

WEAK ENOUGH TO LEAD: PAUL'S RESPONSE TO CRITICISM  
AND RIVALS IN 2 CORINTHIANS 10-13:  
A RHETORICAL READING

By

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To two special people & to the memory of one:

My parents,

CLARENCE AUGUSTUS ROBERTS<sup>†</sup> and  
RUBY NATHINE WILCOX ROBERTS,  
who shared with me a living faith  
and a love for learning

My wife,

CAROLYN DARLENE CROSSER ROBERTS,  
partner in faith and hope and  
example of steadfast love

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>Classical World</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF 2 CORINTHIANS 10–13 AND THE METHOD AND GOALS OF THIS STUDY

#### INTRODUCTION

Second Corinthians 10–13 is a letter (or part or fragment<sup>1</sup>) that the apostle Paul wrote some time in the 50's CE to the church he had established in the city of Corinth. Treated in this study as a complete or nearly complete discourse, it performs various speech acts, including rhetorical argument, through which Paul (1) responds to criticisms of his identity and activity as an apostle of Jesus Christ to these Corinthian believers and (2) seeks to prepare the way for a visit to them after they have received this discourse.

More than in any other portion of Paul's undisputed letters, these chapters center on the more general topic of church leadership and governance because critics (including rivals) have charged

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<sup>1</sup> Scholarly judgment and key evidence that these chs. constitute a compositional unit justify limiting this study to them, without concern, within this study, for their specific relation to the rest of canonical 2 Cor. Scholars of 2 Cor unanimously judge these chs. to form a unit, and key evidence both underlying and justifying that judgment comes from the identical concerns of their opening and closing vv.: appeal for reformed behavior (10.1-2//13.5, 11); threat of severity if offenders do not repent (10.2-6//13.2, 10); desire to use authority to build, not to tear down (10.8//13.10). The chs. are also unified by the key speech acts performed through them: the appeal to the Corinthian believers (hereafter simply "believers," without further qualification), the threat of severe discipline to unrepentant believers; Paul's defense against criticisms, his counteraccusation against rivals, and his reproach and accusation toward critics among the believers.

Beyond this premise, this study requires only another: that canonical 2 Cor is genuine (the question of 6.14–7.1 excepted), a premise granted by its unanimous inclusion by scholars among the undisputed letters of Paul. Critical commentaries and specialized studies discuss and provide much bibliography about the history of the composition of 2 Cor (Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, [Word Biblical Commentary; Nashville: Nelson, 1986] xxvi, xxxviii–lii. Martin slightly modifies traditional endorsement of the unity of 2 Cor. He considers chs. 10–13 to be "a later work of Paul called forth by fresh outbreaks of trouble at Corinth"(x1), a work sent to Corinth very soon after the letter containing chs. 1–9 had been sent (xlvi) and presumably very soon thereafter appended to ch. 9 to create canonical 2 Cor. Victor Paul Furnish [*II Corinthians*, (Anchor Bible 32A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1984) 29–54, 58–95] considers chs. 1–9, in which "Paul expresses confidence in the congregation's fidelity," to be an earlier letter than chs. 10–13, in which such expressions of confidence are absent (31). Frederick W. Danker [*II Corinthians* (Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989) 17–20] finds it probable that chs. 10–13 were written in a letter separate from chs. 1–9 but nonetheless describes the final four chs. as "an appropriate rhetorical climax" to Paul's arguments (from the paradigm of social reciprocity) in chs. 1–9 ["Paul's Debt to the *De Corona* of Demosthenes: A Study of Rhetorical Techniques in Second Corinthians," in Duane F. Watson, ed., *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 262–280].

