15

In the preceding chapters, I have examined the progressive moves, conjunctive relations, meta-commentaries, semantic domains, identity chains, and cohesive harmony interactions in the first seven chapters of 2 Corinthians, and I have laboured to abstract from these things a broad understanding of *what is being done*, *who is/are taking part*, and *what is being talked about*. Moreover, I have concluded on the basis of this exercise that 1:3–7:16 can be regarded as the realization of a single context of situation. The question now is whether the same can be said about the text following 8:1, at which point my analysis has indicated another structural transition. After explaining my choice of segmentation, therefore, I will consider whether or not the meanings following 8:1 can be plausibly regarded as the realization of a context wherein Paul and Timothy are enacting leadership over a congregation that has recently demonstrated both obedience and discontentment.

A matter of special importance to the literary integrity debate is whether the social relations relevant to this portion of 2 Corinthians can be regarded as continuous with the social relations construed earlier, wherein Paul and Timothy are depicted as competent and benevolent leaders and the Corinthians are depicted as obedient supporters who will

no doubt continue in partnership with the Pauline mission. It is important to stress once again, therefore, that SFL defines *context of situation* as a semiotic construct, and that SFL regards the act of construing a particular relation in language to be one of the primary ways that human beings create, maintain, and act upon social relations. The issue here is not, therefore, the historical setting of 2 Corinthians, but rather something abstract that is construed and therefore created by the meanings in 2 Corinthians. Numerous details in 1:3–7:16 attest to the fact that alternative construals of relevant historical developments were both possible and popular at the time 2 Corinthians was written, but this is irrelevant to the question of literary integrity when “text” is defined in accordance with the model adopted in this study.

1. The Segmentation

There is little doubt among interpreters that 8:1 marks the beginning of a new segment of some kind (or, for those who partition the letter, the beginning of a new fragment).¹

Underlying this unanimity are some significant semantic indicators, which I will discuss in just a moment. First, however, it is important to observe that there are numerous points of both continuity between 8:1–9:15 and the preceding segment of 2 Corinthians. It can be noted, for instance, that the following domains from 8:1–9:15 are used in the preceding meta-commentary of 7:3–16: TO DESIRE (θέλω [2x], θέλημα, ἐπιποθέω), TO CAUSE OR EXPERIENCE TROUBLE OR RELIEF (θλίψις [2x], ἄνεσις, ἀνάγκη), TO ENCOURAGE (παράκλησις), ABUNDANCE OR LACK (περισεύω [6x], περισσός, περισσεία, περίσσευμα

¹ See O’Mahony, *Pauline Persuasion*, 79.

[2x], πολύς [2x], υπερβάλλω, βάθος, ὑστέρημα [3x], αὐτάρκεια, πλεονάζω, ἐλαττονέω), PLACES (Μακεδονία, Ἀχαΐα), TO BOAST (καυχάομαι, καύχημα, καύχησις), TO MOVE TOWARDS OR AWAY FROM SOMEWHERE (ἔρχομαι, ἐξέρχομαι, προέρχομαι), INNER BEING (καρδία [2x]), TO FEEL HAPPY OR UPSET (χαρά, ἰλαρός, λύπη), OBEDIENCE (ὑποταγή), TO MAKE KNOWN OR REVEAL (γνωρίζω, ἐνδείκνυμι, ἐνδειξις), TO HONOUR OR SHAME (καταισχύνω, δοξάζω), TO BRING ABOUT SOMETHING (κατεργάζομαι), and TO BE EARNEST (σπουδή [3x], σπουδαῖος [3x], προθυμία [4x], ζήλος). Given all of this experiential continuity, does it not seem questionable to segment 2 Corinthians at 8:1?

As an initial response to this question, I note that the experiential continuity in question becomes significantly less compelling when cohesive harmony is taken into account (i.e. when interactions between meanings are considered). For instance, the desire mentioned in 7:3–16 is the Corinthians' longing for Paul, but the desires mentioned in 8:1–9:15 are different altogether. The trouble mentioned in 7:3–16 is Paul and Timothy's trouble, whereas the trouble in 8:1–9:15 is experienced by his churches. The encouragement in 7:3–16 is an improvement in Paul and Timothy's disposition, but in 8:1–9:15 it is an urging directed at Titus. And so on and so forth. In only a few cases do we find that a whole cluster of experiential meanings is used similarly in both 7:3–16 and 8:1–9:15. Both segments speak about Paul moving into Macedonia and then from there to Corinth, and both segments speak about Titus moving into Macedonia and then on to Corinth ahead of Paul. More notably, both segments speak about the Corinthians being obedient, making their true qualities known, and thereby ensuring that Paul and

Timothy's boasting in them does not result in shame. And finally, both segments speak about the zeal of the Corinthians.

These more significant points of experiential continuity cohere with the hypothesis that 7:3–16 and 8:1–9:15 are parts of a single text, inasmuch as they permit a single Macedonian provenance and manifest what may have been a deliberate persuasive strategy (i.e. Paul praises the Corinthians for their zeal and obedience before asking for more of the same). They do not, however, undermine the claim that Paul and Timothy are beginning to do something new when they employ the formulaic introduction γνωρίζομεν δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί in 8:1. To the contrary, this claim stands largely on the basis of the text's interpersonal meanings.

In considering Paul and Timothy's interpersonal meanings, it is notable that both 6:1–7:16 and 8:1–9:15 contain a mixture of statements and commands, and that both segments discuss past and present events in order to clarify the nature of what is being requested. But whereas the commands in 6:1–7:16 are of a very general nature, the commands in 8:1–9:15 are of a very specific nature. For example, in the introductory command of 6:1, Paul and Timothy ask only that the Corinthians not receive the grace of God in vain. And then in 6:14, they do not have any particular unbelievers in mind. And in their climactic appeal for purity in 7:1, they include a very broad and all-encompassing range of impurities (παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος). By way of contrast, when Paul and Timothy call for generosity in 8:7, they relate this generosity to a specific and known participant (ταύτη τῆ χάριτι). And in 8:14 they situate their appeal using the temporal phrase ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ. And the instruction in 8:24 relates specifically to the

brothers whom Paul and Timothy are sending ahead of themselves (εις αὐτούς). This change from general to specific reveals that Paul and Timothy are demanding goods-and-services of a very different sort in 8:1–9:15. They are no longer giving general exhortations, but specific instructions. And it is on this basis that I identify 8:1–9:15 as a distinct segment in 2 Corinthians.

Confirming this identification is the fact that a number of new identity chains are introduced in 8:1–9:15, involving the Macedonian churches, the Jerusalem collection, the saints in Jerusalem, the churches (generally), and the two brothers whom Paul and Timothy are sending with Titus. And of course, we also find a number of semantic domains that either increase in frequency or appear for the first time, including GIFT (χάρις [4x], εὐλογία [3x], δωρεά), SINCERITY (ἀπλότης [3x], γνήσιος), TO SEND AWAY FROM SOMEWHERE (πέμπω, συμπέμπω [2x]), TO GIVE OR RECEIVE (δίδωμι [5x], δέχομαι), TO BEGIN OR COMPLETE (προενάρχομαι [2x], ἐπιτελέω [3x]), TO TEST (δοκιμάζω [2x], δοκιμή), POVERTY OR WEALTH (πτωχεία [2x], πλοῦτος), TO BECOME POOR OR RICH (πτωχεύω, πλουτέω), TO BE PREPARED OR UNPREPARED (παρασκευάζω [2x], ἀπαρασκευάστος, ἔτοιμος), and TO SUPPLY (χορηγέω, ἐπιχορηγέω, προσαναπληρώω). As is intuitively grasped by commentators, these new identity chains and semantic domains indicate the introduction of a new topic: namely, preparations for Paul's Jerusalem collection.

2. The Analysis and Its Implications

a. News from Macedonia (8:1–6)

Although Betz opts to treat 8:1–5 together (as an Exordium) and 8:6 separately (as a Narratio), it is necessary to treat 8:1–6 together.² In these verses, Paul and Timothy report that the Macedonians have decided to participate in the Pauline mission's collection for the saints in Jerusalem. And from the way this development is reported, it is clear that it has taken Paul and Timothy by surprise. The Macedonians gave entirely of their own accord (αὐθαίρετοι), begging for the opportunity (δεόμενοι ἡμῶν). And it is not as though Paul and Timothy were anticipating this (καὶ οὐ καθὼς ἠλπίσαμεν); rather (ἀλλά), the Macedonians contributed first because it was the will of *God*.³ Frequently, commentators understand πρῶτον in relation to τῷ κυρίῳ, so that Paul is thought to be saying that the Macedonians gave “first and foremost to God.”⁴ But Paul's point in the present context is probably that the Macedonian churches have given quite unexpectedly to the Jerusalem collection *before the Achaian churches*.⁵ The phrase διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ thus emphasizes

² Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 38–39. Thrall suggests that “the unity of vv. 1–6 is so obvious that one should not divide the passage into two rhetorical sections” and that “it is surely improbable that a whole separate rhetorical section should consist only of a series of subordinate clauses” (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:38).

³ Although commentators regularly read this verse as somehow anticipating ἔδωκαν (e.g. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 402), I suggest that Paul is here employing a grammatical construction similar to the one I have observed in 3:13–14 (καὶ οὐ καθὼς). In the former passage, he states: “And it's not as though Moses kept putting a veil over his face in order to prevent the Israelites from seeing..., rather....” Here he states: “And it's not as though we hoped [for this], rather....”

⁴ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 568.

⁵ Does this suggest that Paul intended for all of his churches to take turns giving to Jerusalem? If

that this has *not* come about through any planning on Paul's part, and the phrase εἰς τὸ παρακαλέσαι ἡμᾶς Τίτον explains what is happening now as a consequence of the unexpected development.⁶

b. A Gentle Appeal for a Sufficiently Large Gift (8:7–15)

According to numerous editions and translations, shifts or breaks occur within 8:7–15, with the most frequent locations being vv. 8, 10, and 13. And for his part, Betz sees a new rhetorical section beginning with 8:9, arguing that 8:7–8 is the *Propositio* and that 8:9–15 is the *Probatio*.⁷ Despite all of these descriptions, however, the evidence suggests that 8:7–15 is a single section that employs a variety of more-or-less explicit approaches in order to influence the Corinthians behaviour.⁸ The moves in vv. 7, 11, and 14–15 are direct or indirect commands, whereas the remaining material in 8:7–15 is either elaborative or meta-discursive.

To begin with, the ἀλλά in 8:7 must be discussed, since it initiates the section by relating it back to the reports in 8:1–6. Betz states that it “marks the introduction of a new section in the argument,”⁹ while Harris calls it “transitional.”¹⁰ Furnish argues that it is

so, it becomes all the more important to reckon with the possibility that the Galatian churches completed a collection prior to the one in view throughout 2 Cor 8–9.

⁶ Probably, since Paul's collection is about equality (8:13), he was not expecting the poor Macedonian churches to give at this time.

⁷ Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 39.

⁸ See also O'Mahony, *Pauline Persuasion*, 97.

⁹ Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 56.

¹⁰ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 574.

“not an adversative particle here, but functions to strengthen the command.”¹¹ Winer sees it marking a contrast between the Corinthians and Titus,¹² while Plummer sees a contrast between two incentives (i.e. the Macedonian example and what God has done for the Corinthians).¹³ Thrall attempts to take all of these together, arguing that it marks a point of transition, strengthens the “virtual” command which follows, and may yet retain some weak adversative force.¹⁴ Here, however, I wish to suggest that Paul and Timothy have in view the supposition that *mere completion alone* would be an acceptable action on the part of the Corinthians. They have just indicated in 8:6 that Titus is coming to ensure the completion (ἐπιτελέσῃ) of the collection; now they are going to raise the bar by calling for a very *generous* completion (see below). And so the ἀλλά in 8:7 does co-occur with a heightening of sorts, but its contribution is actually the marking of a contrast between mere completion (8:6) and generous completion (8:7–15).

As regards 8:7, BDF suggests that a present imperative form might have been incorrectly interpreted as an indicative, so that Paul and Timothy’s use of the ἵνα + subjunctive should be regarded as the result of a desire for clarity.¹⁵ I suggest, however, that this is not Paul and Timothy’s reason for using the ἵνα + subjunctive construction here. Rather, the Greek imperative form is the most direct way of realizing a command, with the other possible realizations giving the language user somewhat more nuanced

¹¹ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 403.

¹² Winer, *Grammar*, 451.

¹³ Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 237–38.

¹⁴ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:529.

¹⁵ BDF §387.

options. Paul and Timothy are using the ἵνα + subjunctive construction because it enables them to demand goods-and-services in a less direct manner than would be the case with an imperative clause.¹⁶ They want to obtain something from their readers, but they do not want to obtain it by force, as the immediately ensuing meta-commentary underscores (see below). And so they project a scenario in which the Corinthians act generously (ἵνα καὶ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ χάριτι περισσεύητε), leaving their readers to infer from various contextual cues that they are indirectly instructing the church to be generous.

In 8:8–10 Paul engages in a little bit of meta-commentary, switching into the first person singular in order to clarify what he is and is not doing in 8:7–15. He is not *commanding* generosity (οὐ κατ' ἐπιταγὴν λέγω), he insists, but merely testing the genuineness of the Corinthians' love (8:8). For if they are truly followers of Jesus, then they will imitate the generosity of Jesus—who did, after all, give away even his own life so that others might become rich (8:9). Indeed (καὶ), Paul is giving only an opinion (γνώμην) in this matter, and the only reason he is saying anything at all about the relative *size* of the Corinthians' gift is because his comments in this respect might be of benefit to the Corinthians (τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν συμφέρει). After all, it was last year when they expressed a desire to contribute to the Jerusalem collection and began acting towards this end. Would it not prove somewhat embarrassing if they were seen to have prepared only a small gift in such a long time (8:10)? At the heart of 8:8–10, therefore, is a contrast between ἐπιταγὴν and γνώμην (cf. 1 Cor 7:25). But what is at issue in this distinction not so much the completion of the Corinthians' gift (which is expected on the basis of the fact

¹⁶ Many of the traditional grammarians are cited by Barrett in this regard (*Second Epistle*, 222).

that the Corinthians have made a pledge), but its relative size (which is the real issue at which Paul is getting).

Confirming this interpretation of 8:7–10 is the fact that when Paul and Timothy command the completion of the Corinthians' gift by means of the imperative in 8:11, they point out in a not-so-subtle way that the manner of its completion is a matter of no small concern. Employing a dependent ὅπως-clause, they indicate that just as the Corinthians' participation in the collection is voluntary (τοῦ θέλειν), so also the completion of their gift is to be carried out in a manner proportionate to their wealth (ἐκ τοῦ ἔχειν), with the overarching idea being that the size of their gift should convey the same generosity as was conveyed by their early enthusiasm.

The next moves in 8:12–13 serve to elaborate on 8:11, with the contents of each verse being introduced using γάρ. First, 8:12 points out that the degree of favour that can be obtained by means of a willingness to give depends entirely on whether the resulting gift is generous or not, which is merely an elaboration of what has already been implied in 8:11: a truly acceptable gift is a generous gift, but generosity is inherently proportional to capacity.¹⁷ Next, 8:13 points out that Paul and Timothy want only to achieve equality between believers, a clarification that picks up on the idea of relative capacity in both 8:11 and 8:12. Here Paul and Timothy employ three verbless clauses (ἄλλοις ἀνεσις; ὑμῶν θλίψις; ἐξ ἰσότητος), introducing them by means of the particle ἵνα.¹⁸ This time, however,

¹⁷ It is difficult not to see a parallel with Mark 12:41–44, whose contents may in fact have been known to Paul.

¹⁸ Some supply a copula such as ἦ (e.g. BDAG, 77–78). I would argue, however, that these are simply verbless clauses.

the independent ἵνα construction is not being used to make an indirect command (cf. 8:7); rather, Paul and Timothy are clarifying their intentions: “We don’t expect you to help others become relaxed at the cost of becoming stressed yourselves; rather, we are motivated by a desire for equality.”¹⁹

Yet another verbless clause appears in 8:14–15: τὸ ὑμῶν περισσευμα εἰς τὸ ἐκείνων ὑστέρημα. This clause might be a mere observation in some other context. Given the co-text that surrounds 8:14–15, however—and given the nature of the relationship that exists between Paul and Timothy and the church in Corinth—there is an implicit expectation being conveyed by means of these words (i.e. your over-abundance must be used to assist those who lack).²⁰ So even though Paul is not explicitly commanding generosity (as he says), he and Timothy are communicating a principle that they expect the Corinthians to embrace and act upon.

c. Information and Instruction Regarding Titus and His Companions (8:16–24)

In 8:16–23, Paul and Timothy once again give information that is pertinent to their instructions. Employing the familiar preface χάρις τῷ θεῷ, they report with thankfulness

¹⁹ Barrett’s alternative punctuation of this verse is unpersuasive because of the repetition of ἰσότης in 8:14, as Harris has correctly noted (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 589). Although Sim argues that Paul may be projecting an objection that has been voiced in Corinth (Sim, *Marking Thought and Talk*, 70), this is not a necessary conjecture. Rather, the projected content ἄλλοις ἄνεσις, ὑμῖν θλίψις may be nothing more than a possible intention from which Paul wishes to distance himself (see Sim, *Marking Thought and Talk*, 54–63).

²⁰ Some commentators treat the ἵνα-clause in 8:14 as a reference to the “spiritual” wealth of the Judean believers, but this is unlikely. It is more likely that Paul is envisioning a possible change of material circumstances at some point in the future: “he appears to mean only that if in the future there is need in Corinth the Jerusalem Christians, if they are better off, will share with their Gentile brothers” (Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 226).

that Titus has accepted their request and agreed to go on ahead (8:16–17; cf. 8:6). They also report that two additional brothers have been sent as representatives of the churches. The first has been commissioned by the churches as an official travelling companion, his purpose being to monitor the completion of the collection (8:18–19).²¹ (As the next verses quickly clarify, this plan has been devised in consultation with Paul and Timothy, with the goal being to avoid any allegations of impropriety.) The second brother is not explicitly assigned a role of any kind (8:22), but a summary statement confirms that he too is a representative of the churches (8:23). And then, having reported the sending of these representatives ahead of themselves (8:16–23), Paul and Timothy issue the final instruction of the present segment. Employing yet another indirect command—in this case an independent participle with no finite verb—they state that the Corinthians should show the brothers who are coming the proof of their love and of Paul and Timothy’s boasting (τὴν ἔνδειξιν...ἐνδεικνύμενοι [8:24]).²²

d. Meta-Commentary: Clarification of Paul’s Motives (9:1–5)

Throughout 8:1–14, the first person plural occurs eighteen times, which substantiates the idea that Paul is continuing to presume Timothy as his co-author. Moreover, as regards the four first person singular items in this section, three are easily explainable as meta-

²¹ Because this brother alone is said to have been commissioned as Paul’s travelling companion, it is possible that the second brother plans to return home from Corinth instead of travelling on to Judea. If this is so, then both brothers are representatives (8:23), but only the first brother is going on to Judea in order to deliver the collection (8:19).

²² For a breakdown of the various interpretations proposed for 8:24, each of which takes the addressees of this fragment to be the implied subject of ἐνδεικνύμενοι, see Harris, *Second Epistle*, 613.

comments (8:3 [μαρτυρῶ]; 8:8 [οὐ κατ' ἐπιταγὴν λέγω]; 8:10 [γνώμην ἐν τούτῳ δίδωμι]), and the remaining instance is explicable with reference to the fact that Timothy and Titus held equivalent status within the Pauline mission. Each of the two men was a partner of Paul (κοινωνὸς ἐμός), a detail that would have been obscured by a first person plural in 8:23. Like all of the preceding text in 2 Corinthians, therefore—with the exception of 1:13b–2:13—the whole of 8:1–24 is construed as something being enacted by Paul and Timothy together.

Why, then, does the first person singular predominate in 9:1–5? The reason is that 9:1–5 functions as a clarification of 8:1–9:15 (i.e. it is a meta-commentary). Beginning with the meta-discursive words in 9:1 (περισσὸν μοί ἐστιν τὸ γράφειν ὑμῖν), Paul is pausing to provide some explicit comments about the context of situation that underlies 8:1–9:15, using the first person singular as is his tendency in such comments. Yet even here, as elsewhere in his meta-commentaries, Paul sporadically presumes Timothy's presence when speaking about details external to the text he is composing (cf. 7:3). Thus amidst all of the first person singular items in 9:1–5, the boasting and embarrassment that are at issue are framed as processes involving Timothy (τὸ καύχημα ἡμῶν [9:3]; καταισχυρθῶμεν ἡμεῖς [9:4]).

The presence of γάρ in 9:1 suggests that Paul is conveying information that is pertinent to what he and Timothy have just said in 8:24, although this is disputed by Betz in his treatment of ch. 9 as an independent administrative letter. Betz asserts that “the presence of the particle μέν means that γάρ (‘for’) need not refer to anything preceding.

Rather, it refers to that which follows without connection to what has gone before.”²³ In an early review of Betz’s commentary, Stowers observes that “Betz’s argument cannot be correct.”²⁴ And in a subsequent article detailing the weakness of Betz’s argument, Stowers concludes that “The oft repeated argument that the presence of μὲν...δέ means that γάρ does not or need not connect with what precedes, has no basis whatsoever in the actual usage of the expression.”²⁵ Until new evidence is found that supports Betz’s argument, therefore, the clarifications in 9:1–5 should be regarded as relating back to 8:24.²⁶

Assuming that 9:1–5 does relate back to 8:24, the next thing to note is that these verses contain a μὲν...δέ construction with two complementary parts, followed by a concluding remark introduced with οὖν. In the first part of the μὲν...δέ construction, Paul points out that it is superfluous for him to mention the collection to the Corinthians. Then in the second part, he explains that he has sent representatives on ahead in order to ensure that he and Timothy will not have any reason to be embarrassed of the pride they have been expressing in the Corinthians. And finally, using the conjunction οὖν in order to draw these details together, Paul insists that he has felt it necessary to send the brothers *in advance* of his own coming so they might make *advance* preparations for the money that

²³ Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 90.

²⁴ Stowers, “Review,” 728.

²⁵ Stowers, “περὶ μὲν γάρ,” 343.

²⁶ Unless, that is, it is for some reason intolerable to understand the text in this way, in which case it may be necessary to consider that the text we possess has been redacted or corrupted somehow. This is the cautious conclusion of Thrall, who accepts that 9:1 is the beginning of a distinct letter fragment and suggests that the γάρ may be redactional (*Second Epistle*, 42).

was pledged so much *in advance*. Assuming that these observations relate back to 8:24 somehow, the most pressing interpretive question is *why* Paul includes 9:1–5.

The answer given or implied by many commentators is that the collection process in Corinth has for some reason been delayed or perhaps even halted altogether, with “the offender” being the most frequently cited culprit. In other words, the goal of 9:1–5 is to overcome resistance in a diplomatic manner by drawing attention to the Corinthians’ earlier enthusiasm and by pointing out that embarrassment will result if they do not follow through on their earlier commitment.²⁷ This does not, however, represent the most plausible explanation of what is happening in 8:24–9:5. Rather, Paul provides the clarification in 9:1–5 for a completely different reason altogether: he wants to emphasize that he has no reason to doubt that the Corinthians are still eager and willing to make a contribution to the collection.

In the first place, Paul nowhere indicates that he is sending representatives because of anything the Corinthians have or have not done. To the contrary, the wording of 9:1–5 explains Paul’s decision to send the brothers on ahead with reference to Paul and Timothy’s actions and with reference to an unexpected response on the part of the Macedonians. It is immediately suspect, therefore, when interpreters explain this sending of representatives with reference to something that has taken place in Corinth. For such an explanation to be compelling, we would need to have good grounds for rejecting the explanation that Paul himself offers in 9:1–5.

²⁷ See, e.g., Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 414–15; Belleville, *Reflections*, 208–209; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:67–69; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 556.

Second, we have no independent knowledge about the state of the Corinthian contribution at the time Paul and Timothy wrote 2 Corinthians. In fact, it is hazardous to assume that Paul himself knew very much about the precise state of the Corinthian contribution. He reports that the Corinthians got an early start as regards both their giving and their desire to give (οὐ μόνον τὸ ποιῆσαι ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ θέλειν προενήρξασθε ἀπὸ πέρυσι [8:10]), and that Titus helped them to accomplish this early start (προενήρξατο...εἰς ὑμᾶς καὶ τὴν χάριν ταύτην [8:6]). This is all he says, however, and it is inappropriate to introduce unfounded assumptions concerning subsequent developments in Corinth in the absence of any corroborating evidence. Caution demands that the interpreter work with the assumption that Paul knows nothing about the Corinthian collection except that Titus helped to get it started ἀπὸ πέρυσι.

A third thing to observe is that the whole of 9:1–5 can be regarded as an elaboration prompted by the phrase ἡμῶν καυχήσεως ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν εἰς αὐτούς in 8:24. This is why the first part of Paul's μὲν...δέ construction employs the verb καυχάομαι, why the second part employs the noun καύχημα, and why the clause introduced by οὖν contains the verb καταισχύνω. It is also why Paul returns to the first person plural in the phrase τὸ καύχημα ἡμῶν τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (9:3) and the clause καταισχυνοῦμεν ἡμεῖς (9:4) amidst a passage that is dominated by the first person singular.²⁸ Paul and Timothy have been bragging about their Corinthian converts to the Macedonians (8:24), and Paul wants to make sure that the Corinthians take note of this (9:1–5). He wants to ensure that they

²⁸ Conversely, there is a switch from plural (8:18, 22) to singular (9:3) in the case of the verb πέμπω. Probably, this derives from the nature of 9:1–5 as a meta-commentary. It takes greater effort to maintain the inclusive plural when writing about one's own reasons for writing than it does when writing about other things.

know how proud the Pauline mission is of its partners in Corinth, because he does not want them to *misinterpret* the sending of the brothers as an indication that he and Timothy have developed a negative opinion of the Corinthian community (cf. 3:2–3; 7:3–16).²⁹

Along similar lines, it is possible to explain why Paul and Timothy mention the Corinthians' enthusiastic initiation with an almost irritating regularity throughout 8:1–9:15, and why Paul characterizes their contribution in 9:5 as a gift (ὡς εὐλογίαν) rather than as something extorted (ὡς πλεονεξίαν). The point is not to soften the blow of a demand for renewed action in the aftermath of conflict and the consequent cessation of the Corinthian collection efforts. Rather, the point is to ensure that nobody mistakenly infers that Paul and Timothy are questioning the extent to which the Corinthians remain committed to their earlier pledge (τὴν προεπηγγελμένην εὐλογίαν ὑμῶν). As Paul points out, he does not need to prompt the Corinthians with regard to the collection (9:1) because the enthusiasm of the Corinthians (τὴν προθυμίαν ὑμῶν; τὸ ὑμῶν ζῆλος) is an example to other churches (9:2).³⁰

What Paul clarifies in 9:1–5 is that he is only sending the brothers in order to make sure that the Corinthians are ready *prior to his arrival*, as is indicated by the

²⁹ This demonstrates once again the importance of paying attention to Paul's meta-commentaries. Just as 3:1–3 and 5:11b–15 shed important light on 2:14–5:21, and just as 7:3–16 sheds important light on 6:1–7:2, so also 9:1–5 sheds important light on 8:1–9:15. In all three cases, the language used in the surrounding co-text is *open to misunderstanding*, which is precisely why the meta-commentaries are present in the first place.

³⁰ Here again it must be recalled that the context of situation construed by Paul and Timothy's words is a semiotic construct. Thus the historian is free to suggest that Paul did in fact worry about commitment of the Corinthians to his collection effort but nevertheless chose to insist upon his confidence—provided there is a good reason not to take the text at face value. In this case, however, the simpler approach adequately accounts for all the available evidence.

domain TO BE READY OR PREPARED (παρασκευάζω [2x], ἀπαρασκευάστος, ἔτοιμος) in general and by the term προκαταρτίσωσιν in particular. In fact, it is *because* he has been so confident in his readers—in particular, because he has been boasting about them to the Macedonians—that he is so anxious to ensure that things have been continuing well since Titus’s departure and that everything will be ready when he arrives. Probably, what this implies is that the Corinthians can no longer expect that they will be able to make final preparations for the collection *after* Paul’s arrival, because the overwhelmingly generous Macedonians are looking forward to meeting the enthusiastic congregation about which they have been hearing so much. Because the Macedonians have been inspired by the Corinthians’ eagerness to get a head start on their collection effort (9:2; cf. 8:10), it is vital that the Corinthians be informed in advance about the possibility that Macedonians will be accompanying Paul and Timothy when the two men finally arrive in Corinth.

Overall, therefore, the function of the brief meta-commentary in 9:1–5 is to clarify the context of situation that underlies 8:24 specifically but also 8:1–9:15 in general. Paul and Timothy are not sending the brothers and writing 8:1–9:15 because they doubt their readers, but because they have been boasting about them—and because the Corinthians deserve to have advance warning about an unexpected development that has the potential to adversely affect their reputation.

e. God Blesses Those Who Are Generous (9:6–10)

From 9:6 to 9:15, there is only a single first person item used, and it is plural (i.e. ἡμῶν in 9:11). A more important indication that Paul’s meta-commentary has come to an end,

however, is the fact that 9:6 drops the matter of the brothers entirely. Whereas 9:1–5 elaborates on 8:24, 9:6–10 picks up on the idea of blessing mentioned at the tail end of 9:5 and proceeds to discuss the blessings that result from generosity. In some way or another, its main moves all communicate the fact that God will bless the Corinthians for their contribution to the Jerusalem collection:

- τοῦτο δὲ ὁ σπείρων φειδομένως φειδομένως καὶ θερίσει (9:6a)
- καὶ ὁ σπείρων ἐπ' εὐλογίαις ἐπ' εὐλογίαις καὶ θερίσει... (9:6b–7)
- δυνατεῖ δὲ ὁ θεὸς πᾶσαν χάριν περισσεῦσαι εἰς ὑμᾶς... (9:8–9)
- ὁ δὲ ἐπιχορηγῶν σπόρον τῷ σπείροντι... χορηγήσει [τὸν σπόρον ὑμῶν] (9:10a)
- καὶ πληθυνεῖ τὸν σπόρον ὑμῶν (9:10b)
- καὶ ἀξήσει τὰ γενήματα τῆς δικαιοσύνης ὑμῶν (9:10c)

The first thing that should be noted about this progression of moves is the fact that the opening words in 9:6 (τοῦτο δέ) are not an elliptical clause. Although most commentators supply either φημί or λέγω here,³¹ or perhaps something along the lines of γινώσκετε,³² Meyer argues convincingly that this would represent a highly unusual form of ellipsis. He proposes instead that τοῦτο be treated as an accusative absolute (i.e. an accusative of respect), in which case the author is “taking up again with special weight what was just said, in order to attach to it something further.”³³ The movement from 9:5 to 9:6 is thus as follows: “With respect to this (i.e. with respect to your gift being a blessing), the person who sows sparingly will reap sparingly....”

³¹ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 440; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 633; Bernard, *Second Epistle*, 92.

³² Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 235.

³³ Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 604. Cf. Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 102, who calls this a “citation formula,” and BDF §481, which notes that the ellipsis here may resemble what was common in the spoken language.

Grammatically, both of the clauses in 9:6 are future forms. As regards the meaning of the future form, however, the interpreter is confronted with a small difficulty, since one of two things may be happening here. On the one hand, Paul's point may be that *as a general rule* bountiful harvests follow from bountiful sowing, such that people who sow bountifully tend to reap bountifully.³⁴ This is the meaning presumed by commentators who call the verbs in 9:6 “gnomic”³⁵ or who refer to the clauses as proverbs or maxims.³⁶ On the other hand, it is possible that Paul is making a specific prediction about a single future event wherein all of the actual individuals instantiating these two generic categories will reap what is due them. In this case, he is not merely citing a proverb but making the eschatological claim that God will someday recompense all of humanity: everyone who “sows” bountifully during the present age will “reap” bountifully on the day of the Lord.³⁷ The scripture citation in 9:9 seems to suggest that Paul is thinking about eternal rewards. Because of 9:8 and 9:10, however, it is probably better to treat the clauses in 9:6 as communicating the general way of things, since Paul's comments in those verses indicate that a continued temporal abundance will be supplied *to the Corinthians* if they give generously, so that they will be enabled to *continue* giving generously.

As regards the overall development of 8:1–9:15, the next thing that needs to be considered with respect to 9:6 is the extent to which Paul and Timothy are abstracting

³⁴ E.g. “In itself, the point is made very generally” (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:574).

³⁵ E.g. Harris, *Second Epistle*, 633.

³⁶ Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 102–3.

³⁷ Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 603–4; Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 258.

away from the immediate issue at hand (i.e. the preparation of funds for the collection). If they are citing a proverb, then they expect their readers to step away from the immediate Corinthian situation, to grasp the very general meaning of the proverb, and then to infer how it applies to the Jerusalem collection. If they are simply exploiting a well-worn metaphor for giving and getting, however, then their Corinthian readers need only perceive the metaphor and then apply the relevant meanings *directly* to their collection efforts. This may seem like splitting hairs, but it has an important implication for our understanding of the relation that exists between 9:6 and 9:7, as can be seen when the phrase ἕκαστος is carefully considered.

Typically, the phrase ἕκαστος is understood to mean “each of you,” since it would seem that Paul and Timothy are preoccupied at this point with the gathering of funds in Corinth, and so many interpreters regard 9:7 as an elliptical command of some kind.³⁸ Yet although this seems plausible enough at first glance, it obscures the true development of 9:6–10. Specifically, the alleged command in 9:7 violently disrupts the natural progression that exists between the statements about sowing and reaping in 9:6, the statement about God’s ability to provide in 9:8–9, and the various statements about God’s provision in 9:10. According to the typical reading of 9:6–10, Paul and Timothy:

1. Explain the sending of representatives, tacking on a brief concluding contrast between εὐλογία ‘generous giving’ and πλεονεξία ‘extortion’ (vv. 1–5)
2. Interject with a clarification: “Now (δέ), what I mean is this...” (v. 6a)
3. Cite some proverbial generalizations about sowing and reaping (v. 6b)
4. Command that each individual give his or her gift freely, since God loves a cheerful giver (v. 7)
5. Observe God’s ability to supply (vv. 8–9)

³⁸ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 635 lists some of the finite verbs that have been proposed by various scholars, including δῶη, δότω, διδότη, ποιείτω.

6. Predict God's future supply (v. 10)

There is, however, an obvious connection between the tail end of 9:1–5 and 9:7a, since in both places Paul and Timothy are attempting to eliminate any sense of obligation. And similarly, there are clear connections between 9:6b and 9:8–10, since both passages deal with the prospect of future recompense. Is it really plausible to argue that Paul and Timothy would zig-zag back and forth between these two facets of their topic without giving their readers anything in the way of guidance?³⁹

A much smoother progression can be discerned, I suggest, if the alleged proverb in 9:6 is treated instead as a metaphorical comment that applies directly to the preparation of funds for the collection (i.e. “Those of you who sow a lot will reap a lot; and those of you who sow a little will reap a little”). In this case it becomes possible to relate the phrase ἕκαστος back to the two generic participants in 9:6, since the sowers in question are actually Corinthian givers. And when this is done, ἕκαστος καθὼς προήρηται τῇ καρδίᾳ μὴ ἐκ λύπης ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης can be treated as a non-finite clause elaborating on the paired statements in 9:6, so that Paul and Timothy are not *omitting* something such as δῶν, δότω, διδότη, ποιείτω, or δίδωσιν, but rather *eliding* the participle σπείρων, which is easily retrievable from the immediately preceding co-text. In other words, 9:6–7 hangs together and looks something like this:

- ὁ σπείρων φειδομένως φειδομένως καὶ θερίσει

³⁹ Thrall writes concerning 9:8 that “there is some difference of opinion as to the precise connection with what he has already said” (*Second Epistle*, 577). Scholars typically ignore the δέ in 9:8 completely, although Harris attempts to explain it by saying that δέ is “emphatic...rather than merely continuative” (*Second Epistle*, 637).