This study endorses Danker's stance: Without deciding how the two sections are related in the history of the composition of 2 Cor, this study analyzes the book in its canonical form, interpreting chs. 10–13 within its own micro-literary and -rhetorical world first, then within the larger world of canonical 2 Cor, then again within the world of 1 and 2 Corinthians, etc.



that Paul is not qualified to lead the Corinthian church. Paul's critics and rivals express this charge in various ways.<sup>2</sup> Like tributaries merging into a single river, individual criticisms merge into one that attracts most of Paul's response and may subsume all the charges: namely, Paul is too weak to lead.<sup>3</sup>

This study analyzes these chapters rhetorically in order to demonstrate the preceding claims and to explicate Paul's response to his critics and their criticisms.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the following topical theses, this study focuses on discerning the macro rhetorical form of this discourse. The goal of this dimension of this study is to identify the subsuming form through which the discourse accomplishes its purposes. Subsuming form is closely related to what the ancient rhetoricians called arrangement (*τάξις*; *dispositio*). Literary critic Ronald S. Crane describes his search for this form while writing and the frustration he feels, despite his best efforts in research, thought, and planning, until he finds it:

All too frequently, when I have attempted to write an essay after a long and interested concentration on the subject, and the noting of many exciting ideas and patterns of key terms, and the construction of what looked like a perfect outline, I have found myself unable to compose the first sentence, or even to know what it ought to be about, or, having forced myself to go on, to bring the thing to a satisfying conclusion, whereas, on other occasions, with no more complete preparation, no greater desire to write, and no better state of nerves, I have discovered, to my delight, that nearly everything fell speedily into place . . . in an order that still seemed to me the inevitable one when I came to reread the essay in cold blood.

. . . The best way I can explain [the difference between the two experiences] is to say that what I failed to attain in the former cases and discovered somehow . . . in the latter was a kind of intuitive glimpse of a possible subsuming form for the materials, . . . a form sufficiently coherent and intelligible, as a form in my mind, so that I could know at once what I must or could do, and what I need not or ought not to do, in what order and with what emphasis in the various parts, in developing my arguments and

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<sup>2</sup> Criticisms are expressed, implied, or alluded to in 10.1–3, 7–11; 11.5–7, 11, 29–30; 12.1, 11, 13, 16; 13.3, 5.

<sup>3</sup> These vv. express or respond to the specific criticism that Paul is weak, in multiple senses of the term: 10.1, 3–6, 10; 11.5–7, 9, 21a; 11.30–12.11; 12.20–21; 13.3–4, 9.

<sup>4</sup> In approving this dissertation, my examiners identified a number of topics they wished the study had addressed differently or more fully. They did not request that I revise the dissertation, yet I wish to acknowledge the topics for the benefit of readers. I hope to consider these further as I revise the dissertation for publication. The topics include these: discussion of this reading as compliant, rather than resistant; examination of the rhetoric of representation as it implies and expresses an ideology, which this study does not examine or critique; treating more fully the questions of the literary composition of canonical 2 Cor and of the genre of chs. 10–13; locating Paul and his textual rhetoric more definitively among Greco-Roman orators and writers; querying further the legitimacy of analyzing letters with rhetorical categories invented for the analysis of speeches; comparing Paul's rhetoric with more Greco-Roman discourses and not mainly with handbook descriptions; treating invention, *stasis* especially, and not only arrangement in the analysis of 2 Cor 10–13; considering Paul's rhetoric in light of other Greco-Roman rhetorics and discourses of authority; probing further the usefulness of the (by some contested) category of the sophist.

putting them into words. . . [S]uch a synthesizing idea . . . is more than a general intention, more than a “theme,” and more than an outline in the usual sense of that word; it is, as I have said, a shaping or directing cause, involving at the same time, and in some sort of correlation, the particular conceptual form my subject is to take in my essay, the particular mode of argument or of rhetoric I am to use in discussing it, and the particular end my discussion is to serve. . . .<sup>5</sup>

The ancients described subsuming form similarly, usually under the rubric of rhetorical arrangement. In the *Phaedrus*, for example, Socrates comments on coherent form as part of a true rhetoric when he asks Phaedrus about a speech by Lysias (Hamilton; §264):

Don’t the various parts of his speech give the impression of being thrown together at random? Do you see any intrinsic reason why the second topic, rather than any of the others, should be placed second? I am an ignoramus, of course, but it seemed to me that the writer showed a fine carelessness by saying whatever occurred to him. Can you point out any compelling rhetorical reason why he should have put his arguments together in the order he has?

Phaedrus responds briefly, and then Socrates offers this positive description of good form, or arrangement:

But I think you would agree that any speech ought to have its own organic shape, like a living being; it must not be without either head or feet; it must have a middle and extremities so composed as to fit one another and the work as a whole.