- καὶ ὁ σπεύρων ἐπ' εὐλογίαις ἐπ' εὐλογίαις καὶ θερίσει
- ἕκαστος [σπεύρων] καθὼς προήρηται τῇ καρδίᾳ, μὴ ἐκ λύπης ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης
- ἰλαρὸν γὰρ δότην ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεός

So just as the infinitive clause ταύτην ἐτοιμὴν εἶναι οὕτως ὡς εὐλογίαν καὶ μὴ ὡς πλεονεξίαν hangs rather loosely onto the object τὴν προεπηγγελμένην εὐλογίαν ὑμῶν in 9:5, so also here there is a construction hanging rather loosely from the tail end of 9:6. And in both cases these “afterthoughts” are clarifications designed to underscore that Paul and Timothy are not extorting their churches.

Drawing together all of these ideas, it is possible to treat 9:6–10 as a series of statements communicating the fact that God will richly reward the Corinthians if they give generously to the Jerusalem collection. All of the primary statements in 9:6–10 now involve giving and getting, and they are all oriented in one way or another towards the establishment of proper expectations. Basically, Paul and Timothy:

1. Explain why it has proven necessary to send the aforementioned representatives, tacking on a brief concluding contrast between εὐλογία ‘generous giving’ and πλεονεξία ‘extortion’ (vv. 1–5)
2. Predict that Corinthian givers will be recompensed in accordance with the size of their gift, tacking on a brief mention of the fact that God desires all gifts—both big and small—to be given freely and cheerfully (vv. 6–7)
3. Observe God’s ability to supply (vv. 8–9)
4. Predict God’s future supply (v. 10)

As opposed to the zig-zagging involved in the traditional reading, this interpretation sees a steady progression from an offhand mention of blessing (9:5) to a series of statements concerning God’s provision (9:6–10). My reading also has the added benefit of situating both of the extortion-related comments in clause-final elaborations, with the result that these comments become clarificatory asides that do not disrupt the main flow of the text.

The point of 9:6–10, therefore, is that a divine provision will enable Corinthian givers to sustain their generous giving and that a divine reward will ensure that their righteousness endures forever. Specifically, Paul and Timothy anticipate that God will pour out every possible gift on their readers should they prove generous (9:8a), so that they will have enough of everything they need and will be able to at every point and in every possible way pour themselves into every possible kind of charitable work (9:8b). Indeed, if the Corinthians will consent to continued giving, Paul and Timothy anticipate that their readers' righteousness will endure forever (9:9). They expect that God will increase the Corinthians' "seed" and the "yield" of their righteousness (9:10). Apparently, the two men are not-so-secretly hoping that the present collection will *not* be the last word as far as Achaian generosity is concerned. They are sincere, however, in denying that they are trying to gain personally from the Corinthians' generosity.⁴⁰

f. The Anticipated Result of the Collection (9:11–15)

In 9:11–15 two observations are made along with a concluding exclamation. The observations, however, employ no finite verbs, so that the interpreter of 9:11–14 must confront a number of difficult decisions. Here I take the position that the implied subject of *πλουτιζόμενοι* is the Corinthians, because this permits the text to display the following logical progression: (1) Achaian wealth; (2) permits generosity; (3) which when mediated

⁴⁰ Note the subtle inclusion of *καὶ εἰς πάντας* in 9:13. Bernard (*Second Epistle*, 94) observes that "This would suggest that the rich Corinthian Church had been liberal to other Churches besides that of Jerusalem, but we have no knowledge of anything of the sort." It is more likely that Paul and Timothy are dropping a hint here in anticipation of the still future gifts envisioned in 9:6–10, which would be similar to the Jerusalem collection in that they would provide for the needs of other communities.

by Paul; (4) produces thanksgiving to God.⁴¹ Paul and Timothy have already addressed the Corinthians' relative wealth and the importance of their giving generously to the Jerusalem collection. Now, in the final verses of 8:1–9:15, they point out what will result from that collection.

The interpersonal function of 9:11 is disputed by commentators. By some the verse is treated as parallel with *πᾶσαν ἀντάρκειαν ἔχοντες* in 9:8,⁴² or perhaps anacolouthic with respect to *ὕμῶν* in 9:10.⁴³ By others it is regarded as the near equivalent of an imperative, an optative, a future indicative, or a present indicative.⁴⁴ Harris argues that the preceding three futures favour a future reading here as well,⁴⁵ but the subsequent present tense verbs—both in v. 11 and in the dependent clauses of v. 12 as well—have been cited as favouring a present reading instead.⁴⁶ How is the interpreter to choose from among these options? I suggest that the whole debate is something of a non-starter, since it is somewhat misleading to speak about one grammatical form serving the function of another. Instead, we ought to observe that Paul and Timothy are laying down an experiential framework wherein (1) Achaian wealth (*πλουτιζόμενοι*); (2) permits

⁴¹ But see Betz, who argues that humankind in general is in view: “In fact, it is an anthropological statement which declares that humankind is poor (v 9a) in its absolute dependence on God’s beneficence, but rich in God’s abundant care” (*2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 115).

⁴² Bernard, *Second Epistle*, 93.

⁴³ Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 608; Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 264; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 239. See also BDF §468.

⁴⁴ See the various citations in Harris, *Second Epistle*, 645.

⁴⁵ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 645.

⁴⁶ So Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 443, 451: “Although the context would lead one to expect the future tense here (see 9:10), Paul lapses into the present tense and continues with that through the remainder of the paragraph.”

generosity (εἰς πᾶσαν ἀπλότητα); (3) which when mediated by Paul and Timothy (δι' ἡμῶν); (4) produces thanksgiving to God (κατεργάζεται... εὐχαριστίαν τῷ θεῷ). We can then ask whether this framework is intended to give information to the Corinthians about the results of their behaviour, or whether it is intended to direct their behaviour. Given the contents of 9:6–10 and the fact that Paul and Timothy have already instructed the Corinthians with regard to generosity in 8:7–15, the former is more likely.

Are Paul and Timothy expecting their readers to infer a specific temporal orientation in 9:11–12? Commentators routinely remark on the present tense indicatives in 9:11 and 9:12, suggesting that there is a somewhat unusual construal of time involved in them. They point out, for example, that “Although the Corinthians have yet to make any substantial contribution to the collection, Paul’s confidence in God’s power to supply everything needful for that (cf. 9:8) is so strong that he can write as if this is already being accomplished,”⁴⁷ or that “Paul is so certain of a successful outcome that he can speak of the results of his project as though they are coming about already.”⁴⁸ But it must be carefully remembered that the present indicative is not invariably tied to the construal of non-past time, and that non-past time cannot in any case be equated with “the present moment.” I suggest instead, therefore, that the question should be framed as follows. Why have Paul and Timothy *not* chosen to employ a future form, if it is so clear from the co-text that the processes they are construing have not yet taken place?⁴⁹ Quite apart from

⁴⁷ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 450.

⁴⁸ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:585.

⁴⁹ See Furnish’s comment above.

Paul and Timothy's confidence, a possible explanation can be found in the temporal contrast that exists between 9:6–10 and 9:11–15. Whereas the former verses use a series of future forms to speak about the replenishment of Achaian resources that Paul and Timothy expect will occur at some unspecified point in time *after* the current collection has become a thing of the past, the latter verses are dealing with the collection itself and with its *immediate* results. In both cases “future” events are in view, but there is a difference in temporal depth between the two, with the collection and its immediate results (9:11–15) being more proximate than the eventual replenishment of the Achaians' financial resources (9:6–10). Perhaps, then, Paul and Timothy have avoided using future forms in 9:11–12 because they want to present the imminent generosity and thanksgiving about which they are speaking as more immediate than the additional and subsequent blessings expected in 9:6–10.

Similar interpretive problems surround 9:13. Are Paul and Timothy speaking about the Corinthians glorifying God by their giving?⁵⁰ Or are they speaking about the fact that the eventual recipients of the collection will glorify God by their thanksgiving?⁵¹ Today, most English translations and most commentators defend the second of these two interpretations, which is the interpretation I myself find persuasive. Common arguments in support of this position are as follows: (1) the intervening content of 9:12 makes it

⁵⁰ E.g. NRSV (cf. the clarification in Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 228).

⁵¹ Martin (*2 Corinthians*, 294) proposes a third possibility, namely, those Corinthians who have remained loyal to Paul and who are thus supporting his collection. He finds a reference to this group hidden in the phrase *διὰ πολλῶν* in 9:12.

implausible that 9:13 is coordinate with 9:11;⁵² (2) the phrase εὐχαριστίαν τῷ θεῷ at the conclusion of 9:11 brings about a marked change of focus, moving the centre of attention away from the generosity of the Achaians and of God (9:6–11a) and onto the thanksgiving of those who will receive the collection (9:11b–14);⁵³ and (3) one cannot arbitrarily assert that those giving glory are not the same people as those giving thanks, since the thanksgiving is part of the glorifying.⁵⁴ At each point, however, these arguments can be refuted: (1) the content of 9:12 clearly expands on 9:11 (note the ὅτι), making it quite plausible that 9:11 and 9:13 are parallel statements; (2) if the two participial clauses in 9:11 and 9:13 are parallel, with 9:12 being only a brief expansion of the thanksgiving mentioned at the end of 9:11, then the second objection above amounts to question-begging and the Corinthians are still the focus of 9:13; and (3) there seems to be no good reason why two different groups of people cannot be described as doing closely related things.

Even setting aside these weak arguments, however, there remains a good reason for regarding the recipients of the Jerusalem collection as the implied subject of δοξάζοντες: namely, the prepositional phrase with ἐπί that follows the participle. As Meyer points out, the construction here is a very common one that is used to supply the ground of an act of glorification.⁵⁵ Since it would be somewhat odd for the Corinthians to

⁵² Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 610; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:588.

⁵³ Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 610; Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 266; Lietzmann, *An die Korinther*, 139; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 240; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 440; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:588; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 652.

⁵⁴ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 652–53.

⁵⁵ Meyer, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 611.

glorify God on account of their own generosity, the balance of probability tips here in favour of those who are the intended beneficiaries of their generosity. And so Paul and Timothy's focus has in fact shifted away from the contribution of the Corinthians and onto its anticipated results. The two men are *hoping* that the saints in Jerusalem will praise God for the Corinthians' obedient confession of the gospel and for their generous sharing of their wealth (9:13), and that they will even pray for and long for the Corinthians (9:14).⁵⁶ This thought evidently gives them great joy and relief, because with the next and final move in this section they exclaim how grateful they are to God (9:15). It is abundantly clear that Paul and Timothy have high expectations for the gift that the Corinthians have pledged.

3. Summary

Despite various complicating factors, a fairly clear profile of 8:1–9:15 has emerged from my analysis of its progressive moves, conjunctive relations, meta-commentaries, semantic domains, identity chains, and cohesive harmony. The opening statements in 8:1–6 report that the Macedonians have unexpectedly decided to participate in Paul's Jerusalem collection, with the result that Paul and Timothy have asked Titus to ensure that the Corinthians are ready with their own contribution. In 8:7–15, Paul and Timothy proceed to very delicately instruct the Corinthians to be generous with their gift, pointing out that the acceptability of their contribution will be reckoned in accordance with their

⁵⁶ For a recent discussion of the ideals motivating Paul's collection, see Ogereau, "Jerusalem Collection."

relative wealth. Next, coming back to Titus's mission in 8:16–23, Paul and Timothy clarify that Titus will not be coming alone, and they then instruct the Corinthians to show the proof of Paul and Timothy's boasting about Achaian wealth and generosity. For the sake of clarity, a meta-commentary in 9:1–5 underscores the fact that it is Paul's bragging about Corinth that has in fact prompted the need for an advance delegation, so that Paul is not doubting the Corinthians but only ensuring that they have advance notice about the Macedonians and are not caught unawares. And then finally, Paul and Timothy draw attention to some uplifting prospects. In 9:6–10, they predict that God will restore the Corinthians' finances in the aftermath of the Jerusalem collection, so that they will once again be in a position of relative wealth and once again able to give generously. And in 9:11–15, they draw attention to the positive effects a generous gift will have on the Corinthians' reputation and on the Christian community broadly speaking.

According to Betz, it is 9:6–15 which bears the brunt of the work in 2 Cor 9, since these verses are said to contain the *Probatio* that is crucial to the deliberative rhetoric that Betz perceives in the chapter.⁵⁷ Drawing upon my analysis of progressive moves, however, I would argue to the contrary that the brunt of the work being done in 8:1–9:15 is performed by the instructions in 8:7–15 and 8:24. The main concern of 8:1–9:15 is to request that the brothers are well-received (8:24) and that a generous donation in keeping with the Achaians' relative wealth is ready and waiting when Paul and Timothy arrive from Macedonia (8:7–15), and all of the surrounding information (including all of ch. 9) serves to clarify or support those instructions.

⁵⁷ Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 88–89, 139.

An analysis of semantic domains, identity chains, and cohesive harmony reveals some interesting patterns in 8:1–9:15, as well as some interesting similarities with earlier segments in 2 Corinthians. One of the more noteworthy patterns within 8:1–9:15 involves the identity chains formed using first person references, since this pattern mirrors what has been observed earlier in 2 Corinthians. On the one hand, Paul uses the first person plural in places where it is not obvious from the surrounding text who else might be in view, but where it is plausible to regard Timothy as the additional referent. On the other hand, Paul routinely employs the first person singular when speaking about 2 Corinthians itself or about the situation activating it.

As regards the semantic similarities between 8:1–9:15 and earlier segments in 2 Corinthians, it is notable how the root *καυχ-* is used in order to speak about the pride Paul and Timothy feel towards their Corinthian converts, as well as about public displays of that pride. In 1:14, Paul speaks about the Corinthians being a great source of pride to both himself and Timothy on the day of the Lord. And then Paul and Timothy repeatedly state that they are proud of the Corinthians and also expressing that pride to others (7:4, 14; 8:24; 9:2 [2x]). What is more, this basic idea is present sometimes even when the root *καυχ-* is not used, as when 3:2–3 explains that Paul and Timothy are so transparent about the great things God has been doing in Corinth that they have no need of letters of recommendation from the Corinthians. Looking at these passages, what stands out is the fact that most of them occur in meta-commentaries, which suggests that it is important for Paul and Timothy to explicitly clarify that the Pauline mission is proud of its congregation in Corinth and willing to express their mutual pride before others.

Conversely, 5:12 states that Paul and Timothy want the Corinthians to express their pride in the Pauline mission, which implies either that they are not already doing this or that they are not doing it adequately.

As regards the literary integrity question, these observations support the idea that 8:1–9:15 construes a situation consistent with the earlier segments in 2 Corinthians. The instructions concerning advance collection preparations are consonant with 1:3–7:16, which construes Paul and Timothy as planning to visit Corinth and as having a strong expectation of support from their addressees. And the pre-emptive dismissal of any suggestion that Paul and Timothy are doubting their readers is also consonant with 1:3–7:16, wherein we find similar expressions of pride, hope, and confidence towards the Corinthians. What is more, in both 1:3–7:16 and 8:1–9:15, these expressions of pride and confidence are found mostly within meta-commentaries, which suggests that the relational dynamics presumed by Paul and Timothy’s language are in both cases open to misunderstanding or dispute.

As regards the exegetical implications of my analysis, I have underscored the fact that the caution evident in 8:1–9:15 need not be explained with reference to recent developments in Corinth. Indeed, although many commentators conclude that something has adversely affected the Corinthians’ collection efforts, there are no clear indications of this anywhere in 8:1–9:15. Rather, what the text actually indicates is that the Corinthians were eager already last year (ἀπὸ πέρυσι) to get a head start on their contribution, and that Titus, who helped the Corinthians to begin their preparations, is now being sent back to Corinth because of an unexpected turn of events that has taken place *in Macedonia*.

Moreover, nothing explicitly indicates that Paul and Timothy are trying to overcome resistance on the part of their readers. Rather, it would seem that they are eager to avoid giving the false impression that they have doubts about the Corinthians' eagerness to contribute.

Instead of trying to fill in Paul and Timothy's silence with respect to developments in Corinth, therefore, it is simpler to assume that Paul and Timothy know nothing about what has taken place since Titus first initiated the collection preparations. This hypothesis provides an explanation of the return visit of Titus, inasmuch as total ignorance can explain Paul's anxiety about possible embarrassment just as adequately as the hypothesis of an interruption of the Corinthians' collection efforts.⁵⁸ As regards the caution evident throughout 8:1–9:15, it can be explained with reference to the misunderstandings surrounding Titus's previous visit that have prompted Paul to write 1:13b–2:13 and 7:5–16. Knowing that he has both wounded and provoked the Corinthians with his previous letter, Paul is careful to inform them about unexpected changes surrounding the collection in a manner that will forestall a similar reaction.

⁵⁸ Another exegetical detail of no small importance with regard to the literary integrity of 2 Corinthians is the information given in 8:1–9:15 concerning Titus's visits to Corinth. Because this sort of historical information is best dealt with all at once, however, I will once again postpone my discussion of Paul, Timothy, and Titus's travels until Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 7: 10:1–13:10

In reaching 10:1, this study has arrived at a critical point, since this verse represents the most widely accepted point of discontinuity in 2 Corinthians. Because my method refrains from presupposing discontinuity, however, this chapter will once again begin with a discussion of the continuity and discontinuity exposed by my analysis of progressive moves, conjunctive relations, meta-commentaries, semantic domains, identity chains, and cohesive harmony. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I have determined that there is semantic and contextual shift at 10:1. What may be surprising is the fact that 8:1–9:15 and 10:1–13:10 are linguistically similar to one another in some important ways (see below).

As regards 10:1–13:10 as a whole, I am once again concerned to establish a general description of *what is being done*, *who is/are taking part*, and *what is being talked about*, but I am mostly concerned to determine whether it is possible to situate these parameters of 10:1–13:10 within the overarching context of situation construed by 1:3–9:15. Thus even though there is semantic and contextual variation at 10:1—since otherwise there would be no need to segment the text at this point—this must not be prematurely interpreted as evidence of textual discontinuity. Rather, the nature of the

discontinuity must be carefully probed in order to ascertain whether or not 10:1–13:10 can be integrated with 1:3–9:15 and treated as the final stage of a single context of situation and thus the final segment of a single, overarching text.

Specifically, it must be asked whether or not the situation construed by 10:1–13:10 coheres with the situation construed by 1:3–9:15, wherein Paul and Timothy are writing as church leaders, to a congregation they have founded, in the aftermath of a controversy surrounding their handling of immoral church members, and in advance of an upcoming visit *en route* to Judea. It will also be helpful to keep in mind that the situation of 1:3–9:15 is one wherein Paul and Timothy are confident in their own leadership (which they regard as both non-negotiable and above reproach, despite the criticisms being levelled against them by other Christian leaders) as well as hopeful concerning their partnership with Corinth (although the Corinthians' recent obedience has been enacted amidst complaints and a questioning of Paul's leadership).

1. The Segmentation

It is fair to say that nothing is *less* disputed in 2 Corinthians scholarship than the presence of a significant change of some kind at 10:1—which makes it all the more important to probe the matter carefully. Do linguistic observations support the claim that 2 Corinthians undergoes an important change as the text proceeds from 9:15 to 10:1?

Beginning with interpersonal meanings, I note that Paul uses prefaces in 10:1–2 in order to characterize his semiotic behaviour as an encouragement (*παρακαλῶ*) and an appeal (*δέομαι*). Moreover, I note that the appeal in 10:2 involves specific participants

(τινας τοὺς λογιζομένους ἡμᾶς ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας) as well as a specific time (παρών).¹ Looking at the opening moves of 10:1–13:10 very generally, therefore, it would appear that Paul is continuing with the same sort of semiotic activity as is found in 8:1–9:15. He is asking the Corinthians to do something, and the thing for which he is asking is in some sense historically specific.

With regard to experiential meanings, a number of semantic domains need to be considered because they appear both in the final moves of 8:1–9:15 and in the opening moves of 10:1–13:10. Specifically, in the opening moves of 10:1–13:10 we find the following domains from ch. 9: TO BE READY OR NOT READY (ἔτοιμος), TO DO OR REFUSE TO DO (ἔργον), OBEDIENCE OR DISOBEDIENCE (ὑπακοή [2x], παρακοή), TO URGE OR APPEAL (παρακαλέω), TO GIVE OR RECEIVE (δίδωμι), HONOUR OR SHAME (αἰσχύνω, ἐξουθενέω), TO SPEAK OR TO PROCLAIM (φημί, λόγος [2x]), TO FORMULATE A CONVICTION ABOUT SOMETHING (λογίζομαι [4x]), TO BOAST (καυχάομαι), TO PLEAD (δέομαι), ABUNDANCE OR LACK (περισσότερος), ALL (πᾶς [3x]), and TO BE ABLE OR UNABLE (δυνατός, βαρύς, ἰσχυρός, ἀσθενής).

As with the transition between 2:14–5:21 and 6:1–7:16, it is necessary to evaluate each of these experiential domains carefully. Some of them are so common or so general in meaning as to be inconsequential in small concentrations (e.g. TO DO OR REFUSE TO DO, ALL, TO SPEAK OR TO PROCLAIM), and in other cases there does not seem to be any consistent pattern in how the domains interact with one another and with other meanings.

¹ It is not clear from the participle *παρών* alone that Paul has a specific occasion in view, but the wider context of 2 Cor 10–13 clarifies that the participle describes an impending visit.

For example, God gives to the poor in 9:9, but God gives Paul and Titus authority in 10:8. The Jerusalem saints appeal to God in 9:14, but Paul appeals to his readers in 10:2. A financial donor has the conviction to give in 9:7, whereas in 10:2 Paul has the conviction that he may need to be harsh, and Paul's critics have convictions about Paul and Timothy's conduct. In 9:8, 12, and 14, the financial abundance of Achaia supplies what others are lacking, but in 10:8 it is Paul's pride that is in abundance. And in 9:8 God is able to provide, but in 10:4 Paul and Timothy are empowered by God and in 10:10 Paul's letter-writing is described as forceful. In each of these cases, there is little to no cohesive harmony, making the experiential continuity less significant than might be imagined at first glance.

The four remaining domains, however, create some significant experiential continuity across the alleged break at 10:1. First, Paul mentions the *obedience* of his readers both before and after 10:1 (9:13; 10:6). In the former passage he is speaking about the praise that will result from the Jerusalem collection, whereas the obedience entailed by the latter passage is somewhat less clear. What matters, for my purposes here, is that in both segments of 2 Corinthians Paul speaks about the obedience of his readers. Second, Paul speaks both before and after 10:1 about *readiness*. He wants his readers to be ready (9:1–5), and he wants them to know that he and Timothy are ready (10:6). Moreover, in both cases it is clear that the readiness in question is centred on Paul's arrival in Corinth, since 9:2 speaks about his coming and 10:2 uses the participle *παρών* to describe his arrival. Both before and after 10:1, therefore, Paul is explicitly concerned with a future visit to Corinth and with different kinds of readiness that are relevant to that

arrival. Finally, both before and after 10:1, Paul speaks about the *pride* he feels with respect to his partnership with Corinth (9:2–3; 10:8) and inquires whether this pride is misguided (9:4; 10:8). In 8:1–9:15, Paul’s pride relates to the Corinthians’ financial generosity, and the prospect of shame is tied to the matter of Paul’s arrival in Corinth with accompanying Macedonians. In 10:1–13:10, Paul’s pride relates to his authoritative leadership over the Corinthian community, and the prospect of shame is tied to the allegation that he should be embarrassed about the manner in which he has written to the Corinthians (10:8–10).

Putting all of this together, I conclude that both before and after 10:1, a question hangs in the air: Will Paul be made to feel ashamed with regard to the confident pride he takes in his Corinthian partnership? In the case of 8:1–9:15, the question hangs in the air in such a way that its answer is going to be determined, one way or another, when Paul arrives in Corinth. The Corinthians will either have a generous donation prepared or they will not. In the case of 10:1–13:10, however, the question hangs in the air in a slightly different way. It may be that its answer will be determined when Paul and Timothy arrive in Corinth, if matters come down to a direct confrontation between the Pauline mission and its critics, but the possibility also exists that the answer to this question will be determined sooner in a different way, if the Corinthians avert that unnecessary confrontation. In any case, what matters here is that in both 8:1–9:15 and 10:1–13:10, the Corinthians are being asked to do something prior to Paul and Timothy’s arrival in order to demonstrate that the Pauline mission’s pride is justified.

Does this continuity undermine the widely accepted idea that 10:1 marks the beginning of something new in 2 Corinthians? Not really, although it does temper this claim by providing a context of continuity within which the relevant discontinuity must be understood.

Regarding the experiential discontinuity that demarcates 10:1 as a transition point in 2 Corinthians, it should be noted that a large cluster of domains used to discuss the Jerusalem collection in 8:1–9:15 disappear or become significantly less important following 10:1, while a number of other domains emerge as important. For instance, the following cluster of domains emerges in 10:1 because Paul is speaking about how different people assess both themselves and one another: TO FORMULATE A CONVICTION ABOUT SOMETHING (λογίζομαι [4x]), THOUGHT OR OPINION (λογισμός, νόημα), TO COMPARE OR CLASSIFY (έγκρίνω, συγκρίνω [2x]), TO MEASURE (μετρέω, μέτρον [2x], ἄμετρος [2x]), and TO EXTEND BEYOND (ὑπερεκτείνω, ὑπερέκεινα). Related domains also include TO SPEAK WELL OR BADLY OF SOMEONE OR SOMETHING (συνίστημι [2x]), TO PUT STOCK IN SOMEONE OR SOMETHING (πεποίθησις, πείθω, έλπίς), TO BEHAVE (περιπατέω [2x]), TO BE ABLE OR UNABLE (βαρύς, ισχυρός, άσθενής), TO BE BOLD OR FEARFUL (θαρρέω [2x], τολμάω [2x], έκφοβέω), TO BUILD UP OR TEAR DOWN (ὑψωμα, οίκοδομή, ταπεινός, έπαίρω, καθαιρέω, καθαίρεσις [2x]), and OUTER NATURE (σάρξ [3x], σαρκικός, σῶμα). Each of the latter domains has already been used somewhere in 2 Corinthians in order to characterize Paul and Timothy's ministry or to speak about alternative characterizations of their leadership. There is not, however, any obvious connection between the matter of Paul and Timothy's leadership and the instructions given in 8:1–9:15.

Alongside these experiential shifts, it can also be noted that a number of identity chains both recede and emerge at 10:1. Receding chains include those referring to the Macedonians, the saints in Jerusalem, Paul's collection, Titus, and the two brothers (although three of these chains do make very brief appearances later in 10:1–13:10). Newly emerging participants include someone who is confident and who says Paul's letters are weighty and strong (10:7, 10), other people who are like this confident critic (10:11), certain people who are recommending themselves (10:12), some people who are opportunistic (11:12), still more people who are like those opportunistic people (11:13–15), many people who are boasting according to the flesh (11:18), various people who are depicted as mistreating the Corinthians (11:20), people who make audacious claims (11:21–23), the ethnarch of King Aretas (11:32–33), a man who had a vision fourteen years ago (12:1–5), and a messenger of Satan (12:7–8).²

It is often alleged that a change from the first person plural to the first person singular occurs at 10:1.³ As I have demonstrated with respect to the earlier segments, however, Paul frequently changes between the first person singular and plural even within coherent and cohesive passages. Specifically, I have observed that Paul normally speaks in the plural because he has both himself and his co-author Timothy in view, but that he will occasionally switch into the first person singular: (1) because he is talking

² Whether any of these chains refer to identical people is a matter than must be left for the analysis section below. Linguistically speaking, they are not marked as co-referential by means of endophoric reference devices.

³ E.g. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 32: “while the first person plural predominates in chaps. 1–9, the first person singular predominates in chaps. 10–13 (emphatically introduced in 10:1). While alternation between the first person singular and plural is common in Paul's letters...the kind of shift apparent here in 2 Cor occurs in no other Pauline letter.”

about matters that do not involve Timothy; and/or (2) because he has slipped into a meta-commentary. Does 10:1–13:10 sustain the same pattern of usage, or is something entirely different happening? Careful study of the first person items in 10:1–13:10 reveals exactly the same patterns as I have identified in 1:1–9:15 (see below). Although Paul begins with first person singular references after naming himself in 10:1, he regularly switches to first person plural references whenever he is discussing both himself and Timothy, without deeming it necessary to clarify whom he has in view (e.g. 10:2, 11; 11:4, 12, 21; 12:19; 13:4, 6). Moreover, Paul seems to be ignoring Timothy throughout much of 10:1–13:10 for the same reason as in 1:13b–2:13—his main concern is to defend a leadership decision that did not involve Timothy (see below).

There are, therefore, some linguistic indications of a shift taking place at 10:1, but they should not be exaggerated. Most notably, there is a shift in the phenomena being construed, and there are a number of identity chains that either appear or disappear as the people in view change. Interpersonally speaking, however, it would appear that Paul and Timothy are moving on from the appeal in 8:1–9:15 to a second, similar appeal that involves Timothy less directly.

2. The Analysis and Its Implications

a. Opening Appeal (10:1–2)

As already mentioned, Paul does not leave the analyst to wonder what he is doing in 10:1–13:10.⁴ Instead, he reveals at the outset the particular semiotic activity in which he is engaged: he is attempting to ensure that he will not need to confront certain people upon his eventual arrival in Corinth (τὸ μὴ παρὼν θαρρῆσαι τῇ πεποιθήσει ἢ λογίζομαι τολμῆσαι ἐπὶ τινος). And he is attempting to do so in a forceful manner that will perhaps appear at odds with his physical appearance (ὄς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀπὼν δὲ θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς).⁵ The fact that he enacts this attempt by asking something of his readers (δέομαι) reveals both that 10:1–13:10 is an attempt to influence their behaviour and that they are in a position to determine whether or not Paul's arrival in Corinth will involve a confrontation.⁶ Because Paul does not explicitly construe his readers as doing

⁴ Schmeller observes that the opening of 10:1 is somewhat unclear in the canonical text and proposes that 6:14–7:1 may have originally stood between 9:15 and 10:1 (“Im überlieferten Text ist der Neueinsatz mit παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς ja etwas unklar. Folgt 10,1 dagegen auf 7,1 lässt sich παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς gut als Überleitung von der unmittelbar voranstehenden auf ein neues Thema erklären” [Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 380 n.92]). It is unclear, however, why παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς cannot transition the canonical text to a new topic even where it currently stands.

⁵ Many commentators take this to be a slanderous remark made by Paul's critics, and it has been suggested that he cites it ironically (e.g. Matera, *II Corinthians*, 222). But more likely, Paul is already shaping his own argument, which accepts the charge of physical weakness but then opposes the idea that this implies spiritual weakness or ineffective leadership. Paul, despite his physical weaknesses, is fully prepared to continue being bold at a distance, because he knows that he will have spiritual power when he finally arrives in Corinth. Thus Paul uses present tense verbs in 10:1 and 10:11 in order to depict his (and Timothy's) demeanour when writing from a distance (θαρρῶ, ἔσμεν), because the demeanour is not restricted to earlier letters (cf. the aorist verbs in 2:3, 4; 7:8, 12).

⁶ “That there is a close relation between the various persons in question is shown by Paul's request; the Corinthians can (or Paul's request is futile) act in such a way as to make it unnecessary for Paul

or not doing anything, however, the interpreter is left—for the time being, at least—without any explicit guidance concerning the specific behaviour(s) that might avert the confrontation that Paul wishes to avoid. One of the overriding questions as regards 10:1–13:10, therefore, is *what exactly Paul's readers must or must not do*, and this is a question that the Corinthians themselves presumably asked upon reading 10:1–2.

Also in 10:1–2, Paul reveals something about the people he may need to confront upon his arrival. They are people who have opinions about himself and Timothy (τινας τοὺς λογιζομένους ἡμᾶς), and whose opinions in some way relate to the manner in which Paul and Timothy conduct themselves (ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας). Scholars have long debated what exactly is entailed by the wording ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας, with Thrall listing no fewer than seven established possibilities.⁷ The major interpretations, however, all presume that the wording represents a criticism from the perspective of the people whom Paul has just introduced. And so Paul is allegedly being attacked as an unspiritual person deficient in charismatic experiences, or a fearful and feeble person, or a worldly swindler, or an unredeemed and illegitimate apostle, etc. It is not obvious, however, that ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας represents a quotation or a summary of something being voiced in Corinth. Indeed, it is not even necessary to suppose that ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας conveys a negative assessment of Paul and Timothy. Rather, when the larger context of 10:1–13:10 is taken into account, it becomes more likely that ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας explains how Paul and Timothy's critics are evaluating the

to take a firm line" (Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 249).

⁷ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:605–6.

Pauline mission's leadership. Specifically, other people are assessing *how Paul and Timothy conduct themselves κατὰ σάρκα*.

b. Clarification of Paul and Timothy's Power (10:3–6)

On this reading, Paul is not taking issue with the results of his critics' assessment *per se*. Rather, he is pointing out that certain people have formed an opinion without taking sufficient data into account, since they are only considering how he and Timothy conduct themselves κατὰ σάρκα. This coheres very well with the criticisms quoted explicitly in 10:10, since they mention Paul's weak bodily constitution (ἡ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενή). It also coheres very nicely with 10:3, where Paul introduces a distinction between ἐν σαρκί περιπατεῖν and κατὰ σάρκα στρατευθῆναι. It is frequently said that in this verse Paul concedes that he and Timothy live *in* the flesh but then rejects the more pejorative idea that they live *according to* the flesh, but Paul never actually draws this contrast.⁸ In fact, he makes no explicit contrast at all. Rather, his point is simply that even though he and Timothy do conduct themselves κατὰ σάρκα in a number of ways simply because they live ἐν σαρκί, a consideration of this fact will completely fail to discern the supernatural manner in which Paul and Timothy wage war. Paul and Timothy *do* have fleshly limitations such as are being pointed out by their critics, but the inadequacies they display as fleshly people will not prevent them from waging an aggressive campaign

⁸ E.g. "What distinguishes the two phrases is the use of different prepositions, whereby *en sarki* takes on the neutral sense of *en tō kosmō*" (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 457). As Thrall observes (*Second Epistle*, 607), Paul is known to have used both of the key phrases pejoratively (e.g. Rom 8:8).

against opinions that are contrary to the gospel, since *that* battle is by no means a fleshly one.

In 10:4–6, Paul proceeds to explain how he and Timothy wage war in a non-physical manner, drawing special attention to their divinely-enabled ability to tear down human pretensions—which ability is on display throughout 10:1–13:10. In the final verse of this elaboration, however, Paul reports that he is fully prepared to punish any and every disobedience as soon as his readers’ obedience is complete (10:6). This comment has long puzzled interpreters, with the typical question being who it is that Paul intends to punish. Does he intend to punish his addressees after they have become fully obedient? Or does he intend to punish his critics after his addressees have become fully obedient?⁹ This, however, is only one of several important matters. We must also ask: Is Paul speaking about a general state of obedience? Or does he have in view obedience to a particular instruction? Also, does Paul have in view a single historical development whereby his punishment will follow the Corinthians’ obedience? Or does he mean that he is prepared to punish disobedience as a general practice, provided that the Corinthians have in each case been obedient first.