The chief aim of this study, with regard to method, is to discern and describe the subsuming form, the rhetorical arrangement of this discourse, so that we are able to answer questions like those Socrates posed: Why is the discourse as it is and not otherwise? Why do arguments and other speech acts occur in the sequence in which they do? How would the effect and effectiveness of the discourse differ if it ordered its parts differently? What is its “organic form” and what are the discernible, probable effects of it? In seeking to answer questions such as these, the rhetorical approach of this study makes explicit ways in which this discourse coheres in seeking to fulfill a specific purpose that includes affecting its implied audience in specific ways. It identifies the speech acts (rhetorical arguments among them) that constitute the discourse and considers how they seek to fulfill its purpose. This study also incorporates selectively insights from other readings of the discourse that result from various methods, including these: historical-critical (including form-critical), history-of-religions, social-world, and rhetorical. This study

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<sup>5</sup> *The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry* (The Alexander Lectures, 1951–1952; Toronto: University of Toronto Press), cited by Edward P. J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (New York: Oxford

then assesses how this rhetorical reading of the discourse compares with and differs from other notable readings of it.

As the analysis proceeds, several substantive, topical issues in the discourse emerge as interesting and worthy of study. From such analysis, the study supports the following, additional major topical theses:<sup>6</sup>

1. In contrast to the general notions of Paul's weakness scholars discuss from this discourse, this study shows that the criticism that Paul is too weak to lead the church does not arise from Paul's experiencing hardship and suffering while his rivals avoid these in their lives of triumphalist, miraculous power. Instead, critics call Paul weak because his speaking and personal presence is weak, judged by contemporary rhetorical standards and even by the forcefulness of his own letters. Moreover, because he leads the church "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" and avoids exercising his authority severely, he is criticized for governing the church weakly, especially as his governance is compared with that of his rivals. They, according to this discourse, govern with a much stronger hand and, among other practices, demand or happily receive financial support from the Corinthians, a practice Paul steadfastly rejects during his mission of giving the gospel to Corinth. Late-coming rival ministers and believers unhappy with Paul have successfully influenced the church to believe that the ἐκκλησία of God should have leaders no less qualified than those for the ἐκκλησία of secular Corinth. Against such criteria, Paul does not measure up; and the present discourse expresses his response to this criticism and to the underlying beliefs about Christian leadership that fuel it.
2. Paul the weak leader in this discourse differs significantly from the Paul portrayed and critiqued on ethical grounds in recent studies. Graham Shaw's *The Cost of Authority: Manipulation and Freedom in the New Testament*<sup>7</sup> and Elizabeth Castelli's *Imitating Paul: A*

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University Press, 1971, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 300–301.

<sup>6</sup> This study began without these theses. It began as an attempt to read these chapters from a rhetorical perspective, probing the discourse's rhetorical purposes, structures, and functions. In particular, I wanted to describe the likely effects the discourse would have on the implied audience and to explain why and how the discourse would exert such effects. Throughout this reading, I referred to the secondary literature in order to aid the rhetorical reading, as well as to supplement it with the results of other kinds of readings that would help produce a coherent reading of the whole discourse. Only after completing this initial reading did I ask what were its most significant results and how they compare with the pertinent results of other studies, or readings, of the same text and other of Paul's texts. The theses listed above are what I judged to be the most significant results of this comparison.

<sup>7</sup> (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983)

*Discourse of Power*<sup>8</sup> attack Paul's abuse of authority and power; and Sandra Hack Polaski's *Paul and the Discourse of Power*<sup>9</sup> finds that Paul's texts conceal "complex strategies of power" that interpreters should uncover. Polaski's work shares with Castelli's the criticism that Paul's call to imitate him establishes a goal impossible to reach and simultaneously valorizes sameness in a way that diminishes freedom. In contrast, early critics of Paul, at least those whose criticism appears throughout 2 Cor 10–13, attack Paul's abuse of or veiled grasping for power much less than his lack and ineffective use of it.

3. Paul's practice of "weak" leadership coheres with the Synoptics' portrayal of Jesus' practice and teaching on leadership (esp. Mark 10.41–45 par.), showing that in this regard Paul does not innovate beyond the canonical Jesus tradition.
4. Paul's relationship with Greco-Roman rhetoric remains ambiguous, clear in some respects but unclear in others. He conflicts with rhetorically proficient rivals, and he has earlier rejected rhetorical eloquence as a way to proclaim the gospel (1 Cor 1–4), yet these chapters express effective rhetoric. Like Plato he uses rhetoric to fight rhetoric, but it is unclear from this discourse whether or not he had studied rhetoric, because his effective rhetoric could result from intelligent observation and experience alone, or whether he approved of any form or style of formally learned rhetoric in any dimension of Christian ministry.
5. Paul's rivals, or opponents, are Jewish Christians who, because they value and practice rhetorical eloquence, may be described as sophistic if not identified as sophists and who are either precursors of or early participants in the Second Sophistic movement or, at least, manifest influence of sophistic culture. This identification does not exclude their being described also in other terms or their being seen to display practices of other groups or social types. This study, however, reading the discourse with rhetorical concerns in mind, emphasizes the evidence that Paul's rivals were rhetorically proficient and that they behaved in other ways that identified them with contemporary sophists. The study does not pursue the question of the identity of the rivals further, so it does not synthesize its findings with other proposals about their identity and leaves open questions beyond claiming that the discourse indicates that Paul perceived them to behave like first-century sophists.

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<sup>8</sup> (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991)

<sup>9</sup> (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999)

6. While scholars have rightly considered that Paul did not conflict with his rivals primarily theologically (in this way unlike the conflict in Galatians), his conflict is nevertheless grave and with theological causes, consequences, and responses. From Paul's perspective, the conflict centers on incompatible understandings of authentic Christian spiritual leadership. Paul condemns his rivals because they think and lead as sophists more than as Christians and have consequently imported by attitude and action a different Jesus, spirit, and gospel into the Corinthian church.

### ***Reasons for This Study***

The topical theses the study supports were not the aims that prompted the study itself but are instead largely discoveries the study occasioned. As to its origins, this study arose from a course paper I wrote on chs. 10–12 in which I wanted to find out what knowledge a reading of this discourse through the lens of Greco-Roman rhetoric might produce. That provisional study convinced me that various rhetorical and social conventions were embedded in the discourse, including rhetorical comparison (*synkrisis*), the rhetorical forms of praise (*encomium*) and invective, irony, and conventions of gift-giving and -receiving within friendship. It also convinced me that understanding the discourse required the reader to be somewhat familiar with these conventions. Because this was a rhetorical reading, I wondered not only what effect it would exert on its implied audience but also how it produced such effects. Among the criticism I read, Christopher Forbes' essay was among the better for its identifying and explaining various important socio-rhetorical conventions.<sup>10</sup> Yet he only gestured at accounting for how the discourse would affect its implied (or historical) audience. One of his most effect-oriented comments follows his explaining Paul's escape from Damascus (11.32-33) as a parody of the Roman *corona muralis*, awarded to the first soldier to scale the wall of a city under attack. In this parody, Paul highlights himself as the first to escape down the wall. Forbes comments: "The deliberate self-derision in which Paul indulges here could only have been profoundly disturbing and uncomfortable for his audience. How they would have understood his intentions is

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<sup>10</sup> especially those named in the title of the essay: "Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony: Paul's Boasting and the Conventions of Hellenistic Rhetoric" *NTS* 32 (1986) 1–30.

uncertain.”<sup>11</sup> Such a comment raises questions such as these: “How would disturbing and discomforting his audience help Paul fulfill the purposes of this discourse? How would this response to this limited portion of the discourse cohere with the other significant responses implied in the discourse, and what would be the cumulative effect implied (and sought) by the discourse? How does this cumulative response cohere with the purposes of the discourse?”