Seemingly without fail, commentators presume that the punishment threatened in 10:6 is something that will take place (if necessary) upon Paul and Timothy’s upcoming

⁹ Thrall writes: “It is clear that there are two groups of people with whose obedience or disobedience Paul is concerned” (*Second Epistle*, 614–15). For her part, Thrall concludes that “it is...the rival missionaries... who are to be the object of punishment for disobedience” (*Second Epistle*, 615). Barrett suggests that “he must mean, When you are completely obedient, I will proceed, on that basis, to punish the disobedience of someone else” and then proceeds to argue that these disobedient people “are not Corinthians” and that they “will have come into Corinth and the Corinthian church from the outside” (Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 253–54). Similarly, Harris proposes that “in the absence of a ὑμεῖς–τινέες distinction such as is found in 10:1–2, it is better to assume that the disobedience is shown by persons other than the Corinthians, persons from outside the Corinthian congregation” (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 685).

visit, such that the obedience about which 10:6 speaks is a specific, historical development that Paul hopes will take place before his arrival in Corinth. And more often than not, commentators speak about the Corinthians' obedience in very loose terms as a general withdrawal of support for Paul and Timothy's opponents, perhaps accompanied by other improvements as well. Harris, for instance, proposes that the Corinthians' obedience "would be achieved, we may assume, when the Corinthians ceased to support the interlopers in any way...gave Paul their unqualified recognition and love...and made a decisive break with all idolatrous associations."¹⁰ Similarly, Furnish defines the obedience as complete "whenever their commitment to his gospel—and thus to his apostolate—is firm."¹¹

In view of the way I have interpreted 1:23–2:13 and 7:3–16, I find none of these ideas compelling, and so I propose an entirely different reading of 10:6 that coheres much better with the parameters of the context of situation I have sketched so far. On this new reading, the obedience with which Paul is concerned is defined by a specific instruction he gave to the Corinthians concerning the implementation of disciplinary practices designed to maintain communal purity. Such an instruction is presumed by 1:23–2:13, which describes the enactment of church discipline as proof of the Corinthians' obedience (2:9), and also by 7:3–16, which describes church discipline itself as the Corinthians' obedience (7:15).¹² Thus in all three places in 2 Corinthians where the root ὑπακο- is

¹⁰ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 686.

¹¹ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 464.

¹² This might suggest that the instruction was contained within the earlier letter mentioned in 1:13b–2:13 and 7:3–16. This is not necessarily the case, however (see Chapter 8).

found, it relates to a specific instruction concerning the discipline of sinners within the Corinthian community. And here in 10:6, the point is that Paul and Timothy are prepared to punish those who are disobedient—but only after the Corinthians have first obeyed Paul’s earlier instruction concerning the proper disciplinary procedures that need to be followed first. As discussed in Chapter 3 with reference to 2:6–10, Paul is adamant that his apostolic authority not be imposed until the local leadership of the Corinthian community has exercised its own authority first.¹³

Accepting that the obedience mentioned in 10:6 pertains specifically to procedures that Paul has implemented for the punishment of disobedient church members, it becomes perfectly obvious why Paul describes his and Timothy’s punishment of disobedience as something that must *follow* the Corinthians’ obedience.¹⁴ Should we conclude, then, that the clause ὅταν πληρωθῇ ὑμῶν ἡ ὑπακοή refers to a single, historical development? Or does the use of ὅταν suggest a somewhat larger perspective (i.e. ‘we are *always* prepared to punish, provided that you have first been obedient’)? Certainly, we cannot rule out the possibility that Paul has his and Timothy’s upcoming visit in mind, given that the two men have just written 6:1–7:2 (cf. 13:1–2) and given that 10:1–13:10 begins with a threat involving that visit (10:1–2). The immediately preceding co-text of 10:3–5, however, points in the direction of a broader perspective, wherein Paul and

¹³ Obviously, there is much that could be said here about the precise nature of Paul’s instructions and about such passages as 1 Cor 5 and Matt 18:15–17, but I will postpone these discussions until Chapter 8, at which point a broader perspective will be taken on the matters dealt with in 2 Corinthians.

¹⁴ It also becomes possible to explain why Paul uses the term ἐκδικέω, a detail that is problematic for those who attempt to explain the obedience-punishment progression by proposing that Paul has disobedient outsiders in view. As Thrall observes, “He cannot ‘excommunicate’ the intruders in any meaningful sense, since he does not have jurisdiction over the whole Christian church” (*Second Epistle*, 616).

Timothy's readiness to punish is characteristic of the manner in which they wage war. As a general rule, then, Paul and Timothy are prepared to punish disobedience, provided that the Corinthians have first obeyed the instructions given to them concerning church discipline.

On the basis of this reading of 10:6, some interesting things can be said about the people mentioned in 10:2. First, they have not correctly understood Paul and Timothy's leadership strategy, but have instead come to the conclusion that Paul and Timothy are unprepared to punish their converts. Second, as the military language of 10:3–6 reveals, they have gone further than this and reached the conclusion that Paul and Timothy are not strong enough to punish their converts. What is striking about these two points, of course, is the remarkable way in which they line up with details observed earlier in 2 Corinthians. In 1:3–2:13, for instance, there is evidence that someone is questioning Paul's masculinity, pointing to his decision to "avoid" Corinth (1:17a)—a decision that Paul made in order to give the Corinthians more time to enact appropriate disciplinary measures (1:23–2:4). And in 2:14–5:21, Paul and Timothy raise the question *Who is adequate?* (2:16b) and then proceed to uphold their enduring of physical abuses as evidence for their divine empowerment as leaders, pointing out that their critics are taking too much pride in appearances (5:12).

Evidently, the critics mentioned in 10:1–6 are the same ones who have been in view all along. And so Paul has a handful of converts who have been defiling the Corinthian church; but he also has a handful of critics who are calling his and Timothy's leadership abilities into question, partly on account of the impurity of the Corinthian

congregation and partly on account of Paul and Timothy's failure to confront certain impure converts in person. The former are the ones who have called Paul and Timothy's rules too restrictive (6:12) and who have accused the two men of causing social or economic ruin (7:2). The latter are the ones who have questioned Paul's masculinity (1:17a) and who are boasting in appearances (5:12) and evaluating Paul and Timothy according to the flesh (10:3). And caught between these groups are the remaining Corinthians, who are upset that Paul has been away from Corinth for so long (1:23–2:4; 7:7) and indignant that he has held them responsible for the impurities of their fellows (7:11).

c. Paul's Pride in His and Timothy's Leadership (10:7–10)

The grammar of 10:7–10 is debated at a couple of points. Here I treat βλέπετε as an imperative and I regard the statement as a meta-comment, so that Paul is giving his readers an instruction as regards the reading of his text (i.e. "Look at the obvious facts"). After all, if 10:7 states (or questions) that the Corinthians are looking only at external appearances—much like those who are evaluating Paul and Timothy (5:12; 10:2)—we would expect whatever follows to rectify this deficiency by presenting evidence of a "non-external" nature. In 10:7–18, however, Paul points only to the very obvious fact that he and Timothy worked very hard to found the Corinthian church, unlike the lazy critics who have since moved into their territory. If anything, this argument attempts to refute Paul and Timothy's critics *on their own terms* by contrasting Paul and Timothy's hard-earned leadership with the (implicitly) lackadaisical conduct of those who have come

behind them. It is not, therefore, appropriate to read βλέπετε in 10:7 as an indicative and then to conclude that Paul regards his readers as having embraced his critics.¹⁵ We can say only that he is giving them evidence that he hopes will help them understand why his and Timothy's critics are themselves unsuited for Christian leadership.

A second grammatical issue is the ἵνα clause in 10:9. Here I treat the clause οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσομαι as the grammatical core of 10:8–10, so that the ἐάν clause in v. 8, the ἵνα clause in v. 9, and the ὅτι clause in v. 10 are all regarded as dependent on οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσομαι. On this reading, 10:9 is not an independent move that attempts to preclude a possible misinterpretation of Paul's intentions ("I don't want to seem as though I'm trying to frighten you with my letters"). It is, rather, a dependent clause denying that Paul will permit critics of his recent leadership decisions to shame him into adopting a softer or less abrasive style of correspondence.¹⁶ And the ἐάν clause in v. 8 does not refer to a specific boasting found in 10:1–13:10, but rather places Paul's denial within very general parameters: "Even supposing I might be a bit excessive in expressing how much pride Timothy and I derive from our role as your leaders, I'm not about to be made to feel embarrassed, as though I should avoid giving the impression that I'm trying to frighten you by way of letters."¹⁷

¹⁵ This is typically the end result of taking βλέπετε as indicative, because a direct connection is then drawn between the shallow perspective of Paul's readers and the shallow perspective of Paul's critics as described in such passages as 5:12 and 11:2.

¹⁶ For a list of other explanations that have been proposed, see Harris, *Second Epistle*, 696–97. My reading is very similar to the one proposed by Furnish, except that I do not think it necessary to supply βούλωμαι, and I do not think it correct that τῶν ἐπιστολῶν refers to "letters previously sent to Corinth by Paul" (*II Corinthians*, 467–68). The ἵνα clause is projected from the standpoint of a hypothetical Paul who has boasted freely and then resolved to resist the claim that he should feel ashamed, and so the ἵνα clause applies broadly to any past, present, or future occurrence of such a development.

¹⁷ The plural τῆς ἐξουσίας ἡμῶν is noteworthy, in that it coheres with the other plurals throughout

As mentioned above, 10:8–9 reveals that a question is hanging in the air over the Corinthian situation as Paul and Timothy prepare to for their long-awaited return to the city. Should the great pride that Paul and Timothy derive from their partnership with Corinth be turned into shame? What is more, 10:8–9 provides further confirmation that this question is closely tied to the matter of Paul’s correspondence. This has already been established by 1:13b–2:4, of course, where Paul rejects the claim that his decision to send a letter instead of visiting confirms the weakness of his leadership. Yet whereas 1:13b–2:4 merely ties Paul’s letter-writing to the claim that he is avoiding a personal confrontation (cf. 10:2, 11), it is explicit in 10:8–9 that Paul’s critics have also cast Paul’s letters as inappropriately forceful (see below).¹⁸ Intriguingly, therefore, Paul is not the only one who wants to have his cake and eat it too. *Both* parties in the leadership dispute over Corinth are taking a dual perspective on the situation, wherein the other party’s leadership is simultaneously too weak and too strong.

From Paul’s perspective, other Christian ministers are weak because they are less willing to endure hardship in the course of proclaiming the gospel (2:14–5:21; cf. 10:15; 11:12, 23–33). There are also, however, hints that Paul regards his critics as being excessively strong in the sense that they are imposing themselves as lords in an un-Christian manner (1:24; 4:5; cf. 11:19–20). Conversely, from the perspective of Paul’s

10:1–18. Although Paul is responding to specific criticisms provoked by certain recent actions that did not involve Timothy, he nevertheless frames his response in 10:1–18 in such a way that Timothy is included wherever possible.

¹⁸ It should be noted that this way of describing Paul’s letters would have appealed to the Corinthians’ sense of indignation, making it a highly effective means of establishing distance between the Corinthian church and its founders.

opponents, Paul has shown himself to be a weak and ineffective leader by not showing up in Corinth personally (1:13b–17a) and by provoking an exorbitant amount of hostility among non-believers (2:14–5:21). And he has shown himself to be overbearing and domineering through the letters he has sent (10:9).

With these situational parameters in mind, the ὅτι clause in 10:10 appears as a somewhat belated summary of some of the criticisms that have prompted Paul to speak as he has in 10:8–9.¹⁹ It is thus a dependent part of the construction begun in 10:8–9, even though it cannot be logically related to that construction in a causal sense.²⁰ But who is this person whose words have provoked Paul? Some have argued that it is a specific individual, perhaps the “ring-leader” of Paul’s critics.²¹ In context, however, the singular verb φησὶν is part of an identity chain begun with τις, λογιζέσθω, and αὐτός in 10:7. The criticisms cited in 10:10, therefore, are not attributed to a specific, known individual in Corinth. They are advanced as the slanderous remarks of a vague, unidentified person who is criticizing Paul and Timothy’s leadership—which is why Paul can so easily switch to a generic participant (ὁ τοιοῦτος) in the very next verse.²² I would even say that the

¹⁹ “Paul now explains why he has brought up the matter of his letters” (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:629). I would add that Paul is bringing up the matter of his letters *again* (i.e. for the third time; cf. 1:13b–2:13; 7:3–16). As Barrett observes, it is difficult to account for 10:9–10 if the so-called painful letter has not yet been sent at the time Paul is writing 2 Cor 10–13 (*Second Epistle*, 259–60).

²⁰ This sort of relation can be seen in the English expressions *If you want a drink, there’s beer in the fridge* or *I didn’t like your presentation at all, since you asked*. McGregor describes these sorts of constructions as involving illocutionary scopal relations, wherein the dependent clause is actually dependent on the mood operator of the primary clause rather than on the clause as a whole (*Semiotic Grammar*, 240–41).

²¹ E.g. Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 275.

²² Thrall argues that “the τοιοῦτο of v. 11 (obviously identical with the subject of φησὶν) suggests that some specific individual is in view” (*Second Epistle*, 2:629–30), but in actual fact, the phrase ὁ τοιοῦτος can be used to generalize a participant whose identity is defined solely with reference to his or her

wording found in 10:10 may not represent a single statement made on a single historical occasion. Perhaps it is merely Paul's own pithy summary of the sorts of things that various people are saying about him in Corinth.²³

Assuming, then, that the remarks in 10:10 are an attempt to encapsulate the sorts of criticisms that are being articulated in Corinth, what do they reveal about the nature of those criticisms? Two major proposals have been advanced with respect to the clause αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ...βαρεῖται καὶ ἰσχυραί. The first of these argues that Paul's letters are being positively assessed as rhetorically compelling; the second argues that Paul's letters are being negatively assessed as overbearing and authoritarian. It is the second, however, that is confirmed by the surrounding co-text and by the situation construed earlier in 2 Corinthians. Paul has just spoken about terrifying people with his letters (10:9). Moreover, we know already from 1:23–2:4 and 7:3–16 that the Corinthians have been made upset by Paul's letter, a reaction that implicates forcefulness rather than eloquence. But most importantly of all, 10:8–10 hangs together in the way that it does because Paul is leveraging the accusation that his letters are too forceful in order to underscore the fact that he is fully prepared to be equally forceful in person (10:2–6, 11).²⁴

participation in a hypothetical scenario (e.g. Gal 6:1).

²³ Thus, although the verb is not technically impersonal in the way that Harris proposes, he is correct when he says that it may have in view "Paul's critics in general...as represented by a particular spokesman" (*Second Epistle*, 698). The spokesman, however, is a nameless and faceless figure who is evoked by Paul's wording in 10:7–10 rather than a specific, known individual whose identity is being deliberately obscured.

²⁴ As Thrall observes, "What he wants to get across is that he will make *just as forceful* an impression in person" (*Second Epistle*, 627). In this way Paul shows his willingness and readiness to do what his critics have claimed he ought to have done in the first place (i.e. show up in person and demonstrate strong leadership), and yet he persists in refusing to regret what he has done (i.e. sent a forceful letter).

At this point, it is necessary to take a step back and to consider all of the above observations concerning 10:1–10 and their implications as regards the situation construed by Paul’s language. First and foremost, the reading I have proposed regards the situation underlying 10:1–10 as identical to the one underlying earlier segments in 2 Corinthians, as is especially clear in those segments which address Paul’s handling of Corinthian impurities (i.e. 1:3–2:13; 6:1–7:16). Paul has chosen not to personally discipline a number of rebellious converts who have been defiling the Corinthian community, but has instead demanded in writing that the community itself take responsibility for their discipline—a strategy that has succeeded in getting the sinners punished, while also prompting backlash from everyone in Corinth. Paul’s readers have reacted indignantly, feeling unfairly criticized; other Christian leaders have accused Paul of being both weak and inappropriately critical of his readers, spinning his decision as a mark of deficient leadership rather than intentional delegation.

How does this proposal influence the remainder of 10:10, which states: ἡ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενῆς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος? The first of these two observations can be easily related to Paul’s decision to write rather than visit, once it is recognized that masculinity and physiognomy played an even more important role in ancient ideals about leadership than they do today.²⁵ Paul is being cast as an ineffective leader, so naturally his physical impotence is relevant. He has failed to confront his rebellious converts in person because he is not man enough to do so. Or at least, so it is

²⁵ For a discussion of the former in connection with 2 Corinthians, see Larson, “Paul’s Masculinity.” For the latter, see Gleason, *Making Men*; Harrill, “Invective Against Paul.”

said by Paul's critics—for his part, Paul insists that he is fully prepared to invoke *spiritual* weapons against such rebellious people, provided proper procedures are followed first (10:6), such that his decision should not be thought to imply cowardice.²⁶

Can the clause ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος be similarly related to Paul's decision to write rather than visit? Generally speaking, this connection is rarely made in the literature, with the more common approach being to relate the clause to Paul's oratorical abilities.²⁷ Schellenberg, however, makes the interesting suggestion that the clause ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος means something like 'what he says comes to nothing,' citing 1 Macc. 3:14 and 2 Chr 36:16 as examples where a leader's instructions are flagrantly disobeyed. Perhaps, he suggests, the idea in 10:10 is that Paul talks big but is unable to back up his words with action.²⁸ Undeniably, Schellenberg's proposal fits the context of 10:1–18 much better than the usual rhetorically-oriented interpretations, making it necessary to consider the possibility that Paul's letter-writing is being cast, not only as overbearing, but also as unsuccessful.

²⁶ It is entirely inappropriate to evade the obvious implication of the claims being made about Paul, as is pointed out by Schellenberg. He writes:

[I]f Paul was called slavish, it was because he really appeared so: his ταπεινότης was embodied. Indeed, what 2 Cor 10:10 reveals is that it was his somatic vulnerability that constituted the interpretive matrix through which Paul's failure convincingly to exercise authority in Corinth was seen. So, although this may be invective, it is not merely so. Paul, to all appearances, is weak and derisible (Schellenberg, "Paul's Rhetorical Education," 317–18).

²⁷ E.g. "Paul's critics were affirming that his speaking ability, including his ability in extempore speech, was wholly without merit" (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 700); "Here *logos* refers more to the manner and style of Paul's speaking than to what he says" (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 468).

²⁸ Schellenberg, "Paul's Rhetorical Education," 318–19. The relevant wordings are τοὺς ἐξουθενούντας τὸν λόγον τοῦ βασιλέως (1 Macc. 3:14) and ἦσαν...ἐξουθενούντες τοὺς λόγους αὐτοῦ (2 Chr 36:16 LXX), with both contexts involving the rejection of authoritative instructions.

There are, I suggest, at least two possible ways to relate the allegation ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος to the context of situation activating 2 Corinthians, and they are not in any way mutually exclusive. On the one hand, we have evidence already in 6:12 and 7:2 that some of Paul's converts have flagrantly opposed his leadership and disdained his instructions with regard to idolatry (cf. 1 Cor 8:1–11:1). We might, therefore, suppose that the allegation ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος was made in response to written correspondence that preceded the earlier letter spoken about in 1:13b–2:13 and 7:3–16: “He makes authoritative pronouncements, but nobody listens to what he says.” On the other hand, we have Paul and Timothy's discussion of their sufferings in 2:14–5:21, which is framed as a response to the allegation that those sufferings are the direct result of their inadequacies as public proclaimers. We might, therefore, interpret the remark in 10:10 as applicable both to Paul's written instructions and to his evangelistic proclamation: “He is overbearing in his letters, but in truth he is a wimp and nobody respects what he says.”²⁹ What matters for the purposes of the present study is that the criticisms cited in 10:10 can be related directly to the context of situation construed in the preceding segments of 2 Corinthians.

²⁹ At this point, the most obvious step is to invoke shoddy rhetorical skills as the reason that people so frequently scorned Paul's preaching. And certainly, there is an inherent plausibility to this argument. If Paul was not a trained rhetor—as seems to have been the case—then his critics might very well have been embarrassed by his presentation of the gospel, ascribing much of the controversy surrounding the Pauline mission to Paul and Timothy's unskilled and ineffective presentation of the gospel.

d. The Proper Basis of Paul and Timothy's Pride (10:11–18)

Whereas 10:8–10 deals with Paul's bold but ineffective communications, 10:11–18 takes up the larger issue at hand: Why are Paul and Timothy so ready and willing to aggressively confront other Christian leaders?³⁰ The first part of the answer is that Paul and Timothy have the right to be proud of their authority as leaders because they reached Corinth first and founded the church there—with the implicit inference being that their critics have not earned the same right.³¹ These people deserve to be confronted, apparently, because they are *not* going out and doing the hard work of proclaiming the gospel but are instead taking issue with Paul's leadership decisions in order to establish themselves as authoritative over the Pauline mission's hard-earned converts.

Another part of Paul's answer is that he and Timothy are hoping (ἐλπίδα ἔχοντες) to extend their ministry into regions beyond Achaia (10:15). Here again Paul and Timothy are construed as having high *hopes* for their Corinthian ministry (cf. 1:3–2:13), yet the further detail is added that the attainment of their hope is contingent upon an increase in the Corinthians' faith or trust (αὐξανομένης τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν) such that Paul and

³⁰ This is evident in that 10:12 begins with γάρ, which seems to indicate that 10:12–18 explain why Paul and Timothy are so willing to confront their critics. Crucially, it is in 10:11–18 that we have the first explicit indication that Paul and Timothy's critics are not merely Christians but also Christian leaders. After all, they are described as people who are recommending themselves to the Corinthians (10:12; cf. 3:1; 5:12).

³¹ This is why 10:12–18 is replete not only with the domain TO BOAST, but also the domain TO SPEAK OR TO PROCLAIM (εὐαγγέλιον, εὐαγγελίζω) and a whole cluster of domains that involve spatial dimensions and comparative evaluation (e.g. TO COMPARE OR CLASSIFY, TO MEASURE, TO EXTEND BEYOND, TO INCREASE OR ENLARGE [αὐξάνω, μεγαλύνω], PLACES [κανών [3x]], TO MOVE TOWARDS OR AWAY FROM SOMEWHERE [ἐφικνέομαι [2x], φθάνω]).

Timothy are held in high esteem among the Corinthians in accordance with the position of authority to which they have been assigned by God (ἐν ὑμῖν μεγαλυνθῆναι κατὰ τὸν κανόνα ἡμῶν). In other words, Paul and Timothy regard the Corinthians as their partners in the proclamation of the gospel (cf. 1:13b–14, 24; 6:1; 9:11), and so they regard their critics—who have no plans to do the hard work of evangelizing new areas but want only to seize leadership in Corinth—as a threat to the Pauline mission’s financial base in Corinth and thus a threat to the mission’s future evangelistic work.³²

In 10:1–18, therefore, Paul communicates to the Corinthians that he and Timothy are not afraid of the other Christian leaders who are insulting them. He embraces insults that have been made about his physical limitations, while simultaneously exposing those insults as indicative of shallow and worldly preoccupations unbecoming of Christian leaders. He embraces remarks that have been made about the forcefulness of his letters, proceeding to threaten his critics with an equally forceful confrontation on the occasion of his arrival in Corinth. And he explains that he and Timothy are prepared to fight because the Corinthian church is the result of their evangelistic work and they are not about to let others take away the support they need for the continuation of that evangelistic work. In all of this, however, the Corinthians are cast as observers rather than antagonists (cf. 5:12), as is clear from the meta-comment τὰ κατὰ πρόσωπον βλέπετε in 10:7 and the preface τοῦτο λογιζέσθω...ὅτι in 10:7 and 10:11. So just as Paul and Timothy presented a defence of the Pauline mission in 2:14–5:21 as something important

³² In other words, seizing leadership over Paul and Timothy’s hard-earned converts is hardly a praiseworthy endeavour. Using a modern analogy, we might say that “transfer growth is not real church growth.”

for their critics (3:1–3; 5:11b–12), so also Paul is uttering threats in 10:1–18 that are intended for his and Timothy's critics. The Corinthians are not being as supportive of the Pauline mission as Paul would like (10:15; cf. 5:12), but the edge of his most cutting remarks is nevertheless pointed entirely at other Christian leaders.

e. Meta-Commentary: Imitation of Foolish and Dangerous Corinthian Leaders (11:1–4)

Frequently, 11:1–12:10 is recognized as a discrete unit on account of the fact that Paul communicates foolishly in these verses. Or, to be more precise, he repeatedly characterizes his own speech in these verses as foolish, using a whole series of meta-comments employing the domain WISDOM OR FOOLISHNESS (ἄφροσύνη [3x], ἄφρων [4x], φρόνιμος, παραφρονέω). The first of these meta-commentaries appears in 11:1–4 and additional instances can be found in 11:16–21, 11:23, and 12:1. While 12:11 might also be added to this list, it employs the stative aspect in order to construe Paul as being in a foolish state on account of his having behaved so foolishly in 11:1–12:10 (γέγονα ἄφρων), rendering the remark in 12:11 somewhat retrospective. Taking these meta-commentaries all together, therefore, I note that Paul construes himself as acting *foolishly* in 11:1–12:10.³³

Is this foolish conduct a distinct activity? Or is it merely the foolish continuation of something begun in 10:1? Here I have adopted the latter position, such that the foolishness of 11:1–12:10 has to do with the manner in which Paul is doing something rather than with what he is doing *per se*. After all, the section looks very much like a

³³ For a discussion of the so-called Fool's Speech and its context, see Lambrecht, "Fool's Speech."

continuation of something begun already in 10:1. It presents more of the facts that the Corinthians will need to consider (10:7) in the course of determining whether Paul and Timothy will need to confront their critics upon their arrival in Corinth (10:1). The only difference is that Paul surrenders to the pressures of the moment and adopts a different standard of behaviour in 11:1–12:10. He continues to do the same thing he began in 10:1–18, but he allows himself to play dirty, so to speak.

As evidence for this shift, I observe that Paul has already characterized his critics as *unwise* (οὐ συνιᾶσιν) because they criticize the Pauline mission according to shallow standards (10:2) and then measure themselves according to those same self-serving standards (10:12). Even more importantly, however, Paul has pointed out that it would be inappropriate for him and Timothy to compare themselves with other ministers (10:12) and he has insisted that it is the Lord's prerogative to evaluate his servants (10:18; cf. 1 Cor 4:1–5; 2 Cor 5:8–10; Rom 14:4). And so Paul is caught between wanting to openly compare himself with his critics and feeling obliged to uphold a higher standard than his critics. He barely manages to sustain this tension in 10:7–18, permitting himself a very obvious (albeit implicit) comparison. But then in 11:1, a dam bursts as Paul surrenders to the stronger need.

First, Paul openly admits that he would like to behave as foolishly as his critics, if only the Corinthians could be counted upon to tolerate such behaviour (ὄφελον ἀνείχεσθέ μου μικρόν τι ἀφροσύνης). Then immediately, he caves in to his desire, telling his readers that they will have to tolerate him (ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνέχεσθέ μου), justifying this imposition with reference to the danger he perceives (11:2–3) and with reference to the fact that his

readers have already shown themselves willing to tolerate foolish behaviour from other ministers in Corinth (11:4).³⁴ If the Corinthians are willing on the one hand (μέν) to tolerate the preaching of a different Jesus and the reception of a different Spirit or gospel, surely they are also willing to tolerate a little foolishness from Paul.³⁵ But of course, because Paul is so careful to draw attention to the fact that he is about to behave foolishly *like his critics*, his decision to act foolishly is made to reflect badly on them rather than on Paul himself.

f. Paul's Financial Strategy Exposes False Ministers (11:5–15)

As his first foolish act (11:5–15), Paul compares and contrasts himself with the lazy and opportunistic people he has just discussed in 10:1–18, concluding that these people are working so very hard to establish themselves as credible apostles of Christ because they are in fact ministers of Satan.³⁶ Two details are noteworthy, inasmuch as they have bearing on the overall situation being construed in 10:1–13:10.

First, the greatest apostles mentioned in 11:5 (τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων) are in no way explicitly related to the specific situation Paul is addressing. Rather, Paul's point is simply the general one that he measures up to the highest standard set by the best of

³⁴ Probably, the use of ἀλλά καί here is in some way related to the much more frequent οὐ μόνον...ἀλλά καί construction. See Luke 12:7; 16:21; Phil 1:18. BDAG, 44 describes this use of ἀλλά as being “for strong alternative/additional consideration,” citing Rom 6:5.

³⁵ The latter point is not explicitly stated, of course, but something along these lines is anticipated by the particle μέν.

³⁶ Interestingly, Paul has already suggested in 2:12–13 that Satan is attempting to disrupt the Pauline mission's evangelistic work. Now he clarifies that Satan is exploiting other Christian leaders in order to accomplish this purpose.

Christ's apostles (see also 12:11). This point, which is not new to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 15:9), remains relevant even if the greatest apostles have nothing to do with Paul's Corinthian troubles.³⁷

Second, the phenomena that Paul construes in 11:7–15 are largely financial, with his primary argument being that he never asked the Corinthians to provide for his needs when he was in Corinth (and will never ask for such support in the future). Did Paul make himself a failure in the eyes of his Corinthian converts by refusing to accept payment (ἀμαρτίαν ἐποίησα ἑμαυτόν)? Typically, it is argued that Paul is concerned about being thought to be deficient in his leadership abilities because of his refusal to accept payment for his ministry work, as though someone might think (or as though people are already insisting) that there is a connection between his leadership deficiencies and his status as an unpaid minister. It is vital to recognize, however, that Paul is advancing his refusal to accept payment as *positive* evidence that he is an exceptional apostle. Not only is this practice described as a source of pride (11:10), but Paul explicitly frames his refusal to accept money as a practice that will expose his critics for the false apostles they really are (11:12–13). The rhetorical question in 11:7, therefore, should not be taken as a reaction to financial criticisms, but as an effective way of drawing the Corinthians' attention to something that will elevate the Pauline mission in their eyes.

Notice especially the way Paul describes the effects of his financial practices. In the first of two ἵνα clauses in 11:12, Paul observes that his persistence in offering free

³⁷ I am not saying that Paul's troubles had nothing to do with the greatest apostles, of course. I am merely pointing out that Paul's language remains relevant one way or the other, making it hazardous to invoke the wording of 11:5 in the course of reconstructing the historical setting of 2 Corinthians.

leadership takes away the financial base of those who are seeking a financial base (ἐκκόψω τὴν ἀφορμὴν τῶν θελόντων ἀφορμὴν). Typically, this clause is taken together with the next ἵνα clause, which is said to be related to τῶν θελόντων ἀφορμὴν, with the result that Paul is allegedly wanting “to cut off the opportunity of those who want an opportunity to be regarded as on par with us in what they boast about.”³⁸ For Harris, therefore, the “opportunity” in 11:12 involves being considered equal with Paul, so that Paul’s financial practices keep him from being “brought down” to the level of his opponents.³⁹ This reading, however, fails to give enough weight to the fact that the term ἀφορμὴ appears in 11:7–15 amidst numerous other financial terms, with the result that the term should almost certainly be interpreted financially as well. According to BDAG, the term refers to “the resources needed to carry through an undertaking (e.g. even commercial capital),”⁴⁰ which in the context of 11:7–15 indicates that other Christian leaders are seeking to establish a financial base of operations in Corinth—and that Paul regards his financial model as something that problematizes such efforts.⁴¹

Setting aside the oft-cited idea that Paul’s Corinthian converts are frustrated with his refusal to accept financial support—an idea that has no real basis in any of the typically cited passages—I propose that the Corinthians are wary of having to pay for new leadership, and that Paul is bringing up money in order to exploit this wariness. On

³⁸ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 753. Furnish writes that he takes it this way “with most commentators” (*II Corinthians*, 494).

³⁹ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 769.

⁴⁰ BDAG, 158.

⁴¹ See Belleville, *Reflections*, 281: “Paul’s rivals wanted the church to believe that Corinth was within their legitimate sphere of ministry and hence part of their authorized base of financial support.”

this reading, Paul's financial model reduces the likelihood that new arrivals in Achaia will be able to establish their leadership over his converts, because it is extremely difficult to persuade people who are not used to paying for something that they need to start doing so. How might Paul's critics have attempted to overcome this wariness? They probably did so by pointing out the inadequacies of Paul's leadership and the benefits that will come to the Corinthians if they "upgrade" to newer (albeit more costly) leadership. And so we come to the second of the two ἵνα clauses in 11:7, wherein Paul speaks once again about the boasting of his critics.

What does Paul mean when he speaks about his critics being "found" in what they boast, just as he and Timothy are "found" in what they boast (ἐν ᾧ καυχῶνται εὐρεθῶσιν καθὼς καὶ ἡμεῖς)?⁴² He means that there is a trial of sorts taking place in Corinth, and that his readers should be able to arrive at a verdict by observing the different boasts that are being made.⁴³ Indeed, this is the same basic point already made by the instruction in 10:7 and the subsequent discussion in 10:7–18, which characterizes Paul and Timothy's critics as having an inappropriate boast in comparison with the leaders of the Pauline mission. For his part, Paul thinks that his and Timothy's financial practices are reflective of

⁴² Meyer correctly discerns that the second ἵνα clause here is parallel with the first, but he takes the clause to mean that Paul wants to force his critics to adopt his financial model (*Epistles to the Corinthians*, 435). My own reading takes the clause to mean that Paul's "free leadership" model forces his critics to boast in order to justify their "paid leadership" model—and thereby exposes a shallow and worldly character that is out of keeping with the cross of Christ, inasmuch as his critics end up boasting in themselves κατὰ σάρκα. Taking the clause in this way disarms the typical objections to Meyer's reading of the grammar (e.g. Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:691).

⁴³ Cf. John 18:38; 19:4, 6; Acts 13:28; 23:9; 24:20; Rom 7:10. Thayer says of this usage of εὐρίσκω that it involves "one's character or state as found out by others" (*Greek-English Lexicon*, 262). There is thus a relationship of sorts between the explicit secondary predication in 11:7 and the secondary predicate that is an unrealized potential in 11:12.

personal humility and self-sacrifice, such that they should be “found” to be faithful ambassadors of Christ. As for his critics, he thinks that they are dangerous (11:3), and he thinks that their worldly criticisms and boasts—which have been necessitated by the need to justify a more financially burdensome leadership—are so obviously arrogant and worldly that they will be “found” to be false apostles, deceitful labourers, and servants of Satan.

In 11:7–15, therefore, Paul continues to cast the Corinthians as observers who must judge the relative merits of different Christian leaders (cf. 10:7), pointing out to them that his financial practices have made it necessary for would-be leaders to explain why the Corinthians should have to start paying for church leadership (e.g. by criticizing Paul and Timothy and by pointing out the things about themselves in which they take pride). And so finances *per se* are not at issue in Corinth, but rather: (1) those who are criticizing and seeking to usurp Paul’s leadership intend to replace his financial model with their own; (2) they feel justified in imposing new financial demands on the Corinthians because they view their leadership as superior to Paul’s; and (3) it is in the course of appealing for financial support that they have criticized the Pauline mission’s leadership and advanced themselves as superior leaders. In the end, the most relevant detail in 11:7–15, as regards the trial taking place in Corinth, is the manner in which Paul’s critics are attempting to justify their imposition of a financial burden—by voicing worldly criticisms and worldly boasts.

g. Meta-Commentary: Stooping to Their Level by Retaliating (11:16–21)

Pausing momentarily in 11:16–21, Paul clarifies once again how he views his own semiotic behaviour, repeating what he said in 11:1–4: he is speaking foolishly (11:16–17) and therefore presuming upon his readers' willingness to tolerate foolishness (11:18–19). A notable detail here is Paul's claim that many people are boasting *κατὰ σάρκα*, a phrase that evokes his earlier assertion that certain people are evaluating him *κατὰ σάρκα* (10:2; cf. 5:16) as well as the more immediate claim that his critics are revealing their true nature by means of their inappropriate boasting (11:12–13). Thrall observes that "Some exegetes take this as an allusion to the content of the opponents' boasting: external advantages such as wealth, birth, or ancestry; human achievements, or 'outward display' and charismatic demonstrations."⁴⁴ And certainly, this proposal is strengthened by the fact that 11:22–12:10 proceeds to discuss precisely these sorts of things. As Plummer observes, "It is a miserable position that they have taken, but he will not shrink from contending with them on their own ground."⁴⁵ Here I wish to add to this longstanding interpretation the observation that a relationship may exist between Paul's remarks in 11:19–21 and the teachings of Jesus with regard to non-violence and non-retaliation. And I wish to propose that this possible connection softens the ironic description Paul gives of his readers in 11:19–20.