Because the essay by Forbes and many other studies of this discourse do not ask or answer such questions does not in any way diminish their contributions. What I recognized in my earlier study was that such studies, including those I consulted that analyzed the rhetoric of the discourse, did not aim to account in this way for Paul’s rhetoric as fully as I hoped one might be able to. From that study came the broad purpose motivating the present study: namely, to account for Paul’s rhetoric in this discourse. By “accounting for Paul’s rhetoric,” I mean these acts: (1) identifying the subsuming form of the discourse and what it therefore does, including identifying significant rhetorical, literary, social, and other conventions and explaining how they function within the discourse; (2) understanding and explaining how the speech acts of the discourse, including those occurring in the significant conventions, would prompt the implied audience to respond to the discourse in a way that would fulfill its purposes. The study fulfills this initial purpose to the extent that actual readers are satisfied that its reading accounts plausibly both for how the discourse attempts to fulfill its purposes, which involve specific responses from the implied audience, and also for why it is reasonable to believe that the implied audience would (or would not) respond as the discourse seeks them to. In seeking to fulfill this purpose, the study also supports the six theses listed in the previous section.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 21. He comments similarly when referring to Paul’s listing his sufferings in 2 Cor 11.21b–29: “It is hardly likely to have inspired confidence in Paul’s position, among the status-conscious leaders of the Corinthian church. ‘Labours’ is of course an entirely respectable topic, but imprisonments and beatings by both the Jewish and Roman authorities, not to mention stonings, are hardly calculated to inspire confidence in the respectability of anyone’s position. . . . [T]hese particular events have been deliberately chosen by Paul, and are seen as being ‘for Christ’s sake’ (1 Corinthians 4.10) and are intended for the imitation of the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4.16) as an expression of the dying and rising of Christ (2 Corinthians 4.7–12)” (19). From such comments, I asked, “If this list would not inspire confidence, that is, if it would portray Paul negatively, why would Paul knowingly portray himself that way? What effect does he seek? Further, will these choices of sufferings be received by the audience as imitations of Christ? Because Paul asserts that they have received a different Jesus, what effect would this imitation of Paul’s Christ have on them, and why?” The ultimate question is “Why would the speech acts Paul performs in this discourse move the implied audience to respond as he wishes them to?”

## RATIONALE OF THIS STUDY AND KEY DEFINITIONS

Among the options available for this study is the application of a synthesis of Greco-Roman rhetoric to this discourse exclusively. Studies approaching the Corinthian literature in this way include those written by these scholars, some of whose works are discussed further below: Hans Dieter-Betz, Margaret Mitchell, Stephen Pogoloff, Duane Litfin, Bruce Winter, and Brian Peterson.<sup>12</sup> But I have chosen to use a hybrid method that begins with an understanding of the act of interpretation and then moves to analysis of speech acts en route to a discerning of the suasory shape of the discourse—a discerning of the structures that function to fulfill the purposes of the discourse. Greco-Roman rhetoric assists this process of interpretation, but the study is directed by that rhetoric less than it is aided by it, in the manner explained in the following paragraphs.

### *Definition of the Interpretive Act*

This study proceeds from the following understanding of what one does to interpret a literary or rhetorical document. I begin with this definition of the task of interpretation from *The Act of Interpretation: A Critique of Literary Reason* by Walter A. Davis:

The task of interpretation is to apprehend the purposive principle immanent in the structure of a literary work which determines the mutual interfunctioning of its component parts. . . . Function, structure, and purpose, in that order, become the primary categories of interpretation: for parts function only by serving a purpose and structure is the process through which purpose is actualized. . . . The critic . . . takes the knowledge of backgrounds and conventions not as a critical conclusion but as a starting point. The task of interpretation is to discover, through internal analysis, the particular purpose, always potentially new, to which a writer puts the materials, conventions, and generic expectations he derives from his sources.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Hans Dieter-Betz, *Paul's Apology II Corinthians 10–13 and the Socratic Tradition* (Protocol of the Second Colloquy: 5 December 1970; The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture: Berkeley, Calif., 1975); *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition: eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner 'Apologie' 2 Korinther 10–13* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1972); “The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology according to the Apostle Paul,” in A. Vanhoye (ed.), *L'Apôtre Paul: Personnalité, Style et Conception du Ministère* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986) 16–48; Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); Stephen Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (SBL Dissertation Series 134; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); Duane Litfin, *St Paul's Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1–4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (SNTS Monograph Series 79; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Bruce Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (SNTS Monograph Series 96; London: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Brian Peterson, *Eloquence and the Proclamation of the Gospel* (SBL Dissertation Series 163; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978: 2