⁴⁴ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:715.

⁴⁵ Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 315.

A number of details in 11:16–21 combine to indicate a possible relationship between Paul’s remarks and Jesus’ teachings about non-violence and non-retaliation, including: (1) Paul’s suggestion that his readers quite wisely tolerate fools, which employs a term used elsewhere in connection with enduring abuse (ἀνέχω; see 1 Cor 4:12; 2 Thess 1:4–6); (2) the vivid images Paul uses to describe his readers’ tolerance of fools, which are quite similar to examples that Jesus uses to teach about non-violence and non-retaliation (e.g. domination, exploitation, arrogance, insults, and even physical abuse; see Matt 5:11–12, 38–48; 20:25–28); (3) Paul’s use of the adverb ἡδέως, which accords well with the emphasis on joy amidst abuse that is found both in Jesus’ teachings about non-violence and in other early Christian literature (Matt 5:11–12; Luke 6:22–23; Heb 10:34; Jas 1:2; 1 Pet 4:13–14); (4) Paul’s assertion that as a fool he will be just as daring as his critics (ἐν ᾧ δ’ ἂν τις τολμᾷ...τολμῶ καὶ γώ), which in the present context suggests that he can no longer tolerate their worldly boasting and criticizing and so will now retaliate in kind (cf. 10:12 and 11:1).

Putting these details together, I suggest that Paul is drawing a contrast between the Corinthians’ willingness to joyfully endure wrong-treatment at the hands of his overbearing critics and his own regrettable decision to retaliate. The Corinthians are wisely able to tolerate exploitation and abuse (ἡδέως ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων φρόνιμοι ὄντες), but Paul and Timothy’s resolve has weakened (κατὰ ἀτιμίαν λέγω, ὡς ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἡσθενήκαμεν) such that Paul will now foolishly retaliate (ἐν ᾧ δ’ ἂν τις τολμᾷ, ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ λέγω, τολμῶ καὶ γώ). Crucially, if this is the contrast Paul is making, then his depiction of the Corinthians is not as cutting as is often thought, because endurance in the

face of abusive overlords was widely regarded in early Christianity as a positive and noble thing. Moreover, the contribution of 11:16–21 becomes entirely continuous with 10:1–11:15, in that the Corinthians are being asked to observe the fact that Paul’s critics are conducting themselves in accordance with the standards of the world and should thus be treated as unbelievers. The irony here thus chides the Corinthians for regarding Paul’s critics as Christian leaders who want to serve the church rather than as worldly overlords who want to persecute and abuse the church.⁴⁶ And Paul is once again spinning the allegation that he has demonstrated weak leadership with respect to his unruly Gentile converts in Corinth, turning the allegation on its head in order to expose his critics as forceful and imposing overlords who are employing worldly strategies in order to gain dominance over the Corinthian community.⁴⁷

h. Weakness as Paul’s Fleshly Qualification for Leadership (11:22–12:10)

As already mentioned, in 11:22–12:10 Paul proceeds to boast κατὰ σάρκα, just as his critics have been doing. But although he begins by matching their boasting, referencing his impeccable Jewish pedigree, he quickly abandons this particular strategy in order to

⁴⁶ Note Vegge, *Reconciliation*, 336–37, which discusses the tyranny of Paul’s opponents and the likelihood that they were much more forceful than was Paul.

⁴⁷ As Vegge astutely observes, “Paul’s descriptions of the false apostles as brutal tyrants, and of the Corinthians’ ideal of the apostolate as tyranny (11:19–20), show that it is unlikely that his critics had a problem with his harsh and threatening letters. The criticism of Paul concerns his lack of follow-up through punitive action, and the inconsistency between the letter-writing Paul and the physically present Paul.... Paul rejects the accusation most strongly.... Paul has only postponed the use of punishment (13:2), evidently in the hope that things will be straightened out in Corinth” (*Reconciliation*, 387). To this I would add only that Paul has not so much postponed the use of punishment, but rather enacted punishment through Titus and through the Corinthians themselves, because his ideal is that the church will learn to oversee itself in manner that does not require his personal intervention.

boast about his weaknesses rather than his strengths. He persists in speaking about himself *κατὰ σάρκα*, in the sense that he refers to his own accomplishments and experiences, but he subverts his critics' manner of boasting *κατὰ σάρκα* by setting aside things that might earn him worldly respect and by taking pride instead in various things that manifest his weaknesses and his total dependence on Christ. As McCant correctly observes, this amounts to a parody of their behaviour, such that Paul's foolish imitation takes on the form of a scathing ridicule.⁴⁸

In 11:22–33, this involves the use of numerous domains that have appeared earlier in the letter, including SERVANT (*διάκονος*), TO BE ABLE OR UNABLE (*ἀσθενέω* [2x], *ἀσθένεια*), TO CAUSE OR EXPERIENCE TROUBLE OR RELIEF (*κόπος* [2x], *πληγή*, *μόχθος*, *ἐπίστασις*, *μέριμνα*), LIFE OR DEATH (*θάνατος*), PRISON (*φυλακή*), SLEEPLESSNESS (*ἀγρυπνία*), and HUNGER OR THIRST (*λιμός*, *δίψος*, *νηστεία*). In 12:1–10, we also find domains from earlier in the letter, including TO BE ABLE OR UNABLE (*ἀσθένεια* [4x], *ἀσθενέω*, *δύναμις* [2x]), TO CAUSE OR EXPERIENCE TROUBLE OR RELIEF (*ἀνάγκη*, *στενοχωρία*, *διωγμός*, *ὑβρις*), and TO HARM OR RESCUE FROM HARM (*κολαφίζω*). In 11:22–12:10, therefore, Paul is once again drawing attention to facets of his ministry that exemplify his subservience to Christ, with the underlying assumption being that the power of the resurrected Christ is mediated through conformity to the suffering of his cross (cf. 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 4:11; Rom 8:35–37; Phil 3:7–11).

⁴⁸ See McCant, *2 Corinthians*, 139: “Paul’s boasting...is thus ironical, a parody of boasting.” Unlike McCant, I do not think that all of 2 Corinthians can be regarded as a parody, and I do think Paul was concerned with tangible “opponents” in Corinth in the sense that he regarded other Christian leaders as a danger to his church.

Concerning the discussion of visions and revelations in 12:1–10, a great many words have been written. Here, I wish only to clarify how I understand the introductory remarks in 12:1–6. Essentially, Paul conveys four things in these verses: (1) people *do* at times experience unusual, inexplicable, and even non-verifiable experiences, even though these experiences are difficult or impossible to convey in precise language; (2) Paul himself is not prone to dismissing visionaries or their visionary experiences; (3) Paul himself is a visionary; and (4) Paul will not argue that he is qualified for leadership because of his revelations, but will appeal instead to his weaknesses and request that people evaluate him on the basis of what he actually does and says.

Taking as a point of departure the fact that Paul explicitly describes himself as someone who has received amazing revelations (12:6–7), I begin with the hypothesis that Paul was well-known for speaking about his revelations. This hypothesis has in its favour the indisputable fact that Paul explicitly lays claim to divine revelation both here and elsewhere in his letters (e.g. 1 Cor 9:1; Gal 1:1, 11–12, 15–17; cf. Acts 9), making it more plausible than the comparatively speculative hypothesis that Paul's *critics* were known for their visionary experiences, a proposal for which we have no explicit evidence at all.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Wallace's recent survey (*Snatched into Paradise*, 9–35) aptly demonstrates the popularity of the idea that Paul's opponents were visionaries, which Wallace calls "one of the dominant interpretations of 2 Cor 12:1–10 to this day" (p. 11) and which he traces back to Käsemann's 1942 article on the subject ("Legitimität des Apostels"). Yet there is little evidence to support these claims about Paul's opponents. Supporting them with reference to Gnosticism (e.g. Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*; Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*) or mystical Judaism (Gooder, *Third Heaven*) is unpersuasive, because what is at stake is a handful of actual people in a specific historical setting. We cannot claim that Paul's critics were Gnostics or mystics simply because there were Gnostics or mystics in the ancient world at the time 2 Corinthians was written. Yet even more importantly, we do not need to infer anything like this in order to make sense of 2 Corinthians. As Plummer observes, "this cannot be inferred from what is told us here, and no such hypothesis is required in order to make what is told us more intelligible" (Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 339).

From here, I note that Paul makes a point of saying that visionaries should be respected (12:5a), while at the same time rejecting the suggestion that he will rely upon his visionary experiences as proof that he is qualified for leadership (12:5b–10).⁵⁰ If Paul has been accused of making too much of his alleged revelations, as though his revelations should somehow be regarded as validating his leadership, then his desire to defend his revelations is in tension with his strategy of subversive imitation.⁵¹ He wants to affirm his visions because they are important to his self-understanding, but his more pressing need is to refute the suggestion that the basis of his claim to leadership is (literally) insubstantial.⁵² Thus he states that he *could* speak about his amazing revelations (12:5–6), which are at least spiritual rather than fleshly, but he then evades his critics by choosing

⁵⁰ Although the phrase τοῦ τοιοῦτου in 12:5 may be yet another reference to the man introduced in 12:2, the fact that we do not find τοῦ τοιοῦτου ἀνθρώπου in 12:5 raises the possibility that τοῦ τοιοῦτου is a generic reference to people like the man discussed in 12:2–4. That the same cannot be said about the phrases τὸν τοιοῦτον and τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον in 12:2–3 is due to the fact that the former is grammatically related to the opening phrase ἄνθρωπον and the latter must be anaphoric in order for Paul's comments to make sense. In those earlier instances, therefore, Paul is employing articular phrases with τοιοῦτος instead of the simple demonstrative because he wants to emphasize something qualitative about the specific person he has in view, an unusual usage of ὁ τοιοῦτος that is possible only when contextual cues indicate the specific identity of the participant in question (cf. Acts 22:22; Antoph. 6.40 [where there is manuscript variation between οὗτος and ὁ τοιοῦτος]). Because this use makes perfectly good sense in 12:5 as well, it may well be that Paul is still speaking about the specific person described in 12:2–4. Yet Paul may also be broadening his perspective so as to include *all such people*, in which case we have here the more common meaning of the singular phrase ὁ τοιοῦτος, which is almost always used generically and is almost always a generalization of some specific participant mentioned previously (John 8:5; 1 Cor 5:5, 11; 2 Cor 2:6, 7; 10:11; Gal 6:1; Titus 3:11).

⁵¹ If we hypothesize that Paul's critics are boasting about visions, then this shift can be regarded as part of an overall strategy within 12:1–10 wherein Paul casts himself as a visionary in order to match or surpass his critics on their own terms even while maintaining the appearance of humility. He first recounts one of his astonishing visionary experiences (12:2–4), using the third person in order to avoid being overtly boastful, and then he explicitly diverts attention away from his great visions and onto his thorn (12:5–10). For a discussion of several different forms of this approach, as well as a number of more innovative approaches, see Wallace, *Snatched into Paradise*, 11–23.

⁵² See, e.g., Baur, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi*, 1:291–92; Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 338–39.

to set aside his revelations in order to focus upon fleshly weaknesses (12:7; cf. 11:30; 12:8–10).

If this reading of 12:5–10 is on track, then the function of 12:2–4 becomes a bit puzzling. After all, even those who follow Baur’s hypothesis concede the traditional view that Paul is himself the visionary in question, but it is hard to imagine that Paul would open himself up to further criticism in an already hostile situation by speaking about himself in the manner of 12:2–4.⁵³ As Baur duly notes, the account accentuates the subjective and non-verifiable nature of the visionary experience. Yet Paul gains nothing by stressing this point if he has himself in view. Why, then, does Paul not proceed immediately following 12:1 with an argument along the lines of 12:6–10?⁵⁴

The answer to this question emerges when we abandon the idea that Paul is the visionary described in 12:2–4, a hypothesis which has little in its favour other than tradition.⁵⁵ Only a very small handful of scholars have favoured the idea that Paul is not

⁵³ Plummer writes that “reluctantly, and only for a moment, he lifts the veil which usually covers the details of the most sacred moments of his life and allows the Corinthians to see enough to convince them that the revelations of which he has claimed to be the recipient were intensely and supremely real” (*Second Epistle*, 339). There is nothing in 12:2–4, however, that inspires confidence. Rather, the whole account leeches uncertainty even while it exalts in the otherworldly nature of visions that gives rise to this uncertainty.

⁵⁴ Baur attempts to avoid this problem by arguing that “it behoves him to be silent on nothing which *might* serve in the vindication and establishment of his apostolic authority” and also that “he *cannot* conceal from himself, that this testimony to his apostolic call belongs to the sphere of his own immediate consciousness” (Baur, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi*, 1:292 [emphasis mine]).

⁵⁵ When Paul’s identity as the visionary in 12:2–4 is not being presumed outright (e.g. Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 307; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 398; Bernard, *Second Epistle*, 109–10), it is advanced only by weak or erroneous arguments. Take, for example, the “compelling reasons” cited by Harris as evidence that Paul himself is the visionary in 12:2–4 (*Second Epistle*, 834). (1) *Paul knew the exact time when the vision took place*. Are we really to suppose that the expression πρὸ ἑτῶν δεκατεσσάρων is exact? Or that people are incapable of associating other people’s experiences with particular points in time? (2) *Paul knew that the visionary heard things that cannot be put into words*. And yet modern interpreters also know this. Presumably, therefore, Paul himself may have been informed of this detail by someone, just as we have been informed of it by Paul. (3) *Paul knew that this person was uncertain of his bodily state during the vision*. This is simply incorrect, since Paul asserts only that *he himself* is uncertain of the visionary’s bodily

state. But even if we presuppose that the visionary himself was *similarly* uncertain about his bodily state, the possibility remains that Paul was somehow informed of this fact. (4) *The giving of the “thorn” followed as a direct consequence of the revelatory vision described in 11:2–4.* Yet this is nowhere stated in 12:1–10. Rather, the key phrase τῆ ὑπερβολῆ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων can be explained entirely with reference to 12:5–6, which introduces Paul’s own visions and revelations into the discussion. (5) *The experience described in 12:2–4 is irrelevant if it happened to someone unknown to Paul’s readers.* This is the most difficult problem, of course, and probably the main reason why interpreters have overcome the wording of 12:5–6 in order to assert that Paul is indeed the visionary of 12:2–4. Below, I will propose a response to this objection that draws upon Furnish’s observation that “Paul describes his experience in a way that only accentuates how useless it is as a proof for anything” (*II Corinthians*, 543).

Some additional arguments in favour of the traditional hypothesis are advanced by Thrall (*Second Epistle*, 2:779). These too, however, are not ultimately convincing. Thrall argues, for instance, that there is no reason why Paul would describe his boasting of someone else as οὐ συμφέρον (12:1), since elsewhere he has no qualms about such boasting (e.g. 1:14; 7:4, 14; 8:24; 9:2–3). The meta-comments in 12:1, however, have to do with the overarching strategy of 11:1–12:10 wherein the strategy of boasting κατὰ σάρκα is shown to be foolish and pointless. And to the extent that 12:1–10 *as a whole* demonstrates that Paul will boast about his thorn in the flesh but not about his amazing revelations, the point is well made—even if the visionary in 12:2–4 is not identified as Paul—that comparing one’s fleshly experiences and qualities with those of others is foolish and pointless. Secondly, Thrall argues that the detailed nature of the vision recounted in 12:2–4 is neither necessary nor relevant unless Paul himself is the visionary. Yet Paul’s account is not detailed in comparison with the extensive visionary reports we possess from other sources. (Cf. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 544: “In marked contrast to other ancient accounts of heavenly journeys, Paul has surprisingly little to say about the experience itself.”) And more to the point, the sensational nature of visionary experiences is being deliberately exploited in order to challenge the idea that detailed and sensational visionary reports can be regarded as credible evidence with respect to the spiritual maturity of an alleged visionary. Thus Paul contrasts visions (ὄπτασις) with his own accomplishments, which are visible to others (ὁ βλέπει με). And in much the same way, he contrasts unutterable words (ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι) with the things he clearly communicates to others (ὁ...ἀκούει τι ἐξ ἐμοῦ). I would argue, therefore, that the fantastic experience described in 12:2–4 remains a useful illustration of the sorts of things that Paul *could* boast about *if* he were so willing, even though the visionary used in the illustration is not identified with Paul himself. Thrall’s final argument is that the brief phrase τῆ ὑπερβολῆ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων is a wholly inadequate way of introducing Paul’s own experiences, given that those experiences form the basis for the extremely important thorn that is discussed in 12:7–10. This objection is partly blunted by the likelihood that Paul’s readers already know a great deal about his visions and revelations, having spent an extended period of time with him. But even more importantly, Thrall’s concern about 12:7 fails to account for the fact that Paul has already introduced his own revelatory experiences in 12:6, where he asserts that he could boast similarly on his own behalf and could even boast truthfully. In view of this earlier remark, the phrase τῆ ὑπερβολῆ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων is perhaps better regarded as a heightening of something already salient in the text. Paul’s revelations are not merely truthful—they are exceptional. So exceptional, it turns out, that he was given an object lesson in the importance of humility.

An additional argument, advanced by Furnish, is that “It is clear from vv. 6b–7a that the person...to whom Paul refers here is himself” (*II Corinthians*, 524). A more extended version of this same argument has been advanced by Wallace, who writes that

Although Paul describes the heavenly journey in the third person, the experience must be his own. In verse six, he claims that if he were to boast of such a person, he would be telling the truth. He continues, “But I am refraining, lest someone reckon to me more than what he sees of me or what he hears from me, even with the superiority of the revelations” (6b–7a). This shift to the first person in an attempt to explain his own reticence indicates that Paul himself must be the “man in Christ” who entered Paradise, or else no foundation for “reckoning” too much to him would exist (Wallace, *Snatched into Paradise*, 4–5).

the visionary in 12:2–4, and their efforts are rarely taken seriously.⁵⁶ Most notably, Morton Smith’s suggestion that Paul has Jesus in view has been widely rejected as “unlikely.”⁵⁷ And Herrmann’s proposal that Apollos is the visionary of 12:2–4 has been ridiculed as one that “cannot be taken seriously.”⁵⁸ It is essential, however, to distinguish between the substantive claim that Paul is not the visionary in 12:2–4, which follows the explicit signals in the text, and the more difficult claim that the visionary can be positively identified, which relies more heavily on speculation.⁵⁹

In this respect, Michael Goulder’s proposal is superior to those of Smith and Herrmann, in that it respects Paul’s decision to frame the visionary as a specific but unknown individual. Goulder, however, believes that Paul’s opponents in Corinth were criticizing the Pauline mission and boasting about their own visionary experiences. So when the time comes to explain “why Paul should be attacked for lacking such an experience, and should then reply with a story about someone else,” Goulder

The logic of this argument hangs on a “shift to the first person” that allegedly takes place between: (1) an initial comment stating that Paul could boast of *such a person*; and (2) a subsequent disclaimer that he will refrain from doing so in order that people will not think too highly of *him*. But this is not what the text actually says. In reality, when Paul says in 12:6 that he could boast, he is picking up an earlier statement in 12:5 where he denies any willingness to boast about *himself* even though he *will* boast about the visionary described in 12:2–4. So the alleged “shift to the first person” in 12:1–6 takes place already in 12:5, at which point it is not so much a subtle “shift” but an explicit contrast between Paul and the visionary described in 12:2–4. What is clear from 12:6b–7a, therefore, is that Paul explicitly refuses to boast *κατὰ σάρκα* about his *own* visions, even though he will boast about the visions of *others*, so that it is Paul’s own visions *about which he will not speak* and in fact *does not speak* that form the basis of his subsequent remarks in 12:7–10.

⁵⁶ E.g. Herrmann, “Apollos”; Smith, “Ascent”; Goulder, “Vision and Knowledge”; Goulder, “Visions and Revelations.”

⁵⁷ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:778.

⁵⁸ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 525.

⁵⁹ Several of Thrall’s objections to this reading have to do with the latter (*Second Epistle*, 2:778).

hypothesizes that the individual in question must have been one of Paul's colleagues.⁶⁰

Certainly, Goulder's core claim deserves far greater recognition than it has been given to date, since the wording of 12:5 explicitly eliminates the possibility that Paul is the visionary discussed in 12:2–4.⁶¹ I am unconvinced by Goulder's way of framing the crucial question raised by this conclusion, however, preferring instead to pose a somewhat different question: namely, how does relating someone else's visionary experience help to defend Paul against the charge that he makes too much of his own revelations?

The clue that will help us to solve this riddle is the way that Paul accentuates the subjective and non-verifiable nature of the visionary experience he mentions.⁶² This detail is difficult to explain if Paul is the visionary in 12:2–4, unless Betz's proposal is adopted and the entire account is regarded as a parody (a solution that is not without its problems).⁶³ It is quite strategic, however, if the visionary in 12:2–4 is someone known to the Corinthians *and* respected by Paul's critics. In this case, 12:2–4 serves to deflect the

⁶⁰ Goulder, "Visions and Revelations," 306–8, esp. 308 n.4. This represents a further development of Goulder's earlier idea that the individual in question is merely "a (Pauline-Christian) friend" (Goulder, "Vision and Knowledge," 57).

⁶¹ There is not only the immediate problem of supposing that τοῦ τοιοῦτου is referentially equivalent with the contrastive ἐμαυτοῦ in the subsequent clause, but also the larger problem of explaining why Paul would hide behind a third person recounting only to then make the explicit and very open claim that he himself has experienced equally amazing revelations (12:6–7).

⁶² This detail does not stem from the contours of the vision alone, wherein the quality of being unutterable serves as part of the visionary experience. Rather, it stems to a greater extent from the remark in 12:6, where Paul contrasts the seeing and hearing by means of which visionaries *experience spiritual things* with the seeing and hearing by means of which visionaries are *experienced by others*—asserting that he can and will justify his leadership solely on the basis of the latter without needing recourse to the former.

⁶³ Betz, "Christus-Aretalogie"; Betz, *Sokratische Tradition*, 84–96. For a critical evaluation of Betz's proposal, see Wallace, *Snatched into Paradise*, 23–26.

criticisms being levelled against Paul’s revelations by invoking a well-respected and well-known figure in early Christianity whose much discussed visionary experience(s) nobody would dare to criticize.⁶⁴ The non-verifiable nature of the experience (e.g. οὐκ οἶδα [3x]; ἄρρητα ῥήματα; ὑπὲρ ὃ [τις] βλέπει...ἢ ἀκούει) underscores that Paul—like everyone else—has been forced to take this man’s claims at face value, which serves to blunt the force of similar criticisms levelled at Paul.⁶⁵ Moreover, the fact that Paul introduces the individual as “a man in Christ” may suggest a desire neither to invoke his name nor to refer to him as “a brother in Christ.”⁶⁶ Paul has known this man “for over fourteen years,” but he does not seem to have positive feelings towards him.⁶⁷ Perhaps, therefore, there are interpersonal dynamics here akin to what we see in Gal 1–2, where Paul is torn between needing to establish a connection with the Jerusalem leaders and wanting to keep himself independent of them.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ It is sometimes argued that there are two separate experiences in view in 12:2–4 (see the discussion in Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:790–91). This would not affect my reading here, however.

⁶⁵ I thus disagree with Goulder’s suggestion that the heavenly vision in 12:2–4 must have been of a different character than the revelations of 12:6–7 (Goulder, “Vision and Knowledge,” 56; “Visions and Revelations of the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:1–10),” 305–8). Rather, it is enough to note that the experiences of both men discussed in 12:2–6 were similarly non-verifiable.

⁶⁶ Various scholars have argued that “the phrase means ‘Christian’” (Héring, *Seconde épître*, 93; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 308; Wolff, *Zweite Brief*, 242; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:780), which makes sense on traditional readings of 12:2–4. If Paul is not the visionary in question, however, why did Paul not write οἶδα ἀδελφὸν (ἐν Χριστῷ)?

⁶⁷ Here I take the temporal phrase πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων as modifying the stative verb οἶδα (cf. Heb 11:5; 1 Pet 1:20). Alternatively, the phrase may be a way of clarifying which visionary and which vision is in view, supposing that multiple people in early Christianity claimed to have had such experiences. (For still more possibilities in keeping with alternative approaches to 12:1–10, see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:782–85).

⁶⁸ On that passage, Bruce writes that “Paul does not question the Jerusalem leaders’ personal status and prestige; what he does object to is the appeal made in some quarters to their status and prestige to diminish his own” (Bruce, *Galatians*, 117). While I agree with Bruce that Paul did not reject the legitimacy of the Jerusalem leaders, I would hazard that things were somewhat more personal than the above quotation

The function of 12:2–4, then, is to vindicate Paul’s visions as legitimate Christian experiences by pointing out another well-known Christian figure whose similarly non-verifiable experiences are not being called into question.⁶⁹ Paul does not dwell on this point for long, however, but proceeds in 12:5–10 is to disarm the criticism that he relies excessively on his visions in order to establish his credibility. In response to the insinuation that he has no other qualifications for leadership, he employs the same strategy found in 11:23–33: he subverts the claim that fleshly or worldly qualifications are a pre-requisite for effective Christian leadership by choosing to boast in the way his weaknesses magnify the power of Christ.

Here interpreters are intrigued especially by the identity of Paul’s so-called “thorn in the flesh,” with popular hypotheses involving all manner of physical ailments, human opponents, and supernatural beings.⁷⁰ What matters to 11:1–12:10, however, is the lesson that Paul derives from his experiences, since it is this lesson that is most directly relevant to the decision that his Corinthian readers presently need to make: *Christ’s power is most fully manifested when his servants are weak* (12:9). This principle explains why Paul chooses to boast about his weaknesses instead of his strengths throughout 11:23–12:10, and why his foolish boasting sounds so very similar to his impassioned defence in 2:14–5:21. He has caved into pressure and chosen to retaliate against his critics, in the sense

suggests.

⁶⁹ Windisch argues that there is no explicit evidence of any dispute over visions and revelations (*Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 368). His point stands, but the presence of 12:2–4 necessitates some kind of explanation. Here I have regarded criticisms of Paul’s appeal to his revelations (about which we have explicit evidence) as a better explanation than the idea that Paul is the visionary in 12:2–4 (which runs roughshod over the overt signals in the text and over 12:5 in particular).

⁷⁰ A detailed discussion of various proposals can be found in Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:809–18.

that he is trying to win over the Corinthian church by comparing himself favourably with other Christian leaders (i.e. he is drawing attention to his personal qualities and experiences just as they are). Yet he refuses to compromise on the lesson he has been taught by Christ. And so 11:1–12:10 concludes climactically: ὅταν γὰρ ἀσθενῶ, τότε δυνατός εἰμι. To refute these other ministers who are criticizing him as an inadequate leader, Paul points out that they are being arrogant about their own strengths whereas he is humbly conceding his dependence on Christ.

i. More Bragging about Paul's Financial Strategy (12:11–18)

Following the retrospective meta-commentary in 12:11a–b, does Paul begin a new activity?⁷¹ It would appear that he does not, since the information he provides in 12:11–18 continues to relate back to the appeal made in 10:1–6. Paul is still giving his readers information that will help them to decide whether his arrival in Corinth will or will not be marred by unpleasant confrontations. This is evident partly in the fact that Paul (once again) states that he is in no way inferior to even the greatest of the apostles, insisting that he is not lacking with regard to signs, wonders, and miracles (12:11–12).⁷² It is also evident, however, from the fact that Paul once again employs meanings from the semantic field of finances in order to contest the suggestion that he should prove his

⁷¹ Cf. Harris, *Second Epistle*, 870: “Paul reflects on what he has dictated to his amanuensis, beginning at 11:1.”

⁷² Paul seems to have regarded the religious experiences mentioned in 12:12 as distinct from the visionary experiences discussed in 12:1–10, presumably because his signs, wonders, and miracles were verifiable in a manner quite distinct from his visionary experiences. Were the other Christian leaders in Corinth performing such signs and wonders? Nothing in 2 Corinthians indicates as much, although the possibility cannot on this basis be ruled out.

commitment to Corinth by taking over the worldly leadership ideals of his critics (12:13–18; cf. 11:7–15).⁷³

As regards the financial discussion in 12:13–18, it must be asked once again whether Paul is defending himself.⁷⁴ Following the line taken earlier in 11:7–15, I propose that he is not doing this, but is rather leveraging his readers' resistance to the idea of paying for new leadership by pointing out repeatedly that he has never and will never demand payment for his leadership. Really, he is advertising his financial practices as a selling feature for the Pauline mission, but doing so in a highly sarcastic manner in order to further accentuate the negative qualities of his critics. Using terms with strongly negative connotations, Paul insists that *he himself* would never burden the Corinthians by asking them to provide for him during his residencies in Corinth (e.g. αὐτὸς ἐγὼ οὐ κατενάρκησα ὑμῶν; cf. 2:17; 4:2).⁷⁵

⁷³ Note especially the domains TO BURDEN SOMEONE (καταναρκάω [2x], καταβαρέω), TO EXPLOIT (λαμβάνω, πλεονεκτέω [2x]) and TO SAVE UP OR TO SPEND (θησαυρίζω, δαπανάω, ἐκδαπανάω).

⁷⁴ E.g. Harris, *Second Epistle*, 877: "In this verse, as also in the previous two verses, Paul seems to be addressing a complaint made against him.... Here the grievance appears to have been that in comparison with 'the other churches' the Corinthians had been disadvantaged by some action or actions of Paul." As someone who has spent some time in churches, I find it hard to imagine a congregation complaining along these lines. Some things are culturally relative, to be sure, but the desire to get money and keep money is probably a cultural universal, at least in cultures that employ a monetary system. More likely, the idea that Paul's churches have *lacked* because of the Pauline mission's financial practices is a sarcastic remark directed against other leaders who are alleging that the Corinthian church is *lacking* good leadership. What exactly are you lacking, Paul asks, except perhaps the experience of being exploited by overbearing and financially burdensome leaders?

⁷⁵ Interpreters consistently read the aorist indicative in the clause ἐγὼ οὐ κατεβάρησα ὑμᾶς as indicating a statement about the past, but the preceding imperative ἔστω permits the possibility that Paul is construing a hypothetical scenario such as would be more congruently realized by a second class conditional construction. In this case, Paul is claiming that even if his readers were to love him less (i.e. if a negative response is to be given to the question posed in 12:15b), he would still not exploit the Corinthians (i.e. under no circumstances will he ask them to provide for him during his upcoming visit): "Go ahead and love me less; I still wouldn't exploit you."

A frequently discussed issue in 12:13–18 involves the wording τρίτον τοῦτο ἐτοίμως ἔχω ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς (12:14), with the problem being that Paul’s wording is ambiguous. The fronted words τρίτον τοῦτο may be modifying either ἐτοίμως ἔχω (“I am ready for the third time”) or ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς (“to come to you for the third time”).⁷⁶ The majority of modern scholars, reconstructing a hypothetical intermediate visit, accept the latter reading.⁷⁷ It is often conceded, however, that the separation of τρίτον τοῦτο from ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς favours the former reading.⁷⁸ Moreover, it is difficult to account for the explicit “thirdness” of Paul’s coming if the “thirdness” relates only to the number of his visits. Why would Paul bother to specify that he has already paid two visits to Corinth, given that his readers already know this? More than that, why would he go so far as to *emphasize* that he has already paid two visits to Corinth by fronting the words τρίτον τοῦτο?⁷⁹ Why not simply say Ἐτοίμως ἔχω ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς? These unaddressed questions, which are problematic for the current majority view, are easily addressed if the traditional reading is accepted wherein τρίτον τοῦτο implies a third plan rather than a

⁷⁶ Although Harris (*Second Epistle*, 882 n.8) alleges that many English translations explicitly relate τρίτον τοῦτο to ἐλθεῖν by placing the prepositional phrase *for the third time* in a clause final position, this is not in fact the case. Rather, the English wording *I am ready to visit for the third time* is ambiguous in the same way as is Paul’s Greek, even though the associated probabilities are perhaps somewhat different.

⁷⁷ A notable exception is Hyldahl, “Die Frage.”

⁷⁸ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:843; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 882.

⁷⁹ The emphasis in question results from Paul’s fronting of the words τρίτον τοῦτο. See Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 361. It might perhaps be said that his point is to stress that he has visited twice already and has not been a financial burden. But Paul has already discussed his past behaviour in Corinth (12:12–13), and the focus of his text is shifting now to the future (hence the mention of a pending visit and the use of the future tense). Moreover, if Paul’s goal were to emphasize the consistency of his behaviour, he would probably have used an adverb like πάλι.

third visit.⁸⁰ After all, Paul has already discussed his decision to cancel a proposed visit (1:13b–2:4).⁸¹ Ultimately, it is more elegant and less speculative to hypothesize that Paul is speaking here about two earlier plans to return to Corinth (at least one of which we already know about) than it is to hypothesize that he is speaking about an actual second visit that Paul nowhere discusses explicitly.⁸²

j. Meta-Commentary: An Attempt to Provoke More Diligence (11:19–21)

With the brief meta-commentary in 12:19–21, Paul finally stops comparing himself with other ministers who are trying to exercise leadership over the church in Corinth and begins to clarify why it has proven necessary for him to write as he has in 10:1–12:18. Can the first person plural in 12:19 be plausibly said to include Timothy? Arguably, it can, provided that Paul is generalizing in order to speak about 2 Corinthians as a whole, a reading that is supported by Paul's use of the fronted adverb *πάσαι* and the phrase *τὰ πάντα* (as opposed to *ταῦτα*).⁸³ The point of 12:19, therefore, is that Paul and Timothy

⁸⁰ White, "Visits," 87–88.

⁸¹ Windisch argues that Paul would have avoided mentioning the "thirdness" of his coming if this numerical quality were an allusion to previously abandoned plans, given that he has been criticized for his abandoning of those plans (*Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 399). Yet Paul has directly confronted the matter of his travel plans in 1:13b–2:13 and sought to replace the idea that he is avoiding Corinth with the more constructive idea that he is intentionally delegating responsibilities to Corinth. His delay in returning is a deliberate attempt to increase the maturity of the Corinthian congregation as well as an attempt avert an upsetting confrontation on the occasion of his long-awaited return.

⁸² Against the idea that *τρίτον τοῦτο* modifies *ἐτοίμως ἔχω*, multiple commentators have cited the subsequent statement in 12:14b (*καὶ οὐ καταναρκήσω*). For instance, Harris writes that "Paul could be burdensome only on his arrival, not on his readiness to depart" (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 882). And Thrall observes: "Paul goes on to say that he will not be a (financial) burden to his readers. This is relevant only to an actual stay in Corinth, not to mere preparation for a visit" (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:843). But there is no logic to this argument whatsoever, since *on any possible interpretation of the grammar in 12:14a* Paul's wording anticipates a future visit to which *καταναρκήσω* can be related.

⁸³ Most commentators, regarding the plural as a sudden and passing adoption of the epistolary

have not been defending themselves in 2 Corinthians, but have merely been speaking as humble representatives of Christ.⁸⁴ Why then does Paul proceed to use the first person singular in 12:20–21 when explaining what is meant by τῆς ὑμῶν οἰκοδομῆς?⁸⁵ Various commentators note the change in passing without providing an explanation.⁸⁶ I suggest that Paul includes Timothy in 12:19 because he is reflecting somewhat broadly on 2 Corinthians as a whole, whereas he speaks in the singular in 12:20–21 because he is reflecting more immediately on his personal concerns. So nothing Paul and Timothy have been saying in 2 Corinthians should be interpreted as a defensive attempt to protect their personal interests, because the two men have been speaking as humble representatives of Christ (12:19). Really, Paul’s greatest concern is not his own reputation, but the prospect that he will be greeted by an immature and sin-ridden community upon his arrival in Corinth (12:20–21).

It is difficult to underestimate the contribution that 12:20–21 makes to our understanding of 10:1–13:10 and to 2 Corinthians as a whole, given that these verses supply crucial details about the way that Paul conceives of what he is doing by means of his letter-writing. In the first place, he regards 2 Corinthians as an attempt to address

plural, argue that Paul has in view the highly personal remarks in 10:1–12:18 (e.g. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 560).

⁸⁴ Harris argues that the clause κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν is “describing his self-defense throughout the present letter,” in which case “it is...improbable that the first person plural is an instance of the apostolic ‘we,’ with Paul here associating Silvanus and Timothy (cf. 1:19) with himself” (*Second Epistle*, 895). Of course, Silvanus is not even remotely in view in 12:19, but Harris does not even consider that there might be a plural reference to Timothy as co-author, because he has interpreted all the earlier plurals as references to Paul alone.

⁸⁵ “This verse...explains the need for the οἰκοδομῆ of v. 19” (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:862).

⁸⁶ E.g. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 561: “Note that the use of the first person singular resumes after vv. 18c–19.”

disputes that persist among his readers (12:20). And in the second place, he regards 2 Corinthians as an attempt to ensure that he does not find unrepentant sinners within his Corinthian community (12:21). The former of these concerns, I propose, is addressed most directly in those parts of 2 Corinthians where Paul and Timothy's controversial leadership is discussed (1:3–5:21; 7:3–16; 10:1–12:18), whereas the latter is most directly addressed in those places where the Corinthians are encouraged to exercise their own leadership in order maintain the purity of their congregation (6:1–7:2; 13:1–10).

Is there any particular reason why Paul groups these sins into two groups and then orders the groups in the way that he does? And is there any significance to the prefix *προ-* that is attached to the verb *προαμαρτάνω* in 12:21? Some commentators pass over these details in silence, saying nothing about them.⁸⁷ Given my analysis of earlier segments in 2 Corinthians, however, it is possible to be very specific about these details. The ordering of the two groups derives from the fact that Paul holds the first group (i.e. those who have been debating the relative merits of his leadership) responsible for dealing with the behaviour of the latter group (i.e. those who are impure), such that an enduring debate about Paul's leadership among the members of the first group will entail that they will fail to enact their own leadership and will thus permit the second group to be a problem when Paul arrives in Corinth. And the prefix *προ-* derives from the fact that Paul is speaking about a very specific group of people who have sinned prior to a specific point of reference: namely, Paul's earlier letter, which demanded the church enact appropriate disciplinary procedures.

⁸⁷ E.g. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 561–63, 566–67.

Paul's fear, in other words, is that certain newly restored sinners (cf. 2:5–13) will be free to once again defile the Corinthian church because everyone else is more interested in debating Paul and Timothy's leadership than they are interested in enacting their own leadership. He fears that, upon his arrival, he may need to mourn πολλοὺς τῶν προημαρτηκῶν καὶ μὴ μετανοησάντων.⁸⁸ Frequently, this nominal group is said to involve an exegetical genitive rather than a partitive one,⁸⁹ as though the group is merely an "imprecise" way of expressing πολλοὺς τοὺς προημαρτηκότας.⁹⁰ It is preferable, however, to take Paul's choice of words more seriously. Apparently, *some* (but not all) of those who sinned beforehand remain unrepentant.⁹¹ And Paul is worried that he may be forced to mourn *many* (but not all) of those who remain unrepentant. In other words, the idea is that *some* of those who sinned beforehand will have repented prior to Paul's arrival, that *some* of those who remain unrepentant will repent when Paul arrives, and that *many* of those who remain unrepentant upon Paul's arrival may ultimately reject his call for holiness and thus need to be removed from the Corinthian community.⁹² And

⁸⁸ It is debated whether πάλιν in 12:21 modifies ἔρχομαι, because Paul's wording is somewhat ambiguous. The πάλιν may relate to ἐλθόντος, in which case we have an instance of a very common expression meaning 'come/go again' (e.g. Matt 26:43; Mark 11:27; John 4:46; 14:3), or it may relate to ταπεινώση, in which case Paul means that his arrival in Corinth might be associated once again with a sense of lowliness or shame and with a sense of grief over people who are defiling themselves. If the latter is accepted, then the point of the πάλιν in 12:21 is that, upon Paul's return to Corinth, many people will be back where they were when Paul, Silas, and Timothy first arrived in the city—living as unbelievers.

⁸⁹ E.g. Harris, *Second Epistle*, 902: "Paul is clearly not suggesting that there are some sinners who failed to repent over whom he would not mourn."

⁹⁰ Lietzmann, *An die Korinther*, 160; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 562.

⁹¹ Thus Thrall, citing Windisch, proposes that there is an implicit contrast between πολλοὺς and πάντας, such that "Paul may be expressing a modest hope that not all will have remained impenitent by the time he arrives in person, although he fears that *many* may" (*Second Epistle*, 2:869).

⁹² Although Harris objects that Paul will surely grieve over *all* those who have sinned and remained unrepentant (see above), the surrounding co-text is entirely concerned with the imposition of apostolic discipline upon the occasion of Paul's arrival, such that the verb πενήσω has an official

all of this is predicated on the fact that Paul's readers have resisted the idea that they should take responsibility for the purity of their congregation, which was the message conveyed in Paul's earlier upsetting letter.

k. The Appeal Proper (13:1)

With 13:1, we finally arrive at the first direct instruction in all of 10:1–13:10, excluding the vague appeal in 10:1–2 and the various meta-discursive instructions throughout 10:1–12:18. What is more, this direct instruction articulates a procedure for dealing with the punishment of offenders, using the wording of Deut 19:15. Paul has just expressed his fear that the church in Corinth will be so busy disputing his leadership that sinners will be permitted to run wild, and now he underscores a principle that he seems to have given them at an earlier point in time: ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων καὶ τριῶν σταθήσεται πᾶν ῥῆμα. Unfortunately, the immediate relevance of 13:1 has been muddled by attempts to treat the scriptural quotation as an *observation* relating to Paul's upcoming visit instead of a direct *instruction* relating to the period preceding that visit.⁹³ As Welborn notes:

The reason for Paul's citation of this rule of judicial evidence, and its relevance to the charge of embezzlement under discussion since 12:14, have been obscured in the history of interpretation by a "highly artificial" construal of the "three witnesses" of Scripture as Paul's three visits to Corinth. This interpretation, which goes back to Chrysostom and the Catena, was taken over by Calvin, and has established itself as the dominant explanation of the passage among modern

leadership reaction in view. Cf. 1 Cor 5:2, where Paul speaks about mourning the incestuous man. In both cases, the idea is that a person has died by sinning and by departing from the community of faith.

⁹³ Harris, for instance, supposes that "Very abruptly, without any connecting particle and without any introductory formula...such as καθὼς γέγραπται...Paul introduces a citation of Deut. 19:15. His thought has moved swiftly from his arrival in Corinth...to the urgent church business he may have to conduct there" (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 906).

commentators. The interpretation rests upon the assumption that, since the citation immediately follows Paul's announcement, "This is the third time (τρίτον) I am coming to you" in 13:1a, the third visit of the announcement and the three witnesses of the scriptural citation must somehow correspond.⁹⁴

Welborn's own proposal is that Paul has been wrongly accused by a single malicious witness, but my own reading of 2 Corinthians indicates that 13:1 is directly instructing the Corinthians to properly conduct disciplinary procedures whenever necessary.⁹⁵

1. Affirmation of Paul's Power (13:2–4)

Having given the instruction in 13:1, Paul proceeds in 13:2 to warn about the consequences that will follow if it is not heeded, making it clear that his warning is addressed not only to those who sinned beforehand (i.e. those restored by 2:5–13) but also to everyone else as well. With respect to this warning, three things are noteworthy.

First, there are the participial clauses *παρὼν τὸ δεύτερον* and *ἂπὼν νῦν*, which seem to confirm the "thirdness" of Paul's upcoming visit.⁹⁶ Probably, the most

⁹⁴ Welborn, "Two or Three Witnesses," 207–208, citing Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 413. To the extent that "the assumption that Paul is speaking metaphorically in 13:1 is encumbered with difficulties," as Welborn observes, and to the extent that a literal reading of the passage makes perfect sense, the coincidental proximation of the terms *τρίτος/τρεῖς* and *δευτερος/δύο* should not be given any special significance. Instead, the terms *τρίτος* and *δευτερος* in 13:1–2 must be interpreted independently of the scriptural citation in 13:1.

⁹⁵ Welborn, "Two or Three Witnesses," 213.

⁹⁶ Harris says of 12:14 that "it might seem that Paul is simply indicating a willingness, for a third time, to visit Corinth," but concludes "That the reference is to a third coming, not a third willingness or readiness, is clear from 13:1" (*Second Epistle*, 882). Similarly, Martin interprets 12:14 as involving a third visit, saying that "Paul, in much clearer language, tells the Corinthians (in 13:1) that he is coming for a third visit" (*2 Corinthians*, 440). With regard to the expression *τρίτον τοῦτο* in 13:1, however, nothing more needs to be said than has been said already by Warfield:

[I]t is undeniable that grammatically the words *τρίτον τοῦτο* are equally flexible to the two meanings, 'this is the third time that I am coming,' and 'on this third occasion I am actually coming.' And exegetically, all reason fails for the very emphatic (note the position) assertion that the next time Paul visited his Corinthian children would be the third visit he had made them;

widespread reading of these clauses is one that treats ὡς παρὼν τὸ δεύτερον in relation to προεῖρηκα and then treats ἀπὼν νῦν in relation to προλέγω (see below on the structural pairings).⁹⁷ On this reading, Paul has *already* warned his readers on the occasion of his “being present” *for the second time*, and he is *now* warning them “being absent”—hence Paul must have made a second trip to Corinth prior to writing 10:1–13:10.

Adherents of the view that Paul made only two trips to Corinth during his lifetime have responded to this proposed reading with various counter-proposals. The most frequently cited proposal is that of Hyldahl, who argues that the entire expression ὡς παρὼν τὸ δεύτερον καὶ ἀπὼν νῦν modifies προλέγω, with the first instance of ὡς meaning something like *as though* (i.e. “I warn you as though present for the second time but in fact now absent”).⁹⁸ This, however, is an unconvincing explanation, for the most part because it is not clear that ὡς...καὶ can mean *as if...but in fact*.⁹⁹ Taking a similar but slightly different approach, but agreeing with Hyldahl that ὡς παρὼν τὸ δεύτερον καὶ ἀπὼν νῦν modifies προλέγω, I propose that Paul means something like *as one who is approaching for the second time and at a distance for the moment*.¹⁰⁰ On this reading, the

whereas the whole Epistle teems with a very important reason why he need assert that on this third occasion of his preparation to visit them, he would actually fulfil his intention (Warfield, “Difficult Passages,” 39).

⁹⁷ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:876.

⁹⁸ Hyldahl, “Die Frage,” 304.

⁹⁹ “Das ist nur um den Preis einer sehr gezwungenen Deutung dieser Stellen möglich” (Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 40).

¹⁰⁰ Hilgenfeld is probably correct that Paul would have written something like προεῖρηκα παρὼν τὸ δεύτερον καὶ προλέγω ἀπὼν νῦν had he meant to speak about his second visit as distinct from the present moment (“Paulus und Korinth,” 191–92).

conjunction ὡς is not correlative with καί, as is alleged by BDAG.¹⁰¹ Rather, ὡς introduces a description of what Paul is like and καί conjoins the two participial clauses that together constitute that description. Also, the participle παρών does not construe Paul as present in Corinth for the second time. Rather, the verb παρών conveys the idea of proximity, such that Paul is *nearing* for the second time (i.e. ‘to be presenting’).¹⁰² Granted, this makes the clause ἀπὸν νῦν “redundant,” as commentators are apt to point out, but this kind of redundancy is neither unusual nor problematic. To the contrary, it is an effective way of emphasizing something important—in this case, the fact that a period of time remains within which the Corinthians have an opportunity to display their maturity and thereby avert an unpleasant reunion with Paul and Timothy.¹⁰³

A second issue in 13:2 involves the rather unusual expression εἰς τὸ πάλιν. Most scholars regard the expression as equivalent to πάλιν and thus suggest that Paul means

¹⁰¹ BDAG, 1104.

¹⁰² The verb *πάρεμι* conveys the idea of proximity with additional nuances emerging contextually, which is why LSJ contains not only the glosses *to be by* or *present* but also the additional glosses *near* and *at hand*. Notably, in contexts involving inception and/or motion, *πάρεμι* is typically translated using the English verb *to come*, and in various cases we even find the prepositions *εἰς* and *ἐκ* supplying an origin or destination (see the examples in LSJ). In the case of 2 Cor 13:2, therefore, where both movement and arrival are salient ideas, the proximity conveyed by *παρών* is not a static proximity (i.e. ‘to be present’) but one that involves motion towards a goal. Paul is *nearing* Corinth for the second time.

¹⁰³ Frequently, scholars speak as though the verse contains a highly intricate construction. It is better to say, however, that it displays a rhythmic meandering in which Paul sets out to convey a very simple idea but then ends up punctuating his point with a series of pairs. He initially repeats the verb *προλέγω* in order to stress that this is his second warning, but then exploits the resulting rhythmic effect in order to “hammer home” the remainder of the verse by including two pairs that expand on *προλέγω*. The wording ὡς παρών τὸ δεύτερον καὶ ἀπὸν νῦν might perhaps be related to both instances of *προλέγω*, because we know that this is the second time Paul has warned the Corinthians from a distance in order to give them time to prepare for his return (cf. 1:23–2:4; 10:8–10). The adverb *νῦν*, however, shows that Paul’s preoccupation is with the immediate situation, even if his warning is the second of its kind. Along similar lines, the paired phrases τοῖς προημαρτηκόσιν and τοῖς λοιποῖς πᾶσιν are concerned with the scope of the immediate warning.

*come again or come back.*¹⁰⁴ This is unlikely, however, given that the expression εἰς τὸ πάλιν is not at all well-attested in Greek literature (occurring only four times in the entire TLG corpus). More likely, the unusual phrase τὸ πάλιν construes a thing to which Paul may be coming, in accordance with normal use of ἔρχομαι + εἰς (Matt 2:11; 9:1; 12:9; etc.). Paul is concerned, with regard to those who sinned beforehand, that he will be coming “to a repeat” (εἰς τὸ πάλιν). He is concerned, that is, that he will arrive to find a renewed outbreak of the impurities that prompted his earlier call for discipline. Not only does this reading of εἰς τὸ πάλιν fit the surrounding co-text in general, it also fits with the subjunctive wording ἐὰν ἔλθω, which is all too often forced to mean *when I come* simply because Paul has already stated that he is coming.¹⁰⁵ By means of the subjunctive, Paul is not envisioning the possibility that he might come, as though his coming were uncertain; rather, the subjunctive mood envisions the more specific possibility that Paul might come “to a repeat” of the earlier troubles—which is the very situation he is trying to avert by means of 10:1–13:10.

Moving into 13:3, we find a clause that is especially important as regards the social relations enacted in 10:1–13:10, because it has often been interpreted to mean that Paul is not the only party in the author-addressee relationship who is making demands. Despite frequent translations such as *you are demanding*, however, the wording δοκιμὴν ζητεῖτε does not necessarily entail that Paul’s converts in Corinth are arrogantly insisting

¹⁰⁴ BDAG, 289, 752. Moule, 69. Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:877; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 910.

¹⁰⁵ E.g. “There is considerable agreement that ἐὰν here means ‘when’” (Thrall, *Second Epistle* 2:877 n.47); “having announced his imminent return (12:14; 13:1), ἐὰν must mean ‘when’” (Harris, *Second Epistle*, 910).

that Paul supply a proof of his legitimacy. Rather, this wording also permits a less confrontational meaning whereby Paul that is aware of questions being asked among his readers with respect to his leadership (i.e. *you are seeking proof*). In any case, the basic thrust of the verse is that Paul's converts have embraced the position of his critics and are now convinced that Paul should deal personally with his sinful converts in order to demonstrate his legitimacy as a leader. So although Paul would prefer that his converts mature to the point where they can oversee themselves for the most part, his readers are indignant that he would hold them responsible for the sins of their brothers (7:11) and would burden them with the responsibility of exercising church discipline against their own brothers (2:5).

m. The True Object of Paul's Concern (13:5–10)

Following through with this idea into 13:5–10, we come to the clauses *ἑαυτοὺς πειράζετε* and *ἑαυτοὺς δοκιμάζετε*. Furnish writes that Paul's readers "have been demanding from him some evidence that he belongs to Christ in a special way (e.g., v. 3; 10:7). Now he insists that it is about their own Christian existence that they should be concerned: *it is yourselves you must put to the proof*."¹⁰⁶ Is Paul, then, following up an angry warning with a bitter retort? Not necessarily. Rather, keeping in mind that the punishments mentioned in 12:19–13:4 are punishments that Paul wishes to avert, then it is plausible that the implied contrast with *ἑαυτοὺς δοκιμάζετε* is something like *ἐγὼ*

¹⁰⁶ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 577. Cf. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 477: "He exhorts the Corinthians to 'examine' themselves, instead of subjecting him to scrutiny"; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 919: "It is your own selves—not me—that you must put to the test."

δοκιμάζω ὑμᾶς rather than something like ἐμὲ δοκιμάζετε. In this case, commentators are closer to the true orientation of the text when they say things like “he is allowing the Corinthians the chance to correct the situation at Corinth themselves.”¹⁰⁷ Paul’s point is not to aggressively turn the tables on his readers (“Don’t test me, test yourselves!”) but to continue the process begun in 12:19 wherein the focus of the text is being pushed away from questions about Paul and towards questions about the Corinthians’ own well-being (“I don’t want to punish you, so start testing and examining yourselves!”).

In support of this reading, I note several details. First, the opening meta-comments in 12:19 contrast two possible understandings of the behaviour being enacted in 2 Corinthians: either Paul and Timothy are defending themselves, or they are attempting to make their readers more mature. Because Paul explicitly selects the second interpretation as the correct one, however, his readers are directed *away from* the idea that he is concerned with his own reputation and *towards* the idea that he is concerned with their maturity. As so from the outset, the interpreter ought to suspect that Paul will try to deflect attention away from the issues surrounding his leadership and onto something else. Moreover, 12:19–13:10 concludes with Paul reiterating that he is writing in order to build up his readers so that he will not need to be severe when he arrives. This final section of 10:1–13:10, therefore, is bracketed by clarifications that attempt to ensure that the Corinthians do not misunderstand what Paul is trying to accomplish. He is not trying to defend himself and Timothy or to prove his authority; he is trying to provoke his

¹⁰⁷ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 477.

readers into some kind of action that will obviate any need for him to display his authority.

Second, Paul explicitly states in 13:7 that he and Timothy do not want to see any of their converts behaving badly—and that this concern takes precedence over the possibility that they will be regarded as unqualified leaders in the event that their converts are seen to be behaving badly (οὐχ ἵνα ἡμεῖς δόκιμοι φανῶμεν, ἀλλ' ἵνα ὑμεῖς τὸ καλὸν ποιῆτε). Notably, questions surrounding the quality of the Pauline mission are here explicitly tied to the tolerance of bad behaviour within the Pauline churches. If Paul and Timothy's converts conduct themselves badly, Paul and Timothy will be regarded as unqualified. This is important because it gets to the heart of the clarification Paul is making in 12:19–13:10. Some of Paul and Timothy's converts have been conducting themselves so badly that the two men are being regarded as unqualified for leadership, and yet Paul is still more concerned about his converts than he is about re-asserting his and Timothy's authority. He *could* come to Corinth and tear a strip off his converts, but he has chosen instead to help the Corinthians to mature in their own leadership, even though he and Timothy have lost credibility in the process.¹⁰⁸

Third, as a minister of Christ, Paul wants *Christ* to be powerful among the Corinthians (13:3b). He wants the resurrection power of Christ that works within him to

¹⁰⁸ Here Bruce's astute comments are worth quoting:

Paul would certainly feel 'humbled' if he found such things still rife among his converts at Corinth, together with the unrepented impurity, immorality, and licentiousness against which he had repeatedly warned them (cf. 1 C. 5.9ff.; 6.12ff.; 10.8). The persistence of such behaviour in the church would provide his legalist critics with a powerful argument against his reliance on the new life of the indwelling Spirit as the all-sufficient power to change his Gentile converts within and without from pagan ways to Christian ways (Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 252).

spill over into the Corinthian church, so that the Corinthians themselves become powerful (13:4). He wants the Corinthians, as people in the faith, to test themselves and examine themselves (13:5a–b; cf. 1 Cor 11:27–32). In truth, they are not so unqualified that they must wait for Paul and Timothy to come and exercise judgement; rather, they have *Christ* in their midst (13:5c; ἢ οὐκ ἐπιγινώσκετε ἑαυτοὺς ὅτι Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν). The ultimate goal of 10:1–13:10, therefore, is not the matter of Paul and Timothy’s power or authentication, but rather *the Corinthians’* exercise of *Christ’s* power as the best authenticator of Paul and Timothy’s ministry.

As 13:6–10 clarify, the goal of 10:1–13:10 is to empower the Corinthians. Paul and Timothy are happy being weak, provided that their converts are strong (13:9). The two men would much prefer to arrive in Corinth and find a strong and vibrant church than to arrive and find that they need to exercise their authority against their converts (13:10) or against their opponents (10:1–2). So although Paul is willing to issue stern warnings about impending confrontations, he does so only under compulsion, because his readers are apparently under the impression that he must authenticate his ministry by dealing personally with sinners in their community. At this point, we have finally found a response to the question posed with respect to 10:1–2. How are the Corinthians supposed to ensure that Paul and Timothy do not need to confront their critics? They are supposed to ensure this by abandoning the wrongheaded and worldly ideal that good leaders are strong and forceful, by rejecting the related argument that Paul and Timothy should personally punish rebellious sinners in Corinth, and by taking responsibility for the enactment of regular church discipline in accordance with Paul’s repeated instructions.

3. Summary

Drawing upon my analysis of progressive moves, I have argued that there is an unquestionable break in the linear development of 2 Corinthians at 10:1, such that no immediate line of development can be traced from the concluding moves of 8:1–9:15 to the opening moves of 10:1–13:10. Nevertheless, I have also demonstrated that 10:1–13:10 is quite similar to 8:1–9:15 in several important respects. Both segments demand a practical response that is to be carried out prior to Paul’s arrival in Corinth in order to avert an unpleasant situation on the occasion of that arrival. Moreover, in both cases, practical instructions are accompanied by lengthy and developed support material. In the case of 8:1–9:15, this material is explicable with reference to general tensions between Paul and the Corinthians; in the case of 10:1–13:10, it requires the presence of other Christian leaders who are criticizing the Pauline mission and successfully calling into question its leadership. In both cases, however, the relevant factors have already been indicated by 1:3–7:16, making it unnecessary to add any new detail to the existing context of situation.

As regards the identity chains formed in 10:1–13:10, it is noteworthy that there are so many first person singular references even along the mainline of the segment, given that the general tendency in earlier segments has been for Paul to include Timothy wherever possible. Also noteworthy is the emphatic opening preface in 10:1 (αὐτὸς...ἐγὼ Παῦλος παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς), which underscores the fact that Paul himself is personally enacting whatever is being done in 10:1–13:10. These factors do not, however, entail that

Timothy has ceased to function as the implied co-author of 2 Corinthians, any more than is the case in 1:13b–2:13 or 7:3–16. Rather, within each of these passages, Paul continues to switch from the first person singular to the first person plural in such a way that Timothy's accessibility as the implied co-author of 2 Corinthians is presumed (e.g. 1:14, 18, 24; 7:4, 9, 12, 14; 10:2, 11; 11:4, 12, 21; 12:19; 13:4, 6). The use of first person singular items along the mainline of these passages, therefore, should be explained with reference to what is being done within them rather than with reference to a change in the overall context of situation construed by Paul's language. What is being done in 10:1–13:10 involves Paul more than it does Timothy (cf. 10:1), even though what is being done in 2 Corinthians as a whole involves both Paul and Timothy together (cf. 12:19).

Drawing upon the earlier instances of this pattern of participant reference in 1:13b–2:13 and 7:3–16 (which are the other places where 2 Corinthians employs first person singular items outside of meta-commentaries), I suggest that the use of first person singular references along the mainline of 10:1–13:10 can be explained with the hypothesis that Paul is once again responding to criticisms that have been levelled against him on account of some recent leadership decisions that were made without Timothy's direct involvement (i.e. the sending of an upsetting letter and the cancellation of a planned visit). Paul's actions have no doubt affected Timothy's own relations with Corinth, which is why Paul includes him at numerous points throughout the relevant passages whenever he is defending the leadership of the Pauline mission generally, but the independent nature of Paul's decisions and the highly personal nature of the resulting

criticisms (e.g. 1:17a; 10:10) have led Paul to enact 10:1–13:10 with an unusual measure of independence relative to the majority of 2 Corinthians.¹⁰⁹

Turning now to the manner in which 10:1–13:10 unfolds, it would appear that Paul has structured the final segment of 2 Corinthians in precisely the same fashion as he previously structured 6:1–7:16. He first makes a vague, ominous-sounding appeal that does little more than set the tone for the activity in which he is about to engage (10:1–2; cf. 6:1). The appeal signals that he is going to demand something from the Corinthians and that negative consequences will follow if they are non-compliant, but the actual details of his demand are left unstated so that he can build his way up to them and achieve a more climactic and effective delivery. Next, Paul elaborates on his opening appeal with a very basic explanation as to why his appeal should be heeded, encapsulating in miniature the arguments by means of which he is going to support his appeal (10:3–6; cf. 6:2). The fleshly standards of those who are criticizing the Pauline mission render their criticisms irrelevant, and Paul and Timothy are fully prepared to punish any disobedience that remains *after* the Corinthians have obeyed their instructions with regard to the enactment of disciplinary procedures.

In the statements that follow, Paul builds up towards an instruction he wants to give by presenting information that will help the Corinthians to obey it (10:7–12:18; cf. 6:3–10). Specifically, he exposes the worldly leadership ideals of the other Christian ministers who are criticizing the Pauline mission and recommending themselves as more

¹⁰⁹ Note, however, the first person plural in the meta-comment in 12:19. Even while doing something more or less by himself, Paul maintains the perspective that 2 Corinthians as a whole has been enacted by himself and Timothy together.

qualified leaders, presumably because this worldly notion of leadership is causing the Corinthians to resist Paul's demands for communally enacted discipline and to demand that he come to Corinth in order to confront his rebellious converts personally. Then, having laid bare the problem as he sees it, Paul moves closer to the heart of things by framing the problem at issue as something about which he cares personally (12:19–21; cf. 6:11–13). He lays out on the table the fears that are driving him to push so aggressively for the total rejection of his critics: (1) as long as the leadership question remains open, the church will remain divided into factions; and (2) as long as church factions remain, Paul's more impure converts will be permitted to defile the church and will eventually become so problematic that they will need to be excluded from the community permanently.

At this point, after an incredibly long build-up, Paul finally reveals exactly what it is that he wants (13:1–5; 6:14). He wants the Corinthians to make an orderly disciplinary process part of their regular business and he wants them to do so before he arrives, so that he will not need to enact the strong leadership that he is allegedly incapable of enacting. Moreover, he wants the Corinthians to start caring less about the alleged power of individual leaders and more about the power of Christ that operates in their midst. Whether or not he and Timothy are regarded as great leaders in the end, it is essential that the Corinthian church conducts itself as a mature community of faith.

The above description of what is being done in 10:1–13:10 derives from my general analysis of progressive moves. There are also, however, a large number of meta-commentaries throughout the section and these shed additional light on what Paul is

doing. First, it can be noted that 10:7 instructs the Corinthians to look at the obvious facts and that from this point until 12:18 Paul proceeds to outline why he is qualified to lead the Corinthian community. In a subsequent clarification, however, Paul clarifies that he and Timothy have not been defending their leadership but attempting to help the Corinthians become more mature (12:19). How can these two details be reconciled? The solution is familiar from 2:14–5:21. In that earlier segment, Paul and Timothy describe their ministry, ostensibly in order to defend their leadership against allegations of inadequacy—and yet the meta-commentaries in 3:1–3 and 5:11b–15 are unambiguous about the fact that the description in question is *not* a self-recommendation but a resource that is being provided to the Corinthians so that they know how to better respond to critics of the Pauline mission. Along similar lines, 10:7–12:18 reads very much like a defence of Paul and Timothy’s leadership—and yet 12:19 is unambiguous about the fact that it is *not* a defence, but (part of) an attempt to mature the Corinthians, presumably by helping them to abandon the un-Christian view of leadership that is being espoused by other Christian leaders in Corinth.

Turning now to the meta-commentaries that occur within 10:7–12:18, I note that Paul characterizes his conduct as foolish (11:1–4, 16–21; 12:1, 11). But in what, exactly, does this foolishness consist? Contrasting 11:16–21 with the much more reserved stance in 10:12, I have argued that the foolishness of Paul’s discourse consists in the fact that he is going against his better judgement by boasting about his fleshly leadership qualifications (11:16–18) in order to secure power and money (11:19–21). Or at least, this is what Paul *says*. In actual fact, the way he frames his conduct as an imitation of others

serves to clarify that the other leaders whom he is imitating are being foolish when they boast about their fleshly qualifications in order to secure power and money (i.e. the remarks are ironic). And at the same time, the fact that Paul boasts only about his fleshly weaknesses serves to teach the Corinthians that Christ's power is made manifest when his servants are dependent upon him rather than upon their own fleshly abilities. Overall, therefore, 10:7–12:18 uses the form of a self-defence in order to teach the Corinthians a more mature view of Christian leadership, just as 2:14–5:21 uses the form of a self-recommendation in order to provide the Corinthians with the response that should be given to detractors of the Pauline mission.

If I am correct in this description of what Paul is doing in 10:1–13:10, then some exegetical implications emerge as regards Paul's relations with his readers. Most importantly, although Paul's readers have obediently disciplined a number of church members in response to an earlier harsh letter and have thereby demonstrated their submission to Paul's authority, they have by no means learned to take responsibility for themselves and they have not stopped being contentious about the relative merits of different leaders. Rather, Paul continues to lack confidence in their ability to maintain a reasonable standard of holiness and decency, and he is aware that they are not commending the Pauline mission but are instead seeking evidence that Paul and Timothy are adequate as leaders. In particular, they are eager for Paul to make a personal visit and to deal personally with the more rebellious and sinful members of their congregation.

A potential objection at this point is that 1:3–9:15 construes a situation wherein Paul and Timothy are confident and hopeful regarding their partnership with Corinth and

joyful on account of a recent show of obedience, whereas 10:1–13:10 construes a situation wherein Paul is fearful and upset. These differences should not be downplayed, but they must be kept in proper perspective. In 1:3–2:13, Paul and Timothy construe themselves as being confident and hopeful with regards to Corinth—yet they deem it necessary to explain this confidence by means of an extended defence of their conduct. In 2:14–5:21, they construe themselves as having a strong partnership with the Corinthians—yet they deem it necessary to cast themselves as strong leaders so as to help the Corinthians become better at expressing their pride in the Pauline mission. In 6:1–7:16, Paul and Timothy underscore that they are encouraged and even joyful because of recent developments in Corinth—yet these remarks come on the heels of a call for an improved commitment to communal purity. In 8:1–9:15, Paul and Timothy boldly request that a generous financial gift be ready and waiting upon their arrival—yet Paul makes a point of explaining that these advance preparations are necessary because he has been telling everyone about how proud he is of the church in Corinth.

In keeping with this broad perspective, it can be noted that the core appeal of 10:1–13:10 is not that the Corinthians would reassert their loyalty following a terrible betrayal, but that they would do *more* of something that they have just done in response to Paul's earlier letter (i.e. enact their own local leadership by disciplining immoral church members) and thus *continue* towards a mature understanding and practice of church leadership. And the aggressive ridiculing that dominates the segment is not directed at the Corinthians *per se*, but is an ironic parody of other Christian leaders that is being enacted in the Corinthians' presence for their benefit (i.e. to help them become

more mature in their understanding of Christian leadership). Ultimately, therefore, what is surprisingly about 10:1–13:10 is the fact that Paul so overtly reveals a number of things that have been kept in the background throughout 1:3–9:15. But while such a change of strategy is perhaps surprising, it is insufficient evidence for the claim that the text encodes two distinct situations. All of 2 Corinthians construes the same overarching context of situation, even if its final segment is more overt about the unpleasantness of that situation than are the preceding segments.

CHAPTER 8: THE TEXT, SITUATION AND SETTING OF 2 CORINTHIANS

In the course of analyzing 2 Corinthians using the method outlined in Chapter 2, I have come to a number of unconventional conclusions about *what Paul and Timothy are saying* (i.e. about the language of 2 Corinthians), which in turn have led me to an innovative explanation of *what Paul and Timothy are doing* (i.e. of the context of situation construed by 2 Corinthians). This chapter will synthesize and summarize both my linguistic conclusions and my conclusions about the context of situation that is construed by 2 Corinthians. Then, moving into the territory of historical criticism, it will relate the context of situation construed by 2 Corinthians to a specific historical setting.