Unlike literary, or belletristic, works, many suasive (therefore overtly rhetorical) religious works express their purposes. Second Corinthians 10–13 expresses its purpose at both its beginning (10.2) and ending (13.10), simplifying to some extent the task of interpretation, because the preceding definition of interpretation presumes the study of literary works that do not usually express but instead imply their purposes.<sup>14</sup> Yet this study must treat these expressions as provisional and compare the unfolding analysis of the discourse with them to see if the posited purpose and the purpose revealed by the act of interpretation are the same. Apart from the assistance of an expressed purpose, this study proceeds according to the series of tasks listed above and focuses on speech acts as the fundamental unit of analysis throughout the study. When each speech act is identified and assessed, the analysis focuses on function. The main question is “What does this statement mean?”<sup>15</sup> less than “What is this statement (or exclamation or question, etc.) doing? What act is the discourse performing with this written utterance?” Traditional understandings of meaning and this understanding of speech acts are related, and one can identify and name speech acts usually only after first deciding provisionally what a given utterance means. One must usually be able to interpret linguistic acts—discern probable semantic ranges for individual words, phrases, and clauses—before judging what speech act that linguistic act appears to perform. But discerning the action—what the utterance does, how it functions within the discourse—is the immediate task and goal. By identifying functions by means of assessing speech acts, one may then discern their organization into structures at micro to macro levels en route to discerning the purpose(s) of a discourse or confirming those purposes the discourse expresses.

### ***The Sense in Which This Study Is a Rhetorical Analysis***

What makes the interpretation offered by this study a rhetorical interpretation is its additional focus on the intended and implied effects of the discourse on its implied audience, that is to say, its goal of accounting for Paul’s rhetoric in the discourse. This approach to analyzing a written discourse has its place in M. H. Abrams’ useful classification of kinds of literary criticism in the

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<sup>14</sup> E.g., Faulkner’s short story “The Bear” and Twain’s novel *Huckleberry Finn* nowhere state an overarching purpose in the way 2 Cor 10.2 and 13.10 do. Some literary works, John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, for example, express a clear social or political aim that is at the same time their literary purpose in the sense described in the definition of the interpretive act.

<sup>15</sup> which, I suggest, has often been the chief question that traditional exegeses have attempted to answer



first chapter of his *The Mirror and the Lamp*.<sup>16</sup> Abrams puts the Work at the center of a triangle, with the three sides outside the Work occupied by these elements external to the Work: the Universe, the Author, and the Audience. By their choice of a focus among these elements, critics determine the kind of criticism they practice. Critics who focus on the work itself as an internally coherent autonomous whole, exclusive of the other elements, practice Objective Criticism, exemplified in the New Critics and the Chicago School of neo-Aristotelian criticism.<sup>17</sup> Critics who study the work in relationship to the universe outside it, the world the work attempts to represent, and who judge the work by its fidelity to external reality, practice Mimetic Criticism, which claims Plato and Aristotle as its originators.<sup>18</sup> Critics who study the work in relationship to the author and focus on the psychology of the creative act practice Expressive Criticism, exemplified in the Romantic criticism of Wordsworth and Coleridge and the special interest of Abrams' study in this book.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, critics who focus on the relationship between the work and the audience practice what Abrams calls Pragmatic Criticism and what this study calls rhetorical criticism. Abrams says that Pragmatic Criticism “looks at the work of art chiefly as a means to an end, an instrument for getting something done, and tends to judge its value according to its success in achieving that aim.”<sup>20</sup> Edward P.J. Corbett promoted both the use of classical rhetoric in the

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<sup>16</sup> “Introduction: Orientation of Critical Theories” in *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953): 3–29. Despite the series of critical approaches that followed the New Criticism, the latest critical movement to which Abrams referred, Abrams' model continues to be referred to helpfully by contemporary biblical critics (e.g., Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar McKnight, “Introduction,” 15–26, and William Beardslee, “What Is It About? Reference in New Testament Literary Criticism,” 367–386, in McKnight and Struthers Malbon, eds., *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994]). A quite similar model comes from linguistics in R. Jakobson's communications model (“Closing Statement: Linguistic and Poetics,” in *Style and Language*, T. A. Sebeok, ed. [New York: Wiley; Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960] 350–377). But the models of Abrams and Jakobson seem to me to require an additional element to accommodate post-New-Critical developments in literary criticism. Post-critical structuralist, ideological, and deconstructionist critics attend to cultural codes we may describe as being located “beneath the work” but not part of the referential Universe in the way Abrams described it. Some critics argue that these codes generate the work as much or more than any human author or, alternatively, determine the intellectual limits of the work. In either case, the codes render senseless traditional notions of determinate meaning and authorial intention and thus open the work for multiple, equally valid interpretations that do not need to be judged more or less true to the work itself.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 26–28