1. What Are Paul and Timothy Saying?

Throughout Chapters 3–7, I have analyzed the language of 2 Corinthians in a linear fashion from start to finish in order to show that my reading makes sense of the whole rather than merely a few parts. There are, however, a few key passages and a few key decisions on which my reading finally rests. Here, therefore, is a list of those key passages and interpretive decisions.

a. 1:3–2:13

- * Whereas most of 1:3–2:13 is construed as the combined speech of both Paul and Timothy, 1:13b–2:13 employs first person singulars along its mainline, indicating that only one of the two co-authors is enacting this passage. This change is explicable, however, with reference to the fact that Paul is discussing recent developments that have resulted from decisions and actions that did not involve Timothy, such that there is no real need to speak about a change in the underlying context of situation.
- * Paul responds in 1:13b–17a to the charge that he has avoided Corinth because he is not man enough to personally confront the problems developing there. Then, in 1:17b–22, he rejects the suggestion that he will continue to avoid Corinth, tying the reliability of the Pauline mission to the reliability of its divine commissioner.
- * There is no “offender” in view throughout 1:23–2:13. Rather, this passage explains that Paul has *not* been avoiding Corinth but intentionally directing the church to manage its own affairs. He does not want his evangelistic work to be hampered by constant anxiety, and so he has pressed the Corinthian church to take responsibility for the enactment of disciplinary procedures. They have already responded to his written instructions by punishing a number of wayward church members; now he instructs them to take the next step by restoring those church members.

b. 2:14–5:21

- * In 2 Cor 3, Moses is cited *not* as someone who hid himself from others but as a fellow servant whose experience with Israel resembles Paul and Timothy’s own experience. When their fellow Jews reject them (or when other Christians are embarrassed by them), Paul and Timothy take heart and remember Moses. Not only did Moses himself have to deal with people whose hearts were hard, but his veil can be understood figuratively as a symbol of contemporary Israel’s inability to read the Mosaic Law correctly (i.e. so as to perceive that the covenant administered by Moses pales in comparison with the vastly superior covenant administered by Christ).
- * In 3:1–3 and 5:11b–15, Paul and Timothy clarify that they are not recommending themselves to their addressees but only providing a response that supporters of the Pauline mission can give to its critics. It should not be inferred, however, that a debate is taking place in Corinth with respect to letters of recommendation. Rather, the remarks in question can be fully explained with reference to the fact that Paul and Timothy’s leadership is being criticized by other leaders who are seeking to take their place, such that 2:14–5:21 itself might be misunderstood as a self-recommendation.

c. 6:1–7:16

- * Although 6:3–10 talks about many of the same phenomena that are discussed in 2:14–5:21, the former is not a continuation of the latter. Rather, Paul and Timothy signal with the general appeal in 6:1 that they are proceeding with an exhortation of some kind.
- * The function of the Isaiah quotation in 6:2 is the same as the function of the self-example given in 6:3–10—to assure the Corinthians that God is able to sustain and encourage his faithful servants in the event that their obedience to the instructions in 6:14–7:1 becomes costly.
- * Neither 6:11–13 nor 7:2 has mutual affection in view. Rather, the passages are Paul and Timothy's response to allegations being made on the part of certain Corinthian converts. Specifically, it is being alleged that the leaders of the Pauline mission have imposed such stringent restrictions that their converts are being financially ruined.
- * The allegedly disruptive exhortations in 6:14–7:1 are in fact the core of 6:1–7:16. They exhort the Corinthian church to keep watch over itself in order to maintain appropriate standards of communal purity. This exhortation, moreover, is one that Paul and Timothy have given previously.
- * The placating remarks in 7:3–4 are an attempt to prevent the Corinthians from becoming upset on account of the exhortation in 6:1–7:2. Why would they get upset? Because they are disappointed about Paul's decision not to return to Corinth and irritated by his claim that it is they themselves who are failing to act responsibly, and because they have just undertaken the difficult task of punishing certain immoral and impure believers. Why, then, would Paul risk making them upset? Because his priority as a travelling evangelist is to produce mature churches that do not depend upon his direct oversight. He has just called for the restoration of the immoral and impure individuals, and now he is praising his readers for their recent obedience so as to blunt the edge of his demand that they exercise better oversight this time around.
- * In 7:5–16 again, the first person singular appears along the mainline of the discourse. Once again, however, this change is explicable with reference to the fact that Paul is addressing the aftermath of a letter that was not co-authored with Timothy. He acknowledges that his recent conduct has made the Corinthians upset. He is aware of their desire to see him, their indignation at his demands, and their defensiveness regarding his allegations of impurity. He does not, however, apologize for his upsetting letter. Rather, he explains that his godly anger has provoked its readers into repentant and obedient action, such that his leadership decisions have been vindicated and his pride in the Corinthians validated. He did not write the letter at issue either as someone in the wrong (i.e. as a leader making unjust demands) or as someone wronged (i.e. as a

leader with a personal vendetta against rebellious church members), but in order to draw out the great leadership potential that lies within his Corinthian converts.

d. 8:1–9:15

- * Contrary to popular opinion, there is no indication in 8:1–9:15 that the Corinthians' collection efforts have faltered or halted. Indeed, there is no indication that Paul has received any news from Corinth subsequent to Titus's report that he helped the church to get a head start on its collection efforts. Rather, it is a development in *Macedonia* that has necessitated the writing of 8:1–9:15 and the return visit of Titus. Specifically, the Corinthians need to be given advance warning about the Macedonians who may now be accompanying Paul and Timothy to Corinth.
- * Titus's mission is not to restart the Corinthian collection, but to ensure that it is ready *prior* to Paul and Timothy's arrival—an unexpected requirement that has been necessitated by the specific nature of the boast that has brought about the participation of the Macedonian churches. After all, Paul has not been boasting about Achaia's participation in the collection, but about their eagerness to get a head start on their collection efforts. After making this specific boast, it would be *very* embarrassing if the Macedonians were to arrive and find the Achaians unprepared, and a collection prepared hastily upon Paul's arrival would almost certainly throw into doubt the sincerity of the Corinthians' generosity.

e. 10:1–13:10

- * As in 1:13b–2:13 and 7:3–16, first person singular references occur along the mainline of 10:1–13:10, because Paul is once again taking up his decision to delay his arrival in Corinth in order to encourage the Corinthians to take responsibility for their own communal purity. Yet because Timothy is a co-founder of the community in Corinth, he is included whenever Paul is making general remarks about the leadership of the Pauline mission.
- * As in 6:1–7:16, Paul begins 10:1–13:10 by making a vague appeal for some kind of action, the actual details of which are left unstated. Or at least, they are left unstated *initially*. The details of what Paul wants from his readers are found in 13:1 and 13:5, where he urges them to continue enacting proper disciplinary procedures so that he will not find an immature and impure congregation upon his arrival.
- * The puzzling remarks in 10:6 can be easily explained once it is recognized that Paul is once again defending his decision to have the Corinthians punish their own brothers and sisters. He is not too weak to punish his own converts; rather, he is only willing to

punish them *after* the Corinthians have obediently enacted the proper disciplinary procedures.

- * Paul's references to the greatest apostles in 11:5 and 12:11 do not entail that Paul has specific apostles in view who are somehow involved in the Corinthian situation. Other apostles may be involved somehow, but his remarks do not necessitate this inference.
- * In 11:12–13, Paul invokes his financial practices as the reason that his critics have been forced to boast so freely, and he cites their fleshly boasting as proof that they are false apostles and deceitful workers. Accordingly, there is no need to suppose that anyone has taken issue with Paul's financial practices. It is enough to suppose that other Christian leaders are justifying their requests for money by claiming that their leadership skills are superior to Paul's, and that Paul regards his financial practices as a positive demonstration of true Christian leadership.
- * Paul is not the visionary described in 12:2–4. Rather, he is describing *someone else's* experience in order to illustrate why it would be foolish of him to boast about his own, similar experiences. The Christian leader does not take pride in his own subjective experiences, but demonstrates the power of Christ by remaining faithful amidst difficult and humbling circumstances. Moreover, it is unnecessary to suppose that other leaders are boasting about their visionary experiences. They may well be, but it is possible to explain Paul's remarks with reference to the pride he himself feels about his visions and revelations.
- * There is no good reason why Paul would employ the fronted words τρίτον τοῦτο in 12:14 and 13:1 in order to characterize his upcoming visit to Corinth as his third visit. Rather, the "thirdness" of his visit is relevant because he has upset his readers twice already by backing out on planned trips, with one of the two cancellations being the one discussed in 1:13b–2:13, 7:3–16, and 10:1–13:10.
- * In 13:2, Paul warns those who have just sinned and everyone else as well that he will dispense punishments if he arrives and finds a repeat of the situation that prompted his earlier actions (ἐὰν ἔλθω εἰς τὸ πάλιν).
- * The participial clauses ὡς παρὼν τὸ δεύτερον καὶ ἀπὼν νῦν do not locate two different warnings temporally. To the contrary, they describe circumstances that are relevant to the warning in 13:2. Paul is coming to Corinth for the second time, but he has not yet arrived, and so the Corinthians still have an opportunity to prove themselves capable of exercising communal leadership without Paul's direct intervention.

2. What Are Paul and Timothy Doing?

Granting the above points, it is possible to read 2 Corinthians from start to finish as a single text construing a single context of situation, as I have shown already in Chapters 3–7. It may prove helpful, however, to provide a synthesis that explicitly draws together the most important aspects of that situation. Here, therefore, I will draw upon the experiential meanings in 2 Corinthians in order to describe the sphere of experience that Paul and Timothy are construing, and I will draw upon the interpersonal meanings and meta-commentaries in 2 Corinthians in order to describe the activity that Paul and Timothy are enacting.

a. The Sphere of Experience Construed in 2 Corinthians

In very general terms, it is possible to gloss the sphere of experience construed by 2 Corinthians as *the Christian church*. This simple gloss is inadequate from a theoretical perspective, of course, since it fails to situate the sphere in question relative to other cultural spheres in the Greco-Roman world, but it will suffice for my purposes here. In writing the letter we now know as 2 Corinthians, Paul and Timothy have activated meanings that can all be related to the cultural sphere of the Christian church.

In more specific terms, it is possible to group the most frequent semantic domains in 2 Corinthians into a small handful of semantic fields. Not all of these fields are inseparably tied to the Christian church, but they can all be explained in one way or another as fields of meaning that operate within that cultural sphere:

* Christianity. The semantic field of *Christianity* is present on account of a number of meanings from the following semantic domains: WISDOM OR FOOLISHNESS, TRUTH, FLESH, LIFE ESSENCE, TO RESTORE TO LIFE, COVENANT, UNBELIEVER, SIN, TO CHANGE ONE'S MIND, TO TRUST, RIGHTEOUSNESS, REVERENCE OF GOD, PURE OR DEFILED, TO PURIFY, TEMPLE, IDOL, TO BE AMONG OR TO BE SEPARATE FROM, SOCIETY AT LARGE, TO SPEAK OR TO PROCLAIM, TEMPORARY OR ETERNAL, TO CHANGE ONE'S MIND, REVELATION OR SECRET, FALSE-BROTHER, COSMOLOGICAL REALMS, HEBREW, VISION, SIGN, MIGHTY DEED, VICES, TO SIN, THE FAITH, and TO PRAY. Together with these general domains we also find references to some key Christian participants: God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Satan, an angel of Satan, the saints, a variety of churches, the people of Israel, and Moses. Moreover, at various points throughout 2 Corinthians we find citations and allusions to the Jewish scriptures. Individually, none of these factors is strong enough to implicate the cultural sphere of Christianity. Taken together, however, they constitute a set of interacting meanings that can be associated with that cultural sphere—which is why a newly discovered text, if it were found to contain these participants and meanings, would likely be deemed a Christian text.

* Authoritative Leadership or Representation. The semantic field of *authoritative leadership or representation* is present throughout 2 Corinthians by means of a variety of meanings from the following domains: TO ANOINT OR APPOINT, TO RULE, TO SPARE, TO SEAL, TO CENSURE OR SANCTION, PLACE, TO MOVE TOWARDS OR AWAY FROM SOMEWHERE, TO SEND AWAY FROM SOMEWHERE, TO SPEAK OR TO PROCLAIM, TO WRITE OR READ, TO URGE OR APPEAL, OBEDIENCE OR DISOBEDIENCE, TO PLEAD, LETTER (DOCUMENT),

TO SERVE, SERVANT, TO URGE OR APPEAL, TO MAKE KNOWN, COVENANT, SLAVE, TO ENTRUST, TO WORK AS AN APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVE, LEGAL SENTENCE, TO BE BOLD OR FEARFUL, TO EXERCISE JUSTICE, VOLUNTARILY, AUTHORITY, PERFORMANCE OF RELIGIOUS DUTIES, APOSTLE, TO HOLD BACK (SPARE), TO BE OR NOT BE IN A PLACE, TO BUILD UP OR TEAR DOWN, AUTHORITY, TO ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY, GEOGRAPHICAL REGION, MESSENGER, TO MAKE SUBSERVIENT, OFFICIAL, KING, and TO WARN.

* Relational Concord or Discord. The semantic field of *relational concord or discord* is evident throughout 2 Corinthians in a number of meanings from the domains TO PUT STOCK IN SOMETHING OR SOMEONE, TO BE PARTNERS OR TO COLLABORATE, TO AFFIRM, TO BE HAPPY OR UPSET, TEARS, LOVE, TO FORGIVE, TO SPEAK WELL OF OR BADLY OF SOMEONE, TO RECONCILE, TO LOVE, A FAIR EXCHANGE, AGREEMENT, TO DEFEND, INDIGNATION, TO BUILD UP OR TEAR DOWN, TO ENGAGE IN BATTLE, TO MAKE SUBSERVIENT, and TO STRIKE.

* Evaluation. In 2 Corinthians, the semantic field of evaluation is construed through lexical meanings from the domains TO GIVE THANKS, TO BOAST, TO TESTIFY, TO AFFIRM, CONSCIENCE, EVIDENCE, TO SPEAK WELL OF OR BADLY OF SOMEONE, TO FORMULATE A CONVICTION ABOUT SOMETHING, TO KNOW OR NOT KNOW, HONOUR OR SHAME, A LEGAL SENTENCE, TO ACCEPT SOMETHING INTELLECTUALLY, TO DEFEND SOMETHING, TO FIND OR DISCOVER, TO TEST, TO LOWER OR RAISE, TO DISTORT OR DECEIVE, HONEST OR DECEITFUL, TO SUPPOSE, TO COMPARE OR TO CLASSIFY, TO MEASURE, and APPROVED OR DISAPPROVED.

* Personal Adequacy. The semantic field of *personal adequacy* is construed throughout 2 Corinthians by means of the domains TO BE ABLE OR UNABLE, ABUNDANCE OR LACK, WISDOM OR FOOLISHNESS, AMATEUR, TO BE BOLD OR FEARFUL, and TO LOWER OR RAISE.

* Hardship. In 2 Corinthians, we find numerous meanings pertaining to *hardship*. The key domains with regard to this field of meaning are: TO CAUSE OR EXPERIENCE TROUBLE OR RELIEF, TO HARM OR RESCUE FROM HARM, TO BURDEN SOMEONE, LIFE OR DEATH, TEARS, TO ENDURE, COMPASSION, TO ENCOURAGE, TO LEAD IN A TRIUMPH, TO BECOME DISCOURAGED, TO LOWER OR RAISE, PRISON, RIOT, SLEEPLESSNESS, HUNGER OR THIRST, TO SUFFER LOSS, TO BECOME POOR OR RICH, WIDE OR NARROW, POVERTY OR WEALTH, TO BECOME POOR OR RICH, TO ARREST, TO MAKE SUBSERVIENT, TO STRIKE, TO SUFFER SHIPWRECK, TO ESCAPE, and SPLINTER OR THORN.

* Finances. The field of finances appears throughout 2 Corinthians by means of the domains TO EXPLOIT, TO PEDDLE, TO GIVE OR RECEIVE, GIFT, POVERTY OR WEALTH, ABUNDANCE OR LACK, TO BECOME POOR OR RICH, EQUALITY, GIVER, POOR, TO PROVIDE WHAT IS NEEDED, TO BE READY OR PREPARED, TO INCREASE OR ENLARGE, AS A GIFT, TO ROB, MONEY FOR SUPPORT, and TO SAVE UP OR TO SPEND.

Obviously, these semantic fields do not exhaust the meanings that are present in 2 Corinthians. Nor can a complete understanding of the text's context of situation be derived from these fields of meaning alone. They do, however, encompass almost all of the most frequently recurring semantic domains in 2 Corinthians, and so they provide a starting point from which it is possible to discuss which phenomena are being talked about in 2 Corinthians and why. What is more, they make it possible for this discussion to take place at a degree of generality that minimizes the importance of interpretive disagreements with respect to individual passages.

The field of Christianity requires little comment, since nobody to my knowledge has ever disputed the premise that 2 Corinthians is a Christian text (with the obvious qualification involving the alleged fragment in 6:14–7:1). It is, however, important to point out that the field of Christianity is not present simply because the authors of 2 Corinthians are Christians. Rather, the field is present because the authors of 2 Corinthians are talking about phenomena that are closely tied to the Christian worldview.

Along similar lines, it should not be thought that the field of authoritative leadership or representation derives from the fact that the authors of 2 Corinthians are church leaders. Rather, the field is present because the authors are talking about leadership, so that it becomes necessary to explain *why* it is relevant for them to talk about leadership. The obvious answer, of course, is that Paul and Timothy are bent on advancing or defending their leadership claim over the church in Corinth, but this is an interpretation that the two men take pains to refute. More cautiously, therefore, I propose that Paul and Timothy are intent on explaining what Christian leadership should look like, because there are other leaders in Corinth whose conduct they have found to be decidedly un-Christian, and whose criticisms of the Pauline mission imply un-Christian ideals about leadership. Yet I must also add that Paul and Timothy are interested in talking about the Corinthians' own leadership, as is clear from the fact that the addressees of 2 Corinthians are construed as enacting official church procedures.

Given that the semantic field of authoritative leadership is so important in 2 Corinthians, it is all the more interesting that a large number of meanings are used to speak about Paul and Timothy as having a personal partnership with the Corinthians.

Repeatedly, the two men are construed as partners of the Corinthians rather than lords, and a great deal of attention is paid to the emotional dynamics—both positive and negative—that inhere within the relationship that Paul and Timothy enjoy with their readers. For various reasons, this way of speaking is highly strategic. It is strategic for Paul and Timothy to construe their relations with Corinth as personal because this brings their critics into relief as authoritarian intruders who are imposing themselves on an existing relationship in a very untoward manner. Hence interpersonal dynamics between the Pauline mission and the church in Corinth are construed as deeply emotional and personal in nature (irrespective of whether they are positive or negative), whereas interpersonal dynamics between the church in Corinth and the Pauline mission's critics are construed solely in terms of authoritarian leadership and subjugation. Also, it is strategic for Paul and Timothy to contrast their deep affection for Corinth with the authoritarian abuses of their critics, because the two men have been called overbearing by some of their own converts. By framing social relations as they do, Paul and Timothy are able to propose that their *own* requests should not be regarded as authoritarian impositions—whether they are asking the Corinthians to maintain higher standards of purity, or to take more responsibility for their own affairs, or to provide financial support for the various undertakings of the Pauline mission—because *their* relations with Corinth are collaborative rather than exploitative.

Also throughout 2 Corinthians, positive and negative assessments are made by all of the various parties implicated in the Corinthian situation. Most importantly, whereas Paul and Timothy's critics are evaluating the Pauline mission's leadership as weak and

ineffective, Paul and Timothy have a remarkably different evaluation of themselves. And whereas Paul and Timothy's critics have a very positive evaluation of themselves, those same critics receive a very negative evaluation in 2 Corinthians. These two diametrically opposed assessments are crucial to 2 Corinthians, inasmuch as all of the other assessments that are discussed in the letter can be related to these core evaluations. For example, the negative assessments that Paul and Timothy are receiving from other Christian leaders are very subtly drawn into connection with the rejection and violence that the Pauline mission experiences at the hands of imperceptive unbelievers. And similarly, the Corinthians' assessment of Paul and Timothy—which is in question throughout the letter—is implicitly framed as either fleshly (if it is negative) or perceptive (if it is positive).

Various proposals have been made with respect to the conflict that quite patently exists between the Pauline mission and other Christian leaders who are working in Corinth. The most frequent field of meaning that is employed in connection with this conflict, however, involves personal adequacy. Paul has been explicitly insulted by other Christian leaders as someone who lacks the strength required for good leadership, mostly because he has failed to deal personally with certain rebellious converts in Corinth who have been defiling the church and flagrantly opposing his leadership. Yet Paul refuses to accept the claim that he has shown himself to be weak by sending only letters and representatives. Moreover, Paul and Timothy turn the table on their critics by employing meanings from the field of personal adequacy in order to construe the strong Christian leader as one who refuses to shy away from controversy but instead proclaims the gospel

obediently, knowing that the result will be rejection and suffering and even death. The strong leader, they insist, is one who is weak in a fleshly sense but empowered by God with spiritual vitality and authority. Implicitly, therefore, it is Paul and Timothy who are the stronger leaders, because unlike others they do not shy away from controversy but instead openly proclaim the fact that the new covenant in Christ is vastly superior to the old and now-terminated covenant administered by Moses. They may not be trained speakers who deserve to be paid for their labour, but as financially independent ministers they are less likely to compromise the gospel message so as to avoid alienating their hearers.

This last comment is also crucial for understanding the way that Paul and Timothy talk about money in 2 Corinthians. After all, meanings involving finances figure prominently not only in 8:1–9:15, where the Jerusalem collection is in view, but also in 10:1–13:10, where Christian leadership is in view. It is frequently proposed that the topic of finances enters into 10:1–13:10 as a result of criticisms being levelled against Paul's failure to accept financial support from the Corinthians. I have argued to the contrary, however, that in both 1 and 2 Corinthians it is *Paul himself* who chooses to talk about his finances, because he regards his refusal to ask for money as compelling evidence that he does not lord himself over his churches. As regards the Corinthians, Paul is adamant that he is not ruining his converts by demanding too much of them (e.g. when he commands them not to defile themselves through idolatrous associations), but is only asking them to make the same sacrifices he himself makes for the sake of the gospel. And as regards the other leaders in Corinth, Paul's refusal to accept financial support has forced them into an

uphill battle in their attempts to persuade the Corinthians to embrace their leadership, which has made it possible for Paul to ridicule them as worldly and arrogant men who are boasting about their fleshly qualifications because they want to exploit the Corinthians and earn a comfortable living—quite unlike Paul and Timothy, who want the Corinthians' money only so that they can continue to do the hard work of proclaiming the gospel.

These, then, are the most prominent semantic fields in 2 Corinthians. As general fields of meaning, they can be integrated as the different facets of a single, overarching sphere of experience: namely, the Christian church. Moreover, they construe a church situation in which a leadership debate is taking place, with the two most important facets of this debate being *strength* and *money*. Paul and Timothy are good leaders because they are willing to be weak and to endure suffering, and because they are generous enough to not demand money; yet their critics are poor leaders because they are hesitant to suffer and because they are arrogant enough to boast about their fleshly strengths in order to get money.

Turning now from the general fields of meaning found in 2 Corinthians to some of the specific phenomena construed in the text, I will conclude this section by demonstrating that it is possible to integrate the specific phenomena construed in 2 Corinthians into a coherent construal of reality that can be grounded in a single, temporal perspective. This outline, it should be noted, is not an objective description of historical developments surrounding the writing of 2 Corinthians. Nor is it a description of “how Paul and Timothy saw things.” It is, rather, a narrative summary of the representation of

reality that Paul and Timothy have explicitly encoded in the language of 2 Corinthians, with a few details added by way of inference.

1. When leaving Corinth following the founding of the Corinthian church, Paul communicates to his converts that he will be returning soon and will then proceed to expand his mission further westward. Owing to unexpected developments in the east, however, Paul does not return to Corinth as planned. He does, however, mention to his Corinthian converts that he hopes to deliver a gift to the saints in Judea.
2. In Paul's absence, the Corinthian congregation begins to have trouble maintaining appropriate moral boundaries, and Paul somehow hears about this. Also, Paul receives notice that the Corinthians are eager to participate in his collection for Jerusalem. Responding to these developments, Paul demands that his readers keep themselves holy and pure and assures them that he will be coming to see them soon. He is planning further mission work somewhere in the region of Macedonia, and he will be stopping in Corinth on his way there.
3. Paul and Timothy stir up violent opposition by boldly proclaiming the gospel in Asia, which worsens their already controversial reputation. Even other Christians are anxious about the extent of the negative reaction Paul is provoking. It becomes unclear whether a Pauline collection will be well-received by the believers in Jerusalem.
4. Some of Paul and Timothy's converts are now badly defiling the Corinthian church and even openly criticizing the Pauline mission's stance on interactions between Christian believers and society at large. What is more, after observing the various problems plaguing the church in Corinth, other Christian leaders are openly questioning the adequacy of Paul's leadership. Yet worst of all, some of Paul's own converts are sympathetic to these criticisms, because they are unhappy about the immoral and impure conduct of their fellows. With Paul's absence dragging on, with immorality a perennial problem, and with other Christian leaders in Corinth recommending themselves as replacement leaders, debates over suitable leadership began to take place within the Corinthian community.
5. Hearing yet again from his converts that he needs to be more directly involved in the Corinthian church—and hearing that debates about the effectiveness of his leadership have begun—Paul gets very upset and writes a letter to Corinth. In this letter he demands that the church begin taking more responsibility for its own purity, and he calls for the complete cessation of all disputes about church leadership. He also informs his readers that he will not be coming to Corinth *en route* to Macedonia. He is pleased to hear about their desire to participate in a

collection, however, so he promises to visit Corinth *en route* to Jerusalem in order to visit them and receive their contribution.

6. Paul sends his upset letter with Titus and another brother. He then labours in Asia for a while longer before proceeding to Troas, where he hopes to meet Titus and receive good news about the situation in Corinth. He becomes anxious when Titus is nowhere to be seen in Troas, so he decides to leave and proceed to Macedonia.
7. Meanwhile, Titus and the other brother are well-received in Corinth, but—predictably—Paul’s upset letter receives a mixed response. Most importantly, his decision not to make a personal visit aggravates the ongoing leadership debates. Some of his readers are indignant that he would dare to criticize them for failing to exercise better oversight while in the same breath cancelling yet another visit. Other leaders in Corinth, observing these developments, openly criticize Paul’s “long-distance leadership” and insist that the Corinthians would be better off paying for strong, local leaders who would never permit the kinds of impurity that have plagued the Corinthian church. In the end, however, Titus prevails over the situation. A number of rebellious and immoral people are excommunicated from the congregation and arrangements are made for the upcoming Jerusalem collection.
8. In Macedonia, Paul and Timothy have been bragging that the Achaian believers are already setting aside money for Jerusalem and that they will soon be collecting the money and heading to Judea. Upon hearing this, the poor Macedonian churches decide to put together a very quick contribution of their own, meaning that Macedonian representatives will be with Paul and Timothy when they arrive in Corinth.
9. When Titus and the other brother eventually find Paul and Timothy in Macedonia, they inform the two missionaries about the Corinthians’ mixed reaction to Paul’s letter. At this point Paul experiences his own mixed reaction. He is pleased that punishments have been imposed, disappointed that the Corinthians regard this responsibility as an unfair burden, and concerned about the excommunicated believers.
10. Paul is particularly bothered by the fact that his readers are so desperate to ensure the ongoing presence of strong, charismatic leaders. Do the Corinthians really need earthly lords? The money required to support such people will divert resources away from Paul’s frontier mission work, which will mean less boasting for the Corinthians (and Paul) on the day of the Lord.
11. Paul is also appalled that other Christian leaders would dare to critique his and Timothy’s abilities, as though being a successful minister of Christ were dependent upon fleshly qualifications. He and Timothy are bold in their proclamation because they know that the glory of Christ can be revealed in even

the most lowly of human vessels, yet these other ministers are describing Paul and Timothy's behaviour as reckless and imprudent and they are calling Paul and Timothy's personal leadership abilities into question, suggesting that the Pauline mission is inadequate and embarrassing.

12. What is more, Paul is flabbergasted that these other leaders are boasting about being strong, given that they are so worried whenever the Pauline mission stirs up opposition. Whereas Paul and Timothy do not fear death, these other Christian leaders are hesitant to openly proclaim the superiority of the new covenant over the old because they are fearful about jeopardizing their personal safety or their financial stability.
13. Putting all of these ideas together, Paul comes to regard the other ministers who are working in Corinth as shallow and worldly intruders who are not true preachers of the gospel but only money-hungry sheep-stealers who want to enjoy the fruits of his and Timothy's hard labour without having to endanger themselves, produce their own converts, or put up with Paul's more troublesome Gentile converts.
14. Paul is anxious to respond to these developments, but he is also eager to ensure that the Corinthians have continued with their collection preparations following Titus's departure, given that his boasting about Achaia has provoked an unexpected generosity on the part of the Macedonians. He therefore asks Titus to return to Corinth in order to deliver a letter and ensure—without being exploitative—that a generous Corinthian offering is ready when Paul and Timothy arrive.

b. The Activity Enacted in 2 Corinthians

As pointed out in Chapter 1, even those who partition 2 Corinthians into multiple letters are nevertheless persuaded that those letters were all written by Paul in order to address a single, evolving situation in Corinth.¹ And so, having established that it is possible to integrate Paul's experiential meanings into a single, coherent representation of historical realities, it remains to ask whether 2 Corinthians as a whole can be regarded as a single,

¹ Furnish argues, "basic thematic coherence... is no guarantee of... literary unity. An underlying thematic coherence may also obtain in the case of two (or more) separate letters dispatched over a period of time, especially when they are addressed to the same congregation" (*II Corinthians*, 37).

relational activity that was enacted at a particular point in time in response to those perceived realities.² In order to answer this question, I will proceed through each of the segments that I have identified within the letter body of 2 Corinthians, in each case providing a brief description of what Paul and Timothy are doing. Then, I will argue that Paul and Timothy enacted 2 Corinthians *at a particular point in time* as a response to the perceived reality discussed above.

In 1:3–13a, Paul and Timothy respond to recent developments by affirming that they are hopeful with regard to their partnership with Corinth and unfazed by the controversies that surround the Pauline mission. They are hopeful that the Corinthians will learn to share their sufferings and hopeful that the Corinthians will support them as they undertake the dangerous task of delivering Paul’s Jerusalem collection, and they have a clear conscience with regard to their conduct around the Mediterranean and with regard to their communications with Corinth. Then, in 1:13b–2:13, Paul denies the allegation that he has been avoiding Corinth and explains that his recent leadership decisions have been motivated by a desire to teach the church how to deal with its own problems. He also urges his readers, who seem to be upset with him, to continue exercising their leadership by restoring those believers whom they have recently punished.

² Furnish continues, “A two-letter hypothesis does not deny that there is an important continuity of theme between chaps. 1–9 and 10–13. It suggests only that this theme and the issues related to it are approached and developed in such significantly different ways in these two sections that it is reasonable to conclude they were written on different occasions and under somewhat different circumstances” (*II Corinthians*, 37).

At a glance, 2:14–5:21 appears to be a sustained attempt to improve the Corinthians’ opinions about the Pauline mission. After all, Paul and Timothy are described in glowing terms as bold proclaimers of Christ who remain faithful even when hardened and blinded people reject their message and seek to harm them. Moreover, they are exalted above many (οἱ πολλοί)—or perhaps even the rest (οἱ λοιποί)—of Christ’s representatives. Other ministers, it is implied, employ seeker-sensitive strategies that compromise the truth of the gospel, but Paul and Timothy refuse to be secretive about the superiority of the new covenant over the old. They know that Christ died for everyone, and so they do not permit fleshly distinctions to influence their work. Notably, however, Paul and Timothy take pains to ensure that the Corinthians do not *mistake* 2:14–5:21 for an attempt to improve the Corinthians’ opinions about the Pauline mission. Rejecting the idea that they are recommending themselves, the two men construe a situation in which they have a strong partnership with Corinth and in which their supporters need help in order to better respond to arrogant and fleshly people who are criticizing the Pauline mission.

Before proceeding to 6:1–7:16, I observe that the notion of reconciliation, which is sometimes presented as being relevant to the relational dynamics that exist between Paul and the Corinthians, is not employed in 2:14–5:21 in connection with Paul and Timothy’s relations with Corinth.³ Instead, we find that this idea is used only to construe human beings as needing to be reconciled to God through Christ (5:18–20). It is possible

³ Vegge goes so far as to employ the term in the title of his book, *2 Corinthians: A Letter about Reconciliation*, even though very little of the book deals with 2 Cor 5:18–21, which is where the reconciliation terminology actually appears.

that Paul and Timothy missed a tremendous opportunity here that has been noticed only by their subsequent interpreters. But it is more likely that the two men did not regard themselves as needing to be reconciled with their readers in any meaningful sense. The sort of discord that exists between God and humanity, as far as Paul and Timothy's theology is concerned, has no good parallel in the Pauline mission's dealings with Corinth. Rather, Paul and Timothy regard their relations with Corinth as a solid partnership, despite some recent disagreements.

Turning to 6:1–7:16, we find Paul and Timothy exhorting the Corinthian believers to maintain the purity of their community, especially with regard to idolatry. This exhortation, however, is part of a complex dance that involves several additional elements. In the same breath as they call for purity, Paul and Timothy deny that they are ruining anyone by being unfairly restrictive, plead with their beloved Corinthian partners to follow their self-sacrificial example, and re-assure their readers that God sustains his suffering servants. What is more, Paul takes pains in 7:3–16 to clarify that this renewed call for purity should not be received as a harsh criticism, apparently because an earlier message along similar lines has upset the Corinthians. Doing his best to placate his readers, Paul praises them for heeding his earlier letter even though it was upsetting, reassuring everyone that he is pleased with their recent obedience and proud of them as a community.

Following through with the pride that they feel towards the Corinthian church, Paul and Timothy inform their readers in 8:1–9:15 that they have sent Titus and some brothers in order to ensure that the Corinthian contribution to the Jerusalem collection is

ready and waiting when they arrive from Macedonia. In providing this information, however, they engage yet again in another delicate dance. Paul explains that he and Timothy have not forgotten the Corinthians' generosity, but are only seeking to prevent others from having cause to question it. The Macedonian churches have heard about the Corinthians' eagerness to get a head start on their contribution and have decided to throw together a quick collection of their own, and it would be humiliating if they were to arrive with their hastily prepared collection only to find the Corinthians unprepared despite their head start. At the same time, Paul urges his readers to be generous with their contribution. He will not command generosity, but he wants the Corinthians to know that the Macedonians have given much despite having little and that God has made the Achaians comparatively wealthy so that they can be generous towards others in need.

Finally, following through still further with the pride he feels and with his desire to avoid disappointment upon his arrival, Paul makes a final appeal in 10:1–13:10 that rehearses much of what has already been said in earlier segments. He wants the Corinthians to stop questioning the merits of his and Timothy's leadership and to focus instead upon their own responsibilities with regard to their community, so that he and Timothy do not find a repeat of the earlier problems when they arrive. Instead of waiting for a strong and dynamic leader to take charge, they should follow proper disciplinary procedures. And instead of listening to other Christian ministers whose shallow and worldly ideas about leadership have been unduly affected by Greco-Roman ideals, the Corinthians should seek to become more mature in their understanding of the power of Christ, which subverts the wisdom of the world and works through weakness.

Overall, therefore, 2 Corinthians enacts a firm but positive stance wherein Paul and Timothy deny wrongdoing and express their hope that the Corinthians will continue to support the always controversial Pauline mission. Other leaders are alleging that Paul should have come to Corinth in order to confront some unruly Gentile converts who have been defiling his church and openly challenging his leadership, and a number of the Corinthians are in agreement with them. Still, it is by no means clear that the Corinthians have joined with Paul and Timothy's critics or that Paul is fearful about losing his support base in Corinth. To the contrary, the Corinthians have received Titus obediently and punished those whose conduct was so upsetting, and despite their frustrations with Paul's decision to send a representative, they remain eager to see him. Also, Titus has helped them to begin their preparations for the Jerusalem collection, and Paul seems to think that they will follow through with a contribution despite their frustrations with him. And what perhaps appears to be a very defensive or antagonistic outburst in 10:1–13:1 is actually a transparent mockery of the alleged "strength" possessed by Paul's critics that is designed to expose them as arrogant and foolish lords and to ensure that the church in Corinth becomes a mature, *self-governing* congregation—capable of dealing with the problems that arise whenever the standards of the gospel conflict with the worldly standards of Corinthian culture.

So then, Paul and Timothy remain positive about their relations with Corinth, *despite* some unfortunate developments. Yet irrespective of whether the problem is rebellious Gentiles on the inside, or Jewish-Christian leaders imposing themselves from the outside, they want their readers to stand firm in the gospel of the crucified Christ and

to watch over themselves so that the Pauline mission can continue its efforts elsewhere without being anxious about the stability of their church in Corinth. And it is to this end that they enact their leadership by: defending Paul's recent decisions; restoring some rebellious converts; responding to allegations of weakness; calling for holiness and purity; dealing with an unexpected financial urgency; exposing arrogant Christian leaders; and urging the continued use of proper disciplinary procedures.

3. What Are the Relevant Historical Circumstances?

For many biblical scholars, the ultimate question with regard to 2 Corinthians is its historical setting. This is partly because the historical setting of 2 Corinthians is fascinating and enigmatic in its own right and partly because it is vital for our understanding of early Christianity more generally. Was the Pauline mission openly criticized by the apostles in Jerusalem? Was gnostic Christianity already making inroads in Achaia during the fifties? Questions like these depend heavily upon 2 Corinthians, making the historical setting of the letter an important piece of historical evidence. In this final section, therefore, I will reflect ever-so-briefly upon the historical significance of my linguistic analysis. In particular, I will attempt to draw some connections between the context of situation that is encoded in 2 Corinthians and various historical events surrounding the writing of the letter.

a. *The Unexpected Asian Mission*

Supposing that Paul's incessant emphasis on the "thirdness" of his upcoming visit to Corinth implies two prior visits, most modern scholars reconstruct a second visit that is usually alleged to have taken place sometime between Paul's original founding visit and the visit anticipated in 2 Cor 10:1–13:10.⁴ Rejecting this approach on the grounds that it fails to explain Paul's repeated emphasis on the "thirdness" of his upcoming visit,⁵ I propose that scholarship should take up once again the traditional belief that Paul made only two visits to Corinth.⁶ Apparently, in the years leading up to 2 Corinthians, Paul *twice* informed the Corinthians that he would be coming back to Corinth, and then *twice* failed to appear. This is why he underscores in both 12:14 and 13:1 that *this third time* he will come.⁷

⁴ A notable exception in recent years is Hall, who argues for the position that Paul's second visit to Corinth took place prior to the writing of 1 Corinthians (*Unity*, 243–46). For a discussion of various theories concerning Paul's visits to Corinth, see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:49–57.

⁵ It is much easier to account for Paul's decision to explicitly characterize his upcoming visit as his second (13:2). Most likely, the "secondness" of the upcoming visit in 13:2 derives from 12:21, where Paul describes the grief he experienced on his first visit to idolatrous Corinth and expresses the fear that he may be similarly grieved upon his return visit. Paul does not want his upcoming visit to look like his founding visit, because on his *second* visit he should be welcomed by faithful Christians and not confronted with idolatrous pagans.

⁶ Advocates of this view have become increasingly rare since Bleek first postulated an additional visit (Bleek, "Erörterungen"), but it has never entirely disappeared. See, e.g., Hilgenfeld, "Paulus und die korinthischen Wirren"; Warfield, "Difficult Passages"; Hilgenfeld, "Paulus und Korinth"; Heinrici, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*; White, "Visits"; Hyldahl, "Die Frage"; Dockx, "Chronologie"; Hyldahl, *Chronologie*.

⁷ Discussing the hypothesis of Furnish, whereby Paul cancelled two visits between his second and third visits to Corinth (and also between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians), Hall remarks that "there is nothing in 2 Corinthians to suggest more than one change of mind" (*Unity*, 238). This absence of evidence, however, derives from Hall's too-quick dismissal of the idea that τριτόν τοῦτο implies two prior cancellations, which Hall calls "a most unnatural way of understanding Paul's words" (*Unity*, 238). As I have argued in Chapter 7, it is entirely possible to read the phrase τριτόν τοῦτο in this way, as earlier

One of these cancellations we know about from 1:13b–2:13 and 7:5–16. It involved the cancellation of a stopover *en route* to Macedonia, immediately prior to the writing of 2 Corinthians. When did the other cancellation take place? We cannot be certain, but the most likely answer is that Paul never intended to be gone from Corinth for very long following his initial visit to the city. Instead, he planned only to make a brief visit to Judea and Syria, before returning to Corinth and then pressing on further westward. Given the evidence of 2 Corinthians, his plan must have been disrupted by an unexpected development of some kind. But what was this unexpected development?

Paul's remarks about Asia (1:8), Troas, and Macedonia (2:12–13) suggest that this unexpected development involved a mission in Asia that took place just prior to the Macedonian visit mentioned in 2 Corinthians—and indeed, scholars are unanimous in locating an Ephesian ministry in between Paul's first visit to Corinth and the writing of 2 Corinthians. Even more can be said than this, however. After all, whatever is decided about the historical reliability of Acts, it needs to be noted that Luke records a failed attempt to penetrate into Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6–8), which he interprets as evidence that the Holy Spirit (or the Spirit of Jesus) did not want Paul to work in those particular regions. Luke also records that Paul, on his way from Corinth to Judea, made a brief stopover in Ephesus during which time he had a very positive evangelistic experience, noting that Paul promised to return to Asia in the event that God would allow him to do

commentators well knew (e.g. “it is undeniable that grammatically the words τρίτον τοῦτο are equally flexible to the two meanings, ‘this is the third time that I am coming,’ and ‘on this third occasion I am actually coming’” [Warfield, “Difficult Passages,” 39]). For examples of the latter reading, see Baur, *Paulus, Der Apostel Jesu Christi*, 319–20; Hilgenfeld, “Paulus und die korinthischen Wirren,” 100–101; Heinrici, *Zweite Sendschreiben*, 10–11; Golla, *Zwischenreise und Zwischenbrief*, 38.

so (Acts 18:19–21). Irrespective of Luke’s reliability, therefore, we have an early tradition to the effect that Paul gave up on Asia prior to arriving in Corinth, but then embraced an *unexpected* opportunity to work in Ephesus following his departure from Corinth. This tradition is at the very least coherent with the evidence of 2 Corinthians. I hypothesize, therefore, that the first of Paul’s cancellations took place immediately following his departure from Corinth, upon the occasion of his decision to work in Asia instead of continuing westward.

If this hypothesis is correct, then Paul would have communicated his first plan to return to Corinth before leaving for Judea. Also, the cancellation of this first plan would have been communicated to the Corinthians almost immediately after it became apparent that he would be spending some time in Asia, in which case we should not expect to find this cancellation in Paul’s extant correspondence. Even more importantly, however, a very early cancellation like this would help to explain the frustrations that came to surround Paul’s failure to return to Corinth. If the church there was anticipating Paul’s immediate return, then initial disappointment about his failure to return may have set in already before Paul composed the now-missing letter that he mentions in 1 Cor 5, in which case Paul wrote at least three letters to the Corinthians after telling them he would be coming back to see them soon.

b. The Upsetting Letter

Many words have been written against the idea that 1 Corinthians is the severe or upsetting letter that Paul mentions in 2 Cor 1:13b–2:13 and 7:3–16. In fact, the majority

of contemporary interpreters reject the idea, arguing that the hypothesis is untenable.⁸ I propose, however, that the identification of 1 Corinthians as the letter mentioned in 2 Corinthians *can* be sustained when the relevant passages are interpreted as I have interpreted them here.⁹

First and foremost, it needs to be noted that the vast majority of the usual objections to the identification of 1 Corinthians as Paul's earlier letter stand upon the premise that 2 Corinthians has a single "offender" in view and that this individual's offence must have been the primary concern of Paul's upsetting letter.¹⁰ I have argued, however, that 2 Corinthians speaks about numerous individuals whose behaviour Paul found upsetting, and so my thesis is immune to most of the typical criticisms. It is not just the incestuous man of 1 Cor 5:1–5 who is in view in 2 Cor 2:5 and 7:12. Rather, 2 Cor 2:5 pertains to all of those whose impurities are condemned in 1 Corinthians, including other believers who are sexually immoral (1 Cor 5:6–13; 6:12–20; 7:1–9) as well as those who are associating with idolatry (1 Cor 8:1–11:1). And 2 Cor 7:12 does not refer to a

⁸ As Hall observes, "the majority view today is that this letter was written subsequently to 1 Corinthians and is either now wholly lost, or partially lost with part preserved in 2 Cor. 10–13" (*Unity*, 223).

⁹ At the close of his article on the continuity and discontinuity that holds between 1 and 2 Corinthians, Bieringer hints that scholarship may be moving towards the acceptance of greater continuity, and then he makes the following appeal:

Ich möchte daher mit dem Desiderat schließen, daß die Exegese einzelner Texte der beiden Korintherbriefe immer den gesamten Kontext der korinthischen Korrespondenz mit ihrer geschichtlichen Situation, d.h. sowohl 1 und 2 Kor als auch die rekonstruierten Zwischenereignisse, aktiv in die Interpretation einbezieht ("Kontinuität und Diskontinuität," 34).

I have been unable to comment at length on 1 Corinthians here, but I trust that my brief remarks will continue to move scholarship in this more sensible direction.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 164–66; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:57–61; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 5–7.

single Corinthian sinner but rather denies that Paul has done his converts wrong by demanding that they keep themselves pure from idolatry.

Setting aside the traditional problems, therefore, I will undertake a re-consideration of Paul's earlier letter, taking into account the interpretations advanced in Chapters 3–7 above. On the basis of 2 Corinthians, the following things that can be concluded about the letter:

1. Paul wrote it after becoming upset at the Corinthians (2:1–3; 7:10).
2. He wrote it independently of Timothy (note the first person singular in 1:13b–2:13; 7:3–16; 10:8–10).
3. It effected the cancellation of a planned stopover in Corinth *en route* to Macedonia, but left in place a subsequent planned visit *en route* from Macedonia to Jerusalem (1:13b–16, 23; 2:1–3).
4. It was written with much trouble and great anguish, with many tears being shed (2:4).
5. It criticized the Corinthians for not keeping their community pure (7:3–9).
6. Paul's critics described it as forceful (10:10) and criticized Paul for trying to frighten his Corinthian converts into obedience from a distance (10:9).
7. Paul did not intend for it to make the Corinthians upset (2:4); rather, he regarded it as a test (2:9).
8. It was delivered by Titus (7:6–8, 13–16), who was received fearfully (7:15).
9. It made the Corinthians upset (7:8–9, 11; cf. 1:13a).
10. It prompted the Corinthians to react indignantly and defensively (7:11).
11. It prompted the Corinthians to punish various impure believers (2:6–8; 7:7, 11–12, 15), a task that was burdensome to them (2:5).
12. Even after receiving it, the Corinthians expressed an intense desire to see Paul (7:7, 11).
13. It furthered the claim of other Christian leaders that Paul might never come to confront the problems in Corinth personally (10:11; cf. 1:17b–22; 11:16; 13:10).

These points describe a letter just like 1 Corinthians. To begin with, 1 Corinthians was written after Timothy was sent to Corinth by way of Macedonia (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10–11), which would explain why Paul speaks in the first person when discussing his earlier letter. And of course, 1 Corinthians indicates that Paul will come to Corinth only after he is finished in Macedonia (1 Cor 16:5), which would be a cancellation in the event that the Corinthians were expecting him *en route* to Macedonia.¹¹

Also, 1 Corinthians highlights a number of issues related to communal purity (1 Cor 5; 6:12–20; 7:1–9; 8:1–11:1), such as we would expect given the relationship that exists between 2 Cor 6:1–7:2 and 7:3–16. What is more, 1 Cor 5:9–11 indicates that a letter prior to 1 Corinthians had *already* demanded better standards of communal purity, and 1 Cor 5 and 1 Cor 10:14–22 presuppose the idea that persistently immoral and impure believers should not be permitted to eat with the church (cf. Matt 18:15–17). Is it any wonder that Paul expresses his displeasure quite forcefully in 1 Corinthians (e.g. 5:1–2, 6; 6:5, 7; 10:22; 11:17, 30; 14:20; 15:34)? He is getting exasperated with the lack of order and purity in his congregation, displaying the very sort of godly displeasure that is ascribed to Paul's earlier letter in 2 Cor 7:8–13.

What about the objection that 1 Corinthians does not sound at all like the despondent letter described in 2 Cor 2:3–4?¹² This objection can be answered with the

¹¹ Despite what some have said (e.g. Harris, *Second Epistle*, 6), Paul never describes his upsetting letter as a *substitute* for a visit; rather, the letter in question is said to have *cancelled* a visit and thus *postponed* Paul's arrival until the occasion of a second planned visit, which may yet prove painful if the Corinthians do not heed the urgings in Paul's letters and use the time they have been given to make some necessary changes (2 Cor 2:1–3; 13:10; cf. 1 Cor 4:18–21).

¹² Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:58–59.

observation that the verses in question are an attempt to placate people who have been upset by a letter that did *not* successfully convey the sentiments of love and sorrow. Really, if we are going to treat 2 Cor 2:3–4 as a guide in our search for Paul’s earlier letter, we ought to go looking for a letter that sounds harsh and critical rather than sorrowful and loving. We ought to take 2 Cor 2:3–4 together with other verses in 2 Corinthians and look for a letter that raises questions about the obedience of its hearers (2 Cor 2:9) and that threatens punishment upon the occasion of a future visit in the event that obedience is not forthcoming (2 Cor 12:20–13:2). Once again, however, this sounds exactly like 1 Corinthians, which is almost entirely devoted to problems that cannot wait for Paul’s arrival but instead demand immediate remedial attention.

Finally, there are two specific points of contact between 1 and 2 Corinthians that support the identification of 1 Corinthians as the letter discussed in 2 Cor 1:13b–2:13 and 7:3–16. First, Paul and Timothy defend themselves in 2 Cor 6:1–7:16 against the charge that their instructions concerning communal purity are overly restrictive (6:12) and that their unfair demands are ruining people (7:2). Moreover, they attempt to soften the edge of their call for purity by praising the Corinthians for punishing certain people who have made Paul upset (7:3–16; cf. 1:13b–2:13). Yet these details, which have emerged entirely out of my analysis of 2 Corinthians, cohere completely with 1 Cor 8:1–11:1. For there, amidst an extended discussion of the Pauline mission’s prohibition of associations with idolatry, we hear about certain people who are sitting in judgement over Paul (1 Cor 9:3).

Most commentators argue that these people have challenged Paul’s apostleship or taken issue with his financial practices, so that the judgements against Paul are usually

related to the contents of 1 Cor 9:1–23.¹³ It is more likely, however, that their frustrations derive from the idol food prohibition discussed in 1 Cor 8 and that Paul himself has introduced the subject of his apostolic rights in order to refute the charges that have been levelled against him. Paul has demanded that his converts refrain from eating idol food, even though this isolates his Gentile converts from their native culture (8:1–12); yet he also advocates the embrace of Jewish dietary restrictions, a move that helps Jewish Christians to maintain positive relations with their native culture (8:13). Predictably, this handling of social dining has provoked a backlash in Corinth. If food is neither pure nor impure in and of itself, then why are Paul’s dietary instructions so inconvenient for his Gentile converts and yet so convenient for himself and his fellow Jews? It is not surprising that some of Paul’s Gentile converts accused him of making policies that were ruinous to them but advantageous to himself and his fellow Jews.

In response to these misunderstandings, Paul first explains the missional principle that underlies his instructions, insisting that believers should avoid idol food *for the same reason* that believers should accommodate Jewish dietary restrictions—in order to ensure that nothing hinders the proclamation of the gospel (1 Cor 8:1–13).¹⁴ Then, taking a direct stance against the charge that he is a domineering and self-rewarding leader, Paul invokes his refusal to enforce his apostolic rights in order to prove that he is a selfless and self-

¹³ Scholars fairly consistently observe that Paul is defending his right to claim financial support (e.g. “People blamed him for maintaining his independence” [Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 179]), although there is more dispute over the extent to which this is tied to the question of Paul’s apostleship (see Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 666–67).

¹⁴ For an explanation of this point, see Land, “Stumbling Block.”

sacrificing leader who gives a great deal and yet demands little in return (1 Cor 9:1–23).¹⁵

He is not, he insists, preaching a cross of suffering that he himself refuses to bear.

In both 1 and 2 Corinthians, therefore, Paul mentions Gentile converts who are resistant to his call for purity. Yet in 1 Corinthians these people seem to be within the congregation, whereas the evidence of 2 Corinthians suggests that they have been punished. Thus Paul demands purity in the letter that preceded 1 Corinthians. He then responds to resistance in 1 Corinthians, explaining himself, defending himself, and calling for his readers to put an end to the impurities. And finally, in 2 Corinthians, he restores the believers who have been punished and calls once again for better purity standards, softening this demand by praising his readers for siding with him over and against his more rebellious converts.

A second point of contact that strongly supports the identification of 1 Corinthians as the letter mentioned in 1:13b–2:13 and 7:3–16 is the way that Paul responds to criticisms of his leadership. Although in both letters he rejects the false claim that he is not returning to Corinth, the severity of the issues surrounding this charge has increased between 1 and 2 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians Paul warns his readers not to get sidetracked by debates over leadership (1:10–4:21), making the following statements in the process (1 Cor 4:18–21):

Ὡς μὴ ἐρχομένου δέ μου πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐφουσιώθησάν τινες· ἐλεύσομαι δὲ ταχέως πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐὰν ὁ κύριος θελήσῃ, καὶ γνώσομαι οὐ τὸν λόγον τῶν πεφουσιωμένων ἀλλὰ τὴν δύναμιν· οὐ γὰρ ἐν λόγῳ ἢ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλ’ ἐν δυνάμει. τί θέλετε; ἐν ῥάβδῳ ἔλθω πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἢ ἐν ἀγάπῃ πνεύματι τε πραύτητος;

¹⁵ So notwithstanding regular attempts to cast 9:1–23 as a *paradigm* for the idol food issue, 9:1–23 gives evidence of the self-sacrifice demanded in 8:1–12 because Paul has been accused of imposing an ethic that he himself does not live out.

Often, scholars describe the arrogant people of v. 18 as people within the Corinthian congregation, which is why the NRSV and NIV translate τινές as *some of you*.¹⁶ Given the leadership debates at issue in 1:10–4:21, however, it is plausible to suppose that Paul has other Christian leaders in view. The Corinthians may have many pedagogues but they have only one father (1 Cor 4:15), and that father is not at all pleased with the way that some arrogant Christian leaders are talking big about themselves as though Paul is not going to return to Corinth (1 Cor 4:18).

In both 1 and 2 Corinthians, therefore, Paul seems to be dealing with other leaders who are exploiting his lengthy absence and recommending themselves as suitable alternatives. And in both letters, he contrasts their arrogant words with the power he will display upon his arrival, while simultaneously warning his converts that their preoccupation with other leaders is permitting numerous problems to go unchecked within the Corinthian church. Thus in 1 Corinthians Paul rejects the idea that the Corinthians have many fathers (4:15) and then immediately proceeds to call for behavioural improvements (4:16–17). He threatens to wield his power against arrogant people (4:18–19), but then proceeds to threaten fatherly discipline because of sexual immorality and lawsuits (4:21–6:20).¹⁷ And in 2 Corinthians he threatens his arrogant and pretentious critics (10:1–5), citing his willingness to punish his disobedient converts as

¹⁶ E.g. Thiselton fails to discuss the pronoun τινές, presuming that it must refer to people within the church (*First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 376–77). And Fee writes quite oddly that “The words ‘some of you have become arrogant’ indicate...the trouble that Paul has been having comes from within the community itself, not from outside agitators” (*First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 189–90).

¹⁷ Despite the frequent claim that a new section begins in 1 Cor 5:1, there is in fact a close relationship between 4:21 and 5:1, as various commentators note (e.g. Calvin, Findlay, Fee, Thiselton).

proof of his powerful leadership (10:6). And he mocks the foolish and worldly boasting of his critics (10:7–12:18), before clarifying that his purpose in doing this is actually to instruct his immature converts so that he will not need to punish their sin upon his arrival (12:19–13:10).¹⁸

Fee, then, is correct to observe that Paul threatens certain people who are arrogant but nevertheless aims his heavy guns at the whole community; Fee is incorrect, however, to suppose that the arrogant people are within the community.¹⁹ Rather, the connection between the leadership debates in 1 Cor 1–4 and the sin issues in 1 Cor 5–6 is the same as is found in 2 Corinthians. Paul is writing letters demanding that his immature and disorganized congregation undertake remedial efforts, but his efforts are being thwarted by other Christian leaders who are criticizing his absence and presenting themselves as superior leaders who are willing to help the church deal with its problems. From 1 Cor 4:17, we learn that Timothy has been sent to bring about improvements following the sending of the letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9. Yet from 2 Cor 7:3–16, we learn that it is Titus who has overseen the punishment of various sinners. It would appear, therefore, that Paul wrote *two* letters and sent *two* representatives before his more rebellious Gentile converts were successfully punished—which makes the criticism in 2 Cor 10:8–10 all the easier to understand. After all, the criticism is that Paul’s *letters* (note the plural) are forceful, but that nobody listens to him, and the context is one in which Paul feels a need

¹⁸ Thus, while I differ from Engberg-Pedersen with regard to various details, I agree with him that there are very close connections between 1 Cor 4–6 and 2 Corinthians and that these stem from the similarly close relationship that exists between the problem of the sinners in Corinth and the problem of Paul’s opponents (Engberg-Pedersen, “2. Korintherbrevs,” 85).

¹⁹ Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 192–93.

to threaten that he *is* going to show up in Corinth personally at some point (2 Cor 10:1–2, 11; cf. 1:17a).

Once the gradual buildup of tensions in Corinth is correctly understood as a three-pronged affair, it becomes very persuasive to treat 1 Corinthians as the letter mentioned in 2 Cor 1:13b–2:13 and 7:3–16, and to treat the references in 2 Cor 1:13a and 10:8–10 as references to both 1 Corinthians and the letter which preceded it. First, Paul is struggling with some immoral and impure converts, but he has failed to return to Corinth and thus failed to deal with them effectively. Second, Paul is struggling with disgruntled converts who are upset about his failure to return to Corinth and hesitant to punish their immoral and impure brothers and sisters. Third, Paul is struggling with other Christian leaders who are criticizing his and Timothy's long absence and recommending themselves as alternatives.

Probably, disappointment about Paul's failure to return to Corinth set in immediately following his decision to work in Ephesus. So by the time the letter *before* 1 Corinthians was written, Paul's church was already disgruntled, making it understandable that the letter failed to prompt immediate action but successfully prompted leadership debates.²⁰ Then, by the time Paul heard about the other leaders in Corinth and the leadership debates, his leadership was under fire from both immoral Gentile converts

²⁰ Murphy-O'Connor makes the interesting and plausible suggestion that it was Apollos who brought news to Paul and Timothy in Ephesus and thus prompted the writing of the letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9–11 (*Paul: A Critical Life*, 184). Certainly, Paul was in contact with Apollos sometime before writing 1 Cor 16:12. I am less persuaded, however, by the suggestion of Fee and Murphy-O'Connor that Apollos' arrival in Corinth would have aggravated the situation there (Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 823–24; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life*, 184), preferring the alternative proposal that Paul uses Apollos merely as an example (see Hall, "Disguise"; Vos, "Der Μετασχηματισμός in 1 Kor 4,6"; Hall, *Unity*, ch. 1).

accusing him of being overbearing and other ministers accusing him of being a weakling. Paul reacted to these developments with 1 Corinthians, in which he lambastes his converts for a long list of communal immaturities and warns them not to debate his leadership, while slamming his critics for boasting so arrogantly. First Corinthians succeeded in bring about the discipline of the immoral believers who were challenging Paul's leadership. It did not, however, please Paul's other converts, who continued to express their frustration with Paul's extended absence. Nor did it silence the other Christian leaders in Corinth, who continued to cast Paul as an inadequate leader trying to frighten people from a distance. And so it is that most of 2 Corinthians is directed at disgruntled converts and arrogant critics.

c. Movements from Asia to Macedonia

Supposing that 1 Corinthians is the earlier letter carried by Titus, it becomes necessary to trace Paul, Timothy, and Titus's movements in the months surrounding 2 Corinthians. In 1 Cor 16:8–9, Paul indicates that he intends to remain a while longer in Ephesus. Then in 2 Cor 2:12–13, he indicates that he experienced anxiety in Troas when he did not find Titus there. It would appear, therefore, that Paul and Titus arranged to meet in Troas following Titus's delivery of 1 Corinthians. For his part, Paul carried through with this plan as arranged. He went to Troas, where he encountered a tremendous opportunity for the proclamation of the gospel. Yet this potentially uplifting experience, which presented a welcome relief from the persecutions in Asia, was marred by anxiety. Paul's evangelistic efforts were distracted by his fears about what might have prevented Titus

from keeping to their arrangements, and so he eventually said farewell and proceeded to Macedonia.

A closely related historical puzzle involves Timothy's movements during this same time period. What was Timothy doing while Paul was working in Ephesus and then in Troas? From 1 Cor 4:14–5:13, we learn two things: (1) a letter has been sent to Corinth in response to behavioural problems there (5:9–11); and (2) Timothy has been sent to Corinth in order to bring about behavioural reform (4:17). Setting aside the unlikely possibility that Paul sent Timothy and Titus at the same time, we can conclude that Timothy was sent to Corinth prior to the composition of 1 Corinthians, as numerous interpreters have suggested.²¹ Going a step further than this, however, I wish to propose here that Timothy was sent to Corinth by way of Macedonia soon after the sending of the letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9–11, with the plan being that Paul would travel by sea and eventually join him in Corinth.

Supporting the idea that Timothy took the land route to Corinth through Macedonia are the following details. First, Paul must have expected that Titus would deliver 1 Corinthians before Timothy's arrival, since it would be pointless otherwise for him to give instructions about Timothy's reception in 1 Cor 16:10–12. If Timothy had already been sent by sea, this expectation becomes very hard to explain; it is explicable, however, with the hypothesis that Timothy went by land and Titus by sea. Second, there is no sign of Timothy's return to Corinth in 2 Corinthians, but there is evidence that he is

²¹ See Barrett, *First Epistle*, 116, 390; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 92 n.19; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 821; Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 375. It seems unlikely that Paul sent the two men at the same time, because 16:10–11 seems to give updated instructions for Timothy.

in Macedonia with Paul.²² It is hard to imagine, however, that Timothy would have sailed to Corinth but then bypassed the city and travelled on foot to Macedonia. Third, the tradition evident in Acts 19:22 is that Timothy was sent from Ephesus to Macedonia along with Erastus, which makes the most sense if Timothy did in fact travel from Ephesus to Macedonia but then failed to proceed any further into Achaia.

Why do I make the more specific claim that Timothy was sent following the letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9–11 and that he expected to be reunited with Paul in Corinth? Because immediately after he reports his changed travel plans in 1 Cor 16:5–9, Paul proceeds to give some odd instructions about Timothy. First, he explains that Timothy is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as he himself is, so that he should have no cause to fear and should not be despised. This is typically taken to mean that Timothy should be respected as Paul's representative, with the result that Timothy is described as comparatively timid.²³ Yet it has been rightly pointed out that Paul would not have sent Timothy to deal with divisions in Corinth had he been timid.²⁴ Taking a different tack entirely, I propose that Timothy's work in the Lord is cited by Paul as the reason for his long delay in getting to Corinth, an explanation that fits very nicely with the deep frustration that is evident in 2 Corinthians with regard to Paul and Timothy's long absence from Corinth.

²² On this point, see Lightfoot, "Mission of Titus," 198–201.

²³ E.g. Fee: "That is, they are to treat Timothy as one who is there in Paul's place, ministering in Paul's stead.... Again it is difficult to find a reason for such a word unless Paul was fearful that the contempt some of them have for him will spill over onto his younger colleague" (*First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 821–22).

²⁴ See esp. Hutson, "Timothy," 64: "an envoy who required such coddling could scarcely have been effective in dealing with the divisions in Corinth."

Paul probably sent Timothy to Corinth via Macedonia in response to initial reports of immorality in the church, with the instruction that he should help the Corinthians to behave themselves while awaiting Paul's own arrival. Paul subsequently learned more about the situation in Corinth, however, and decided to cancel the visit during which he was supposed to reunite with Timothy, opting to send Titus with 1 Corinthians instead. This decision, however, created a situation in which Timothy might arrive in Achaia after an extended stay in Macedonia only to be greeted by frustrated believers expressing their disappointment as his long delay. Timothy is not to be despised for arriving so late and leaving so soon, *because he is busy doing the work of the Lord—as is Paul*.

My second reason for thinking that Timothy was sent in response to an earlier stage of the Corinthian situation is the fact that Paul is both certain and uncertain about his arrival in Corinth. On the one hand, Paul describes Timothy's arrival in Corinth in the protasis of a third class conditional construction, which would seem to indicate that he is somewhat uncertain about it.²⁵ Supposing Timothy ever arrives, he is to be treated well and then sent on to Paul.²⁶ On the other hand, Paul quite clearly states that if Timothy

²⁵ Interpreters are fond of equating *ἐάν* and *ὅταν*, as though there were no difference between the two (e.g. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 297), but Findlay is closer to the mark when he writes that "his coming is not *certain*. He and Erastus have been before this sent to Macedonia...with instructions to go forward to Cor. (iv. 17 above); he might be expected to arrive about the same time as this letter. But local circumstances, or even the report of the unfriendly attitude of the Cor. (Ed.), might detain him in Mac." (Findlay, *Second Epistle*, 948).

²⁶ In response to the possible objection that Paul seems entirely certain about Timothy's mission in 1 Cor 4:17, I note that this report of Timothy's sending comes in the context of 1 Cor 1:10–6:20, which is an extended response to people who are questioning the Pauline mission's leadership and considering alternatives, at least in part because Paul and Timothy have been gone from Corinth much longer than expected. In such a context, it makes good sense for Paul to emphasize the fact that he has sent Timothy to Corinth in response to earlier reports of trouble, particularly if he has already mentioned Timothy's mission in the earlier letter referred to in 1 Cor 5:9–11. Moreover, this remains an effective strategy, even if Paul has already decided that he will try to prevent Timothy from leaving Macedonia.

does reach Corinth, he is to be sent back to Paul along with the brothers, which probably means that he is to sail for Troas along with Titus and Titus's travelling companion.²⁷ Yet Paul never explains what should happen in the event that Timothy arrives after the brothers have already set sail, which indicates that Timothy—if he is going to arrive in Corinth at all—is going to arrive before Titus and his travelling companion set sail for Troas.

Taking into account these somewhat odd details, I deduce that Timothy was *not* sent to Corinth in response to the problems underlying 1 Corinthians but in response to earlier problems, and that Paul's reception of news from Corinth prompted not only a change in Paul's travel plans but also an attempt to prevent Timothy from departing for Achaia.²⁸ This hypothesis explains Paul's instructions about Timothy's reception in Corinth, as well as his lack of concern about Timothy arriving after Titus's departure for Troas. He is nervous about Timothy's reception because the situation in Corinth has worsened from a few immoral converts to a few openly rebellious converts, a number of disgruntled converts who are upset with the Pauline mission, and a handful of other

²⁷ Paul's wording is somewhat unclear, of course, and other interpretations have been advanced. Murphy-O'Connor writes that "Commentators have made it clear that 'the brethren' cannot be either the three Corinthians mentioned in 16:15 or other Corinthians supposed to come with Timothy. They must then be the members of the church at Ephesus" (Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life*, 292). Taking into account the evidence of 2 Cor 2:12–13, 8:22, and 12:18, however, it is best to regard the brothers as Titus and his travelling companion (who came to have great confidence in the Corinthians after seeing their response to Titus and to 1 Corinthians). Thus Lightfoot is correct when he states that the brethren of 1 Cor 16:11 "appear to have been the bearers of the letter" ("Mission of Titus," 201) and that "What more probable than that Titus and 'the brother' accompanying him of the Second Epistle, are 'the brethren' of the First?" ("Mission of Titus," 202).

²⁸ Edwards makes the similar point that "if Timotheus heard in Macedonia of the hostile attitude of many in the Corinthian Church towards the Apostle, he would naturally feel as much reluctance to visit Corinth as the Apostle himself" (*First Epistle*, 468). This "reluctance," however, need not be related to interpersonal conflict. Perhaps the missionaries wanted to ensure that difficulties in Corinth would not interfere with their Macedonian and Illyrian work (cf. 2:12–13)?

leaders who are criticizing the Pauline mission; and he is certain Timothy will arrive before Titus leaves for Troas, because if he has not arrived by then, he will have received Paul's urgent message instructing him to wait in Macedonia.²⁹

Did word of Paul's revised itinerary reach Timothy before he left Macedonia? We can safely assume so, given that nothing in 2 Corinthians indicates a return to Corinth on Timothy's part, and given that Acts 19:22 recounts that Timothy and Erastus were sent to Macedonia.³⁰ Instead of sailing for Troas with Titus, therefore, Timothy remained in Macedonia where he was eventually reunited with Paul. What of Titus and his companion? Why did they not meet Paul in Troas as originally planned? We simply do not know. All we know is that Paul and Timothy were being persecuted together in Macedonia when they finally received news from Titus about his experiences in Corinth (2 Cor 7:5–7).

I emphasize that Paul and Timothy were being persecuted in Macedonia, because Murphy-O'Connor makes the rather remarkable claim that Paul finished off the composition of 1 Corinthians in a very positive frame of mind, believing that "A leisurely swing through the churches of Macedonia which, for all their problems, were as angels compared with the Corinthians, would refresh his spirit."³¹ I find it hard to believe that

²⁹ Lightfoot suggests that Timothy knew to wait for Paul in Macedonia because Titus delivered 1 Corinthians by taking the land route through Macedonia (Lightfoot, "Mission of Titus," 203). This, however, fails to explain why Paul is uncertain about Timothy's arrival in 1 Cor 16:10–11.

³⁰ Phil 2:19–24 may also be relevant here. If it is dated to Paul's Ephesian period, it would seem to indicate an even earlier plan whereby Timothy intended to spend a winter in Macedonia before returning to Paul in Asia. Probably, if this is indeed what the passage indicates, Timothy's plan was changed after news arrived from Corinth about the increasing impurity of the Corinthian congregation. At this point, Timothy would have been given instructions to proceed to Corinth after finishing up in Macedonia.

³¹ Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life*, 291.

Paul would give priority to an allegedly “leisurely” jaunt through Philippi and Thessalonica after writing something like 1 Cor 4:18–21. It is possible that the faithful Macedonian believers were enduring hostilities from their neighbours, whereas the complaining Achaian believers were not, with the result that Paul chose to prioritize his Macedonian converts over the Achaians. The superior explanation, however, is that Paul never envisioned his return to Macedonia as a refreshing visit, but as a further opportunity to preach the gospel. On this point, therefore, I agree with Murphy-O’Connor:

A free summer was a golden opportunity to again seek virgin territory, and to be what he was divinely chosen to be, a founder of churches, who preached Christ where he had not yet been named (Rom 15:20). The prospect must have been irresistible. In any case Paul did not restrain himself. He went to Illyricum (Rom 15:19).³²

d. The Collection Preparations

In 1 Cor 16:1–4, Paul seems to speak about his collection for Jerusalem as something he has already proposed to his readers. He has pitched the idea to them and they have accepted it willingly, and so he is now instructing them to set aside a little bit of money each week so that collections will not need to be made after his arrival in Corinth.³³ Turning to 2 Corinthians, we find a similar story. Paul’s readers have a head-start on the Macedonians not only with respect to their actual preparations but also with respect to their desire to give, which they expressed ἀπὸ πέρυσι (8:10). Moreover, Paul has been

³² Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life*, 316.

³³ White correctly proposes that Paul would not speak as he does in 1 Cor 16:1 if the Corinthians had not already accepted the idea of a collection (White, “Visits,” 84).

boasting to the Macedonians that Achaia has been preparing ἀπὸ πέρυσι (9:2). Finally, Titus, who helped the Corinthians to get a head start on their preparations (8:6), is being sent back in order to ensure that the Achaian collection is completed prior to Paul and Timothy's arrival (8:6; 9:1–5).³⁴

Extrapolating from these facts, we can hypothesize the following historical developments. First, Paul formulated his plan for an Achaian collection during the period in which he worked in Asia (cf. Acts 19:21), and his plan for the collection was accepted by the Corinthians prior to the composition of 1 Corinthians.

Second, having decided not to stop in Corinth *en route* to Macedonia, Paul knows that he will not have an opportunity to instruct the Corinthians about the appropriate procedures that ought to be followed with regard to the collection, so he charges Titus with the task of initiating the collection and then includes a brief summary of his expectations at the end of the letter Titus is delivering (1 Cor 16:1–4; cf. 2 Cor 8:6).