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 8–14

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 21–26

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 15; cf. 14–21

teaching of writing<sup>21</sup> and in the rhetorical criticism of aesthetic literature. In his *Rhetorical Analyses of Literary Works*, he characterized this kind of criticism “as a mode of analysis that focuses on the text itself.”<sup>22</sup> Rhetorical criticism shares this focus with objective criticism; but unlike the latter, rhetorical criticism “does not remain *inside* the literary work but works *outward* from the text to considerations of the author and the audience.”<sup>23</sup> With this outward movement, what distinguishes it from forms of mimetic and expressive criticism that emphasize biography, history, sociology, and psychology? Rhetorical criticism welcomes contributions from other criticisms, but it focuses on the text and, through the text, on the author and audience based on evidence for both that the text itself provides: “Rhetorical criticism seeks . . . to ascertain the particular posture or image that the author is establishing in this particular work in order to produce a particular effect on a particular audience”<sup>24</sup> and similarly with the audience, where the text is the basis for the “critic’s speculations about the disposition of the audience and the probable effects of the work on the audience.” That is, rhetorical criticism focuses on the author, audience, and universe witnessed to, or implied by, the text itself. Such criticism does not reject contributions from historical criticism, especially historical reconstructions that supplement its own constructions of author, audience, and universe; but its own constructions are its priority.

Corbett continues in describing the kinds of questions rhetorical critics ask: “When a critic asks why an author did *this*, in *this* order, and in *these* words, and answers his question in relation to one or more of these reference points [—subject-matter, genre, occasion, purpose, author, audience—],<sup>25</sup> he is probably operating as a rhetorical critic.”<sup>26</sup> Although Corbett traces rhetorical criticism from the origins of Greek rhetoric<sup>27</sup> through its mutations throughout western

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<sup>21</sup> During Corbett’s tenure at Ohio State University, he was one of a handful of scholars who revived the study of classical and other western rhetorics in American university English departments during the last third of the twentieth century. The 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, revised with his former student Robert Connors, appeared in 1999 (New York: Oxford University Press).

<sup>22</sup> New York: Oxford University Press, 1968: xvii. The following summary of the properties of rhetorical criticism depends on this work, xv–xxviii.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* xvii–xviii

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* xix

<sup>25</sup> These “reference points” are listed in Corbett’s immediately preceding sentence.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* xxvii

<sup>27</sup> While noting Aristotle’s importance as a philosopher of rhetoric, Corbett says that rhetorical criticism in the sense he describes it does not originate with Aristotle, whose poetics proceeds from an objective critical stance: “As Richard McKeon has pointed out, ‘What later writers learned from Aristotle applicable to literature, they derived from the *Rhetoric* rather than from the *Poetics*.’ [“The Concept of Imitation in Antiquity,” *Critics and Criticism*, ed. R. S. Crane (Chicago, 1952), p. 171] Aristotle did acknowledge that two of the six parts of tragedy, Diction (*lexis*) and Thought (*dianoia*), were common to both poetics and rhetoric and that one of these, Thought, more properly fell

history to its influence on English and early American literature, he makes clear that the practice of rhetorical criticism does not require one to render it “in terms of the ancient system in order [for it] to qualify as being distinctly rhetorical. . . . [O]ne does not have to be committed to any particular rhetorical school in order to operate as a rhetorical critic. And I suspect that some teachers and critics would be surprised—maybe even shocked—to learn that all along they have been engaged in rhetorical criticism of literature.”<sup>28</sup> Corbett’s volume compiles rhetorical analyses of works written by English and American authors from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries, arranged under four traditional concerns of rhetoricians: argument, arrangement, audience, and style.<sup>29</sup>

I have discussed Corbett’s work first within this chapter’s discussion of matters rhetorical in order to emphasize that rhetorical criticism encompasses more than the rhetoric of any one rhetorician, school, or era. As defined and practiced in this study, it is a way of studying a discourse characterized by the questions Corbett lists in the preceding paragraph and aided by all other resources the critic can bring to the task. In slightly other words, the rhetorical critic is always asking “Why?”—“Why this expression, and why here and not somewhere else, and why in these words and not in others?”—in relation to the aims of the discourse and to the implied author and audience.

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within the province of rhetoric. But it is clear that for Aristotle, as for Plato, rhetoric and poetics were distinct disciplines” (xiii–xiv). The predominance of rhetoric in classical schools contributed to the decline of *mimesis* “as the distinguishing mark of poetic discourse . . . and the notion of discourse as communication gained ascendancy. This shift had firmly established itself by the time that Horace had published his *Ars Poetica*.” (xiv) His view of the function of poetry secured its aesthetic function but also firmly included a didactic function as well, the latter of which invites rhetorical analysis of poetry as well as mimetic (or objective or expressive) criticism. From *Ars Poetica*: “Poets strive either to improve [*prodesse*] or to please [*delectare*], or to unite the agreeable with the profitable. . . . Make it a point to unite the pleasant [*dulce*] and the useful [*utile*] for the advice and the delight of readers” (ll. 333–334, 343–344).

<sup>28</sup> *Rhetorical Analyses of Literary Works* xxvii. Much biblical criticism includes observations of a rhetorical nature, although the critics do not call what they are doing “rhetorical criticism,” nor do they usually consistently analyze their subject texts rhetorically.

<sup>29</sup> Here is a sampling of the titles of the fourteen essays in the volume: Argument—“The Rhetoric of Newman’s *Apologia*” by Leonard W. Deen; Arrangement—“Order and Emphasis in Chapter XV of Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*” by William A. Gibson; Audience—“Antony in Behalf of the Play” by Kenneth Burke; “Control of Distance in Jane Austen’s *Emma*” by Wayne C. Booth; Style—“The First Paragraph of *The Ambassadors*” by Ian Watt.

### ***Rationale for Rhetorical Analysis and Its Benefits***

What of value may a rhetorical analysis of a discourse yield? Why would other exegetical methods likely not yield the same results as rhetorical analysis? To answer with questions: Why does drama persist, when the "points" of the drama can be summarized in few words that can be read and understood in far less time than it takes to perform the script? Why poetry, when poems may presumably be paraphrased into economical prose? In a more popular vein, why the body of the joke before the punch line? With the last, the questions moved from justifying whole genres to identifying one communication form's irreducible complexity: take away what comes before the punch line, and that line loses its "punch." Rhetorical discourse shares with the lowly joke this quality of effect produced by the sequence of utterance: Take the passionate conclusion of a persuasive speech, relocate it in the middle before the arguments and other appeals have unfolded, and what might have been a great final effect may now be seriously diminished.

We can add to the above list of forms that of narrative, whether short, as in a short story, or long, as in a novel. Let us presume that it is possible to distill from Faulkner's "The Bear," a long short story, the views of the author and of the narrator and of the characters toward any number of topics: the South's guilt from slavery, the multi-edged sword of technological progress and various forms of alleged social progress, the enduring but complex appeal of the wild and of primitivism. If we can distill to a précis their views accurately on as many topics as the story touches upon, have we experienced the story fully, have we pulled the kernels from the husk and rendered narrative simply the container that delivered these propositions? If the goal is rightly receiving these propositions accurately, then what intrinsic value does the narrative itself have, apart from adorning the propositions with interesting dress that holds the attention of readers while they ingest the more important propositions?

A rhetorical reading compares similarly because it aims to re-present, to partially perform, the discourse so that readers may experience it as an event occurring through time, as a sequence of related symbolic acts, speech acts, each of which exerts force, seeking to affect readers in specific ways. These effects are shaped by the context and sequence in which they occur, and they may be seen in their immediate context and then in the broader context of the whole discourse, where their joint and cumulative effects may be discerned. In this way, rhetorical discourses and their performances in readings