Third, enough time has passed since the onset of Corinth's collection preparations that in 2 Corinthians Paul describes himself as having boasting to the Macedonians about preparations begun in Achaia already ἀπὸ πέρυσι. If this is taken to mean that Titus's delivery of the instructions in 1 Cor 16:1–4 took place "last year," then Titus may have set sail for Corinth from Asia before the end of the travel season, wintered in Corinth, and then found Paul and Timothy in Macedonia sometime the following year, with 2 Corinthians being written soon thereafter. Alternatively, it may be that Titus brought news

³⁴ Moreover, Paul is even more concerned than ever that the Corinthians' preparations are completed in advance of his arrival (2 Cor 8:16–9:5).

to Paul and Timothy in Macedonia during the fall or winter but was only sent back to Corinth in the spring or summer of the following year.³⁵

Two details cause me to favour the latter of these two hypotheses. First, the fact that Paul is anxious about the state of the Corinthians' collection efforts is easily explained if Titus spent the winter with Paul and Timothy in Macedonia after delivering news from Corinth, since this entails that some time has passed since Titus's departure from Corinth. Second, if a winter passed between Titus's arrival in Macedonia and his return to Corinth with 2 Corinthians, it is possible to suppose that Paul delayed his arrival in Corinth by up to a year and a half by cancelling the first of his two planned visits.³⁶ Perhaps he did so quite consciously, with the intention of leaving himself plenty of time for ministry both *en route* to Macedonia (e.g. in Troas), as well as in and around Macedonia (e.g. in Illyricum). Certainly, this would help to explain the vagueness of his remarks in 1 Cor 16:5, which cast his movements in rather uncertain terms (ὅταν Μακεδονίαν διέλθω). But also, the Corinthians' frustration at Paul's change of plans is much easier to understand if they understood it to involve an extensive delay.³⁷

³⁵ On either reading, the tradition of Acts 19:22 is confirmed as accurate (i.e. Paul stayed on in Ephesus 'for a season' after Timothy left for Macedonia).

³⁶ This assumes that 1 Corinthians was written and dispatched shortly before Passover, that Titus delivered news of its reception in the fall, that Paul and Timothy sent Titus back to Corinth with 2 Corinthians the following spring, and that Paul and Timothy did not themselves arrive in Corinth until the fall.

³⁷ Against this, it might be objected that Paul writes in 1 Cor 4:19 that he will come "soon," but this becomes a weak objection if a number of years have already past since Paul was initially supposed to return to Corinth. If Paul has plans to continue working in Asia for a bit, as well as plans to work in Troas, Macedonia, and perhaps Illyricum, then "soon" may in fact mean "sometime late next year." Paul, we must remember, was the type of minister who made it a priority to preach the gospel in new places, which is precisely why his critics were able to propose that he might never return to Corinth (1 Cor 4:18).

e. The Other Christian Leaders in Corinth

At last, we come to the burning question. Who are the other Christian leaders in Corinth, whom Paul describes as secret servants of Satan? This is a difficult question to answer, because Paul's perspective is so clearly biased, but the question cannot for this reason be ignored. Rather, we must begin with the *claims* that are made about these people in 2 Corinthians, and then proceed to consider the historical developments that most likely provoked those claims. These, then, are the claims that Paul and Timothy make about the other Christian leaders who are working in Corinth:

1. They have suggested that Paul should be ashamed of his attempts to terrify his converts into obedience by writing forceful letters from a distance (10:8–10; cf. 13:10).
2. They have drawn attention to Paul's weak physical condition and observed that even his own converts feel free to ignore his instructions (10:10).
3. They have perhaps taken issue with Paul's public speaking (11:6).
4. They are not worried about what will happen if Paul returns to Corinth (10:11), apparently because they do not find him physically intimidating (10:2–5).
5. They are highly critical of Paul and Timothy's leadership on the grounds that the two men are unable or unwilling to keep their impure converts under control (10:6; cf. 13:6–7).
6. They are imposing themselves on Paul's converts in the manner of abusive overlords (11:16–21; cf. 4:5).
7. They are seeking to steal away the Corinthian church, which is a source of pride that Paul and Timothy have earned by the sweat of their own brows (10:13–15).
8. They are bragging about themselves and openly criticizing the Pauline mission in the hopes that they can persuade Paul and Timothy's converts to financially support them, which—according to Paul, at least—reveals that they are false apostles and deceitful workers who are only pretending to be apostles of Christ (11:12–15).

9. They are Jews who are proud of their Jewishness (12:22).
10. They proclaim a different Jesus, dispense a different Spirit, and teach a different gospel than does Paul (11:4), such that Paul worries his converts will be deceived and will lose the simplicity and purity of their devotion to Christ (11:3).
11. They pay too much attention to appearances and not enough attention to matters of the heart (5:12).
12. They regard Paul and Timothy's behaviour as senseless and imprudent (5:13).
13. They are ashamed, so that they hide themselves and are not true to the word of God (4:2).
14. They are cautious in their proclamation of the gospel, not wanting to offend people and thereby jeopardize their personal finances (2:17).
15. They do not adequately recognize that Christ died for everyone, that it is inappropriate to evaluate people on the basis of fleshly standards, and that the reconciliation God desires is one that must be extended to the whole world (5:14–19).

To this list, many scholars would add some additional points. I have argued in Chapter 3–7, however, that a large number of texts in 2 Corinthians should not be exploited through mirror reading, including the remark about letters of recommendation in 3:1–3, the remarks about the greatest apostles in 11:5 and 12:11, the remarks about visionary experiences in 12:1–10, the remarks about apostolic signs and wonders in 12:12, and the remarks about Paul's finances in 11:7–15 and 12:13–18. So then, I will work with the above ideas in order to develop a rough historical portrait of the other Christian leaders in Corinth.

Probably, the most important thing that can be said about Paul and Timothy's critics is that they are openly criticizing Paul and Timothy's leadership because the holiness and purity of the Corinthian church are not being adequately maintained. That other leaders would have made an objection like this is historically plausible for two

reasons. On the one hand, concerns about immorality and impurity were widespread in early Judaism, such that it is relatively easy to imagine that other Christian leaders in Corinth would have been concerned about the purity of a church there. In fact, Paul and Timothy are themselves concerned about the sins of their converts, even though they are the ones who stand accused of permitting them. On the other hand, we have good evidence in 2 Corinthians that neither Paul nor Timothy made a return visit to Corinth in order to address the problems there, despite the passing of time. Instead, Paul cancelled two planned visits and sent no fewer than three letters instructing the church to maintain more adequate purity standards. Taking these two points together, it is quite plausible to suppose that other Christian leaders were very upset with Paul and Timothy's *handling* of the Corinthian impurities, even if everyone was in agreement that the impurities constituted a significant problem.

This first point, unfortunately, does not permit us to identify Paul's critics with any specificity, given that most Christian leaders in the 50s would have taken issue with sexual immorality and associations with idolatry. I will turn, therefore, to the criticisms levelled against Paul's letters. Most obviously, we know that Paul's forceful letters failed to impress his critics, who came to regard his letters as indicative of poor leadership. Because they felt that Paul ought to have returned to Corinth in order to deal personally with his unruly Gentile converts, they attacked Paul's letters as inappropriate attempts to frighten the Corinthians from a distance (2 Cor 10:8–9). Yet they also took issue with the success rate of Paul's letters, observing that the letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9–11 did little to restrain the Pauline mission's more rebellious converts but instead prompted them to

condemn Paul's handling of the idol food issue (2 Cor 10:10; cf. 1 Cor 9:1–23; 2 Cor 6:12; 7:2). Here again, however, the facts permit us to cast virtually any first-century Christian leader as one of Paul and Timothy's critics, inasmuch as virtually any Christian leader might have taken issue with the way that the Corinthian situation became a long and drawn out affair because of Paul and Timothy's delay in returning to Corinth.

Somewhat more significant is the low blow in 2 Cor 10:10, where a very cutting remark is being made about Paul's physical appearance. Also, attention must be drawn to three passages in 1 and 2 Corinthians where Paul attempts to refute the charge that he is avoiding Corinth because he is a weak person (1 Cor 4:18–21; 2 Cor 1:13b–17a; 10:1–6). Apparently, Paul's masculinity has been called into question (2 Cor 1:17a), which perhaps explains why Paul accuses his critics of being too preoccupied with appearances (2 Cor 5:12) and with having fleshly rather than spiritual preoccupations (2 Cor 10:2–5).³⁸ Here again, however, we have nothing that helps us to identify Paul's critics, for as Larson observes,

Simplistic, ad hominem attacks on an opponent seem shocking and unworthy to the modern reader. Our cultural standards of argumentation do not permit us to attack an opponent on the grounds that he stutters, or has a tic in his eye, or because he is a poor excuse for a man with a high girlish voice. Yet these kinds of arguments were not at all unusual in antiquity and judging by their popularity, they seem to have carried weight with audiences.³⁹

³⁸ Probably, as Schellenberg proposes, it was quite easy for Paul's critics to cast him as a feeble character whose weaknesses made him shy away from conflict, because he *really was* slavish in appearance, a trait no doubt aggravated by his manual labour and his repeated sufferings (Schellenberg, "Paul's Rhetorical Education," 315–18).

³⁹ Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," 90.

Indeed, we cannot even presume that Paul has objectively conveyed the true nature of his critics' boasts, given that he is caricaturing them in his own way. For as Larson also points out,

Paul makes his "weakness" a virtue by criticizing several contrasting behaviors of his opponents, behaviors that can be interpreted as hypermasculine. The opponents boast and indulge in self-praise; they constantly measure and compare themselves to each other (and presumably to Paul). They assume a dominant, arrogant attitude toward others whom they view as their inferiors.⁴⁰

In the end, we can safely conclude that Paul was physically weaker and less physically attractive than his critics and that they invoked this as a point in their own favour; but this does not really help us to identify them.

A potentially more promising approach begins with Paul and Timothy's insinuation that their critics are financially dependent upon their hearers and consequently tainted by mixed motives (2 Cor 2:17). Moving from here, it is easy to draw in 2 Cor 11:7–15 and 12:13–18 and to argue that Paul and Timothy's critics were the sort of ministers who were financially supported by Christian believers. Unfortunately, however, Paul makes it clear that virtually all Christian leaders accepted financial support (1 Cor 9:6; 2 Cor 2:17), rendering this observation just as useless as the others.

What about the accusation that Paul and Timothy are acting senselessly and thus failing to demonstrate sober-minded judgement (2 Cor 5:13)? This charge coheres closely with the criticisms levelled against Paul and Timothy's failure to return to Corinth in order to personally punish their converts, inasmuch as it suggests that Paul and Timothy

⁴⁰ Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," 95.

do not display good judgement as leaders. It adds, however, the additional charge that Paul and Timothy's aggressive evangelistic campaign is senseless or even insane—which indicates that there is more at stake between the Pauline mission and its critics than some local problems in Corinth. What their critics call a weak, feminine, and boorish embarrassment (2 Cor 1:17a; 10:10; 11:6), Paul and Timothy call a clay pot containing the glory of Christ (2 Cor 4:7); and what their critics call indiscretion (2 Cor 5:13), Paul and Timothy call boldness (2 Cor 3:4, 12; 4:2). Indeed, all throughout 2 Cor 2:14–5:21, Paul and Timothy exploit the claim that their missionary strategy is insane in order to frame themselves as open and bold, insinuating by implication that their critics are deceptive and fearful.

It is this additional disagreement—over the aggressive strategy of the Pauline mission, which refuses to worry about appearances or to take into account worldly standards—that will occupy my attention for the remainder of this chapter, because this disagreement finally provides us with an interesting window through which to explore how the Pauline mission and its critics should be situated within early Christianity. For their part, Paul and Timothy regard the abuse they endure at the hands of their Jewish brethren to be the result of a spiritual hardening or veiling that is preventing Israel from correctly interpreting the scriptures (2 Cor 3:13–18). So although they are continually forced to reckon with the possibility that they might be killed in the course of their ministry (4:7–5:11a), they nevertheless seek to please their Lord by boldly proclaiming the superiority of the new covenant over the old (2 Cor 3:4–12). The opposition they face is the result of a satanic blindness that has been inflicted on the whole world (2 Cor 4:1–

6), which is why different people come to such differing assessments of the Pauline mission (2 Cor 2:14–17). They refuse to embrace the world’s foolish standards, but instead proclaim the controversial truth that God is reconciling the whole world to himself and is doing away with fleshly distinctions by remaking humanity into a new creation (2 Cor 5:16–21).

Instead of employing mirror-reading in order to reconstruct from these claims an opposing point of view—which would require the indefensible presumption that other Christian leaders rejected the *thinking* that underlies 2 Cor 2:14–5:21—I will work with the hypothesis that Paul and Timothy’s critics are appalled by the *behaviour* of the Pauline mission, because the seemingly intemperate or even insane manner in which the Pauline mission proclaims Christ is provoking both hostility and ridicule. This hypothesis adequately explains Paul and Timothy’s insinuation that other Christian leaders are concerned about public perception because they are worried about their financial stability (2 Cor 2:17). It also explains the related insinuation that other leaders are advocating the use of adaptive strategies in order to win people over (2 Cor 4:1–2), and the explicit allegation that they are unduly preoccupied with appearances (2 Cor 5:12). If 2 Corinthians is any indication, therefore, other Christian leaders in the 50s found the Pauline mission embarrassing and wished that Paul and his colleagues would generate less bad publicity for the Christian movement. And it is this sense of embarrassment that Paul and Timothy exploit in 2 Corinthians.⁴¹ Where critics of the Pauline mission see

⁴¹ In this regard, it is interesting to consider the similarities that exist between Rom 11 and 2 Cor 3–4. Consider especially the following words in Rom 11:13–15: “Inasmuch as I’m an apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry (τὴν διακονίαν μου δοξάζω) in order to provoke my fellow Jews (παραζηλώσω μου τὴν σάρκα) and so perhaps save some of them. After all, if their rejection of Jesus has brought about the reconciliation of the world (καταλλαγή κόσμου), their acceptance of Jesus will no doubt

stability, strategy and sensitivity, Paul and Timothy see only softness and timidity and an unwillingness to follow through on the full implications of the gospel (2 Cor 2:17; 4:2; 5:16–21).⁴²

Few modern readers, I suspect, will find it hard to imagine that Paul might have reacted explosively to shallow and petty allegations about his physical stature or his lack of masculine strength.⁴³ Moreover, several modern pastors have informed me that they would regard it as an unwelcome intrusion if other Christian ministers were to publicly criticize their handling of congregational difficulties. What causes modern readers to stumble, in the end, is Paul's bold assertion that these other Christian leaders, who are so proud of themselves because they are less socially unacceptable, are actually false apostles who proclaim a different gospel (2 Cor 11:4, 13). It seems rhetorically astute for

bring about the final resurrection of the dead!" I suggest that there may be no better explanation for criticisms of the Pauline mission than the one the Apostle himself offers here. The other Christian leaders working in Corinth may well have shared Paul's understanding of Israel's hardness, and shared his vision for the salvation of the whole world, and even affirmed his status as an apostle to the Gentiles—but they took strong issue with his *self-confessedly deliberate* provocations of Diaspora Jews. Where Paul saw a good strategy for bringing on the end of the world, his critics saw only an embarrassing insanity.

⁴² There is, I suggest, a very close connection between Paul's grand vision of the reconciliation of the whole world and the claims of his critics that he fails to adequately maintain purity standards in his local churches. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that Paul's critics have correctly assessed the true nature of his priorities. He really does care about the purity of his churches, but he does not want such problems to prevent him from further expanding the scope of his mission. This is why he has stayed on in Asia and then proceeded by way of Troas to Macedonia (and perhaps Illyricum) instead of travelling though Corinth. It is also why his attention turns so frequently in 2 Corinthians to his hope that the church in Corinth will continue to support the Pauline mission—so that the mission can continue to expand. When looked at from a certain perspective, therefore, 2 Corinthians is largely a letter about how the Corinthian church ought to take responsibility for its role as part of an ever-expanding Pauline mission. They should play their part, Paul says, by defending Paul and Timothy against critics of the mission, by maintaining adequate standards of purity so as to silence critics of the mission, and by giving money to the mission instead of giving money to critics of the mission.

⁴³ Note the wise words of Hengel, who points out that the conflict underlying 2 Corinthians cannot be understood without reference to Paul's "passionate character, which ended up at certain times drawing him into sharp polemic and which we ought not to deny" (Hengel, *Saint Peter*, 72).

Paul to turn the tables on his critics by casting them as fearful and hesitant to upset anybody, but how are we to explain the way he leaps from this charge of cowardice to the seemingly more serious charge of heresy?

It is helpful in this respect to observe how Paul conducts himself in the context of similar disagreements with respect to which we have more information. Here I will consider two such conflicts: (1) the Antioch incident, during which Paul calls Peter a coward whose behaviour is out of line with the truth of the gospel; and (2) the Galatian crisis, during which Paul slanders other Christian leaders as cowards who are afraid of persecution. From Paul's reactions during these other conflicts, I will establish that Paul's understanding of faithfulness to Jesus and the gospel cannot be reduced to the holding of "correct" christological or soteriological doctrines. To the contrary, it is quite plausible that Paul would have directed the statements in 2 Cor 11:4 and 11:13 at Christian leaders whose *behaviour* he deemed out of keeping with the general *ethos* of Jesus and the gospel.

In Gal 2:11–14, we possess Paul's own account of a confrontation that took place between himself and Peter. This account is a helpful comparison for several reasons. First, we know that Paul regarded Peter as a true apostle of Christ, even though the two were not always in agreement on everything (1 Cor 9:1–6; 15:3–8; Gal 1:18; 2:7–8). Second, the disagreement in question seems to have involved both purity concerns as well as concerns about the reputation of the Christian community. Third, the account reveals a tendency on Paul's part to sensationalize actions with which he disagrees.

As a starting point, I note that Peter's actions are described for us by Paul himself: Peter refused to eat with Gentile Christians, although he had been doing so at an earlier point in time (Gal 2:12). Nothing further is described, and so we must assume that none of Peter's other actions are at all relevant to the point Paul is making. Nevertheless, when Paul proceeds to publicly denounce Peter's actions, he says that Peter is forcing Gentiles to judaize (τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις ἰουδαΐζειν)! Then, later on, he says that Peter was fearful (φοβούμενος), that all of the other Jews imitated Peter's hypocrisy (συνυπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ Ἰουδαῖοι), that even Barnabas was led astray (καὶ Βαρναβᾶς συναπήχθη αὐτῶν τῇ ὑποκρίσει), and that none of these people were acting in line with the truth of the gospel (οὐκ ὀρθοποδοῦσιν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου).

On what basis, we might want to ask, does Paul justify this highly polemical reconstruction of Peter's social withdrawal and its effect on the Gentile believers in Antioch? But while this is an interesting question, it is not germane to my observations here. What matters here is simply the bare fact that Paul observes that Peter has stopped eating with Gentiles, but then re-construes this simple action as a cowardly violation of the truth of the gospel, as an attempt to judaize Gentiles, and as a departure from Peter's earlier alignment with Paul on this matter (cf. Gal 2:1–10). In other words, Paul makes the same leap from cowardice to heresy that we find him making in 2 Corinthians—only in this case he makes this highly polemical leap in the course of evaluating a person whom he personally respects as a true apostle of Christ, which is probably why he calls Peter a hypocrite instead of calling him a false apostle and a servant of Satan. According to Paul, Peter's decision to cave in to social pressure and to change his behaviour in order to

accommodate fleshly social distinctions constituted a complete violation of the truth of the gospel.

Turning to the situation in Galatia, I observe in Gal 4:17 that other Christian leaders are excluding Paul's readers in order to provoke feelings of desire (ἐκκλείσαι ὑμᾶς θέλουσιν, ἵνα αὐτοὺς ζηλοῦτε). As with the Antioch incident, therefore, Paul's problem is that Gentile Christians are being somehow excluded by Jewish Christians. Also, in Gal 6:12–13 the Christian leaders who are confusing Paul's churches in Galatia are putting up good fleshly appearances (θέλουσιν εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί) in order to avoid persecution (ἵνα τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μὴ διώκωνται) and in order to be able to take pride in fleshly things (ἵνα ἐν...σαρκὶ καυχῶνται). As in Antioch and Corinth, therefore, Paul's problem is that social pressures are causing Christian leaders to accommodate worldly standards. Finally, in Gal 6:12, as a result of what these other leaders in Galatia are doing, Paul's converts are feeling compelled to circumcise (οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμεσθαι).⁴⁴ So as regards both Antioch *and* Galatia, Paul sees the exclusion of Gentiles as an aggressive act of forced conversion, because for some reason or another—and here the logic of Paul's thinking does not really matter—he has decided that the Jews in Antioch and Galatia, by withdrawing from Gentiles and by excluding them, are effectively forcing Gentile believers to judaize.

⁴⁴ Notably, Paul does *not* state that the *goal* of the other Christian leaders in Galatia is to circumcise his Gentile converts; he states only that the *result* of their decision to exclude his Gentiles converts is a situation wherein his converts are feeling compelled to become circumcised. The possibility must be left open, therefore, that Paul's "opponents" in Galatia are not intentionally compelling his Gentiles to judaize, but only—like Peter in Antioch—affirming the importance of a social segregation that effectively isolates Gentile Christians.

The connections do not stop here, however. Notice, for example, Gal 1:6, where Paul expresses his surprise that the Galatians are turning their allegiance away from the one who called them and towards a different gospel (μετατίθεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς...εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον). Notice also Gal 1:8–9, wherein Paul pronounces a curse on anyone—including himself or even a heavenly angel—who would dare to proclaim anything different from what he himself proclaimed when he founded the Galatian churches (Gal 1:8–9). Here again, a direct line is being drawn between conduct and doctrine. Christian leaders who cowardly conform to worldly standards of behaviour are in fact proclaiming a different gospel than the gospel of the crucified Christ that Paul himself proclaims. Or to put this same point somewhat differently: a Christian leader who conducts himself or herself in a fleshly manner exemplifies a distorted gospel inasmuch as his or her conduct fails to faithfully imitate the cross of Christ. After all, as Paul himself says in Gal 1:7, it is not so much the Galatians themselves who are being turned towards a different gospel; rather *the gospel itself* is being turned (ὁ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο, εἰ μὴ τινές εἰσιν οἱ ταρασσόντες ὑμᾶς καὶ θέλοντες μεταστρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

Finally, it needs to be noted that in Galatians, as in 2 Corinthians, Paul explicitly contrasts the Pauline mission's willingness to imitate the cross of Christ with the cowardly acceptance of worldly standards that characterizes other Christian leaders. In Gal 1:10, he insists that he is not a people-pleaser (ἄρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν; ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν;), since it is impossible for people-pleasers to be servants of Christ (εἰ ἔτι ἀνθρώποις ἠρεσκον, Χριστοῦ δοῦλος οὐκ ἂν ἦμην). In Gal 3:1, he marvels that other leaders have so easily bewitched the Galatians, with the result that his converts

have forgotten his vivid re-enactment of the crucifixion of Christ. Then, in 5:2–12, he clarifies that the other ministers in Galatia are completely misrepresenting him. They have confused the Galatians by suggesting that Paul approves of the way they are going about their ministry, when in fact he regards their labour as a misguided attempt to abolish the offence of the cross. In reality, Paul is still being persecuted because he still refuses to preach circumcision—which is to say, he is still offensively re-enacting the cross of Christ. Lastly, in Gal 6:12–15, Paul insists quite explicitly that his opponents want to avoid being persecuted and want to take pride in fleshly things (ἐν...σαρκὶ καυχῆσονται), whereas he himself will boast only in the cross of Christ and will keep his focus on new creation (καινὴ κτίσις). These remarks closely mirror what we find in 2 Cor 5:12 and 5:17, deepening the continuity between Galatians and 2 Corinthians.⁴⁵

In all three of these conflicts, therefore—Antioch, Galatia, and Corinth—Paul accuses other Christian leaders of distorting the gospel of Christ by conforming their behaviour to worldly standards. When those other leaders are Peter and Barnabas, Paul’s accusation is one of hypocrisy, such that Peter and Barnabas are charged with *acting out of line with the gospel*. But when those other leaders are nameless ministers with whom Paul seems to have been personally unacquainted, Paul’s accusation takes a less sympathetic form, such that the leaders in question are charged with *distorting the gospel by means of their actions* to such an extent that they are effectively *preaching a different*

⁴⁵ Obviously, the situation in 2 Corinthians differs significantly from what is described here, in that Paul’s critics in Corinth are not falsely claiming a Pauline endorsement but rather openly critiquing the Pauline mission. In both cases, however, Paul glories in the cruciform shape of his ministry as the thing that distinguishes him from his worldly colleagues. Moreover, in both cases, Paul frames his cruciform strategy as comparatively more brave than the alternative mission strategy he sees other leaders enacting.

gospel.⁴⁶ In Galatians, he curses other Christian leaders for distorting the gospel out of fear by setting up communal gatherings in Galatia that are open only to people who are willing to follow Jewish customs. Then, in 2 Corinthians, he attacks other Christian leaders as false apostles who proclaim a different Jesus because they are criticizing his leadership in a worldly manner as part of an effort to woo his congregants.

Common to the conflicts in Antioch, Galatia, and Corinth are Paul's outrage at the accommodation of worldly standards and his insistence that the fearful accommodation of worldly standards is entirely contrary to the cross of Christ. The more interesting question, however, concerns what is different. Most notably, it has sometimes been concluded that circumcision was not an issue for Paul's "opponents" in Corinth, with the result that the ministers in Galatia are often treated as culturally distinct from the ministers in Corinth.⁴⁷ This idea, however, falls apart once the underlying situations are reconstructed in accordance with the proposal of this study. On the one hand, there is no real evidence in Galatians that Paul's opponents are insistent upon the circumcision of Gentiles *as a direct course of action*; rather, Paul's letter indicates only that they are making circumcision an entrance requirement for the communities they are establishing in Galatia, with the result that Paul's Gentile converts are being excluded and thus put under an *indirect* pressure to circumcise. On the other hand, there is no real evidence in

⁴⁶ In Gal 5:10, Paul observes that the other Christian leaders in Galatia will come under judgement, whomever they may be (ὁ δὲ παράσσω ὑμᾶς βαστάσει τὸ κρίμα, ὅστις ἐάν ᾤ), which may indicate that they are well-known and well-respected leaders, but which more likely indicates that Paul is either unacquainted with the leaders in question or else uninformed as to their identity.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., the remarks of Lake (Lake, *Earlier Epistles*, 222): "There is from the beginning to the end of the Epistles to the Corinthians not the faintest trace of any controversy as to that insistence on circumcision and on the Law, which we recognize as cardinal in those to the Galatians and Romans."

Paul's Corinthian correspondence that Paul's entire community in Corinth is being *taken over*, Gentiles and all; rather, Paul's letters indicates only that other ministers are attempting to *win over* some of his converts by criticizing his leadership in general and his handling of his immoral and impure Gentile converts in particular.⁴⁸

Paul probably had little concern that his Gentile converts would undergo circumcision in order to join an alternative community being organized by his critics; after all, he was barely managing to keep them distinct from paganism. But even if he had major concerns about his Jewish converts transferring their allegiance to a distinctly Jewish congregation in Corinth, we would not expect to hear about circumcision. We would expect to find evidence of the sorts of things that take place today whenever Christians move from one church to another. For instance, we might find people discussing the strengths and weaknesses of different Christian leaders. Or we might find complaints about leadership decisions or about unpleasant church members. Or we might find a minister complaining that transfer growth is not real church growth. Or we might find a minister worrying about the long-term financial stability of his or her future. In short, if the other Christian leaders in Corinth were attempting to woo Paul's more mature Gentile converts away from Paul's Corinthian church and into a distinct Corinthian church, we would expect to find exactly what we find in 2 Corinthians.

Who then, were the other Christian leaders in Corinth? I suggest that we will never know. Yet we do not need to know, because there seems to have been nothing

⁴⁸ *Pace* Perkins: "The false apostles referred to in 2 Corinthians were clearly active in a Greek-speaking, gentile church" (Perkins, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church*, 15).

particularly distinctive about them. Like so many Christian Jews, including Paul and Timothy, they were concerned about the purity of the Christian churches. Naturally, therefore, they became critical when Paul and Timothy failed to adequately address certain impurities in the Corinthian church. Problems began only when they stepped in, recommending themselves in the hopes that the church in Corinth might recognize their leadership and come join them in forming a Christian community somewhat less damaging to the public reputation of the Christian movement. And really, problems only began at this point because they stepped into the Corinthian situation directly onto Paul's toes—by asking for money from at least some of Paul's converts (which would decrease the amount of money available for the Pauline mission's evangelistic efforts) and by publicly criticizing Paul's leadership (in a worldly and fleshly manner that he found contrary to the gospel).⁴⁹ Really, we learn much more about *Paul* from 2 Corinthians than we do about the anonymous and forgotten leaders whom he so vigorously opposes. For example, we learn that he regarded with disdain and horror any Christian person who would dare to exercise leadership over other Christian people without fully embracing the ethos of the gospel, which he took to require the abandonment of worldly honour and the embrace of a cruciform life that celebrates God's willingness to include everyone—

⁴⁹ In essence, therefore, I agree with the conclusion of Hengel, who writes:

The appearance of the Jewish Christian missionaries from Jewish Palestine or from Syria, who in my opinion have ties to the Petrine mission and who contest Paul's apostolic mission, attack him personally and denigrate the value of his missionary activity, which is so painful and indeed threatening to Paul because the communities that he had established are the very ones who are openly to offer him 'honor' in the parousia: they are his 'hope, joy, his crown of boasting... and his glory' (1 Thess. 2:19–20); or in a word: his καύχημα (boasting) 'on the day of Christ' (Phil. 2:16; cf. 2 Cor. 1:14) (Hengel, *Saint Peter*, 92).

irrespective of his or her social status or physical limitations—in the glorious kingdom of his Christ.

4. Summary

Reconstructions of the historical setting of 2 Corinthians are legion, because there are so many details to be worked out. Certainly, I make no pretensions to having worked out all the details of the reconstruction sketched only briefly in this chapter. I do think, however, that the general parameters I have laid down here will provide a fruitful way forward, past the quagmire that has resulted from hypotheses like “the offender” and “the intermediate visit” and “the letter of tears.”

Most notably, I have argued that other Christian leaders in Corinth were attempting to win over some of Paul’s Jewish converts to an alternative Christian community in Corinth, that they were hoping these converts would help to financially support their ministry, and that they were openly criticizing the Pauline mission in the course of establishing their own presence. I have also argued that this attempted wooing was having a detrimental effect on Paul’s church, in that it became more interested in debating the merits of Paul’s leadership and less willing to follow his instructions. Specifically, many of Paul’s readers became so disappointed with his delay in returning to Corinth that they failed to take seriously his written demand that they punish immoral and impure believers in order to maintain the purity of their community. Thus it came to pass that some of Paul’s Gentile converts began to openly take issue with Paul and Timothy’s

leadership, which gave other Jewish ministers in Corinth yet another reason to criticize the Pauline mission.

Into this tumult entered 1 Corinthians, which was written in the hopes that Paul's church would stop bickering over leaders and reform itself. Yet even as 1 Corinthians succeeded, it also failed. Titus, who bore the letter, managed to convince the Corinthian church to expel the most immoral and impure of its members. He could not, however, prevent Paul and Timothy's converts from getting frustrated at Paul's incessant demands and disappointments, nor could he prevent other ministers from seizing upon this frustration as yet another way of building their own support base in Achaia—and so we have 2 Corinthians.

Meanwhile, Paul was continually making plans for his Achaian collection. The collection was probably proposed and accepted already prior to the letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9–11, with the double-visit itinerary conveyed in that letter involving an initial stop-over during which Paul planned to give practical instructions about setting aside money. Owing to the news he later received from Corinth, however, Paul opted to send Titus with 1 Corinthians, and so it was Titus who organized the Corinthians' collection efforts. Then, Paul made the mistake of boasting somewhat freely about the Achaian collection during a subsequent stay in Macedonia, informing everyone that "Achaia has been working towards the collection since last year." Paul's claim was true, technically speaking, but it put the Corinthians in a tough spot when the Macedonian churches suddenly decided to accompany Paul with their own spontaneously arranged collection. Observing this, Paul became anxious about the Corinthians' collection efforts and

decided to send Titus back to Corinth in order to ensure that things had been proceeding as expected—and so we have 2 Corinthians.

What was Timothy doing during this period of time? Probably, I have suggested, he left for Corinth via Macedonia around the time of the letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9–11, with his plan being to minister in Macedonia for a while and then to encourage the Corinthians while awaiting Paul’s own arrival. Timothy, however, wintered in Macedonia. What is more, Paul changed his mind about visiting Corinth after receiving more news from the city, and so he sent a message to Macedonia in the hopes that he might stop Timothy from continuing down into Achaia. This message was successful, so that Paul and Timothy were reunited in Macedonia later that year—and so we have 2 Corinthians.

CONCLUSION

As the subtitle of this study indicates, my guiding question has been: “Is there a text in these meanings?” After analyzing certain linguistic features across all of 2 Corinthians, I have answered this question affirmatively. Second Corinthians hangs together as a text because it realizes a well-structured situation wherein Paul and Timothy are enacting church leadership in relation to their converts in Corinth.

First, after expressing a positive disposition towards the Corinthian church, 2 Corinthians addresses Paul and Timothy’s controversial behaviour, including especially Paul’s recent handling of some immoral church members, and it calls for the forgiveness and restoration of disciplined believers (1:3–2:13). Second, the letter teaches its readers how to respond when people criticize the Pauline mission (2:14–5:21). Third, the letter urges its readers to cleanse themselves from the pagan immorality of Corinth while also acknowledging some recent progress in this area (6:1–7:16). Fourth, the letter reports an unexpected development in Macedonia and explains the task to which its bearers have been appointed (8:1–9:15). Fifth, the letter pleads with the Corinthians to persist in exercising communal oversight, attempting to divert their attention away from leadership debates by denigrating the worldly standards of other Christian leaders and by warning

that unpleasant conflicts will result upon Paul and Timothy's arrival in Corinth if the earlier immorality recurs (10:1–13:10).

As anyone who has tackled 2 Corinthians is well aware, its interpretive problems are not amenable to a linear approach. They are more like the perpetually frustrating Rubik's Cube, because any adjustment made to any one piece of the puzzle inevitably affects many others—sometimes for better, and sometimes for worse. A linguistic analysis by no means eliminates this complexity or provides an entirely linear path from problem to solution. However, the task of analysis does force the linguist to suspend judgement with regard to specific meanings or specific situational details and to focus instead upon large-scale patterns of meaning. Like the step-by-step solutions that are available for the Rubik's Cube, the task of producing a comprehensive linguistic analysis of 2 Corinthians has forced me to follow a principled process, and the unity hypothesis being advocated by this study has emerged as the “solution” most clearly favoured by the results of that process.

Of course, quite unlike the Rubik's Cube, a complex artefact like 2 Corinthians cannot be fully “solved” mechanistically. Rather, there comes a point where the interpreter must proceed from general descriptors like *what is being done*, *who is/are taking part*, and *what is being talked about* and must begin to develop more specific hypotheses about particular meanings and about the particulars of the situation that is encoded in those meanings. In Chapters 3–7 of this study, therefore, I have articulated a reading of 2 Corinthians that coheres with the general parameters laid down by my linguistic analysis, and in Chapter 8 I have made a preliminary sketch of its historical

implications. Much of the exegetical work in these chapters is exploratory, inasmuch as my linguistic analysis has challenged some longstanding ideas about 2 Corinthians and thus created a need for alternative interpretations. What is most important, however, is that the linguistic analysis underlying this study has put in place some general contextual parameters that will make it easier for scholars to read 2 Corinthians as a single, coherent text.

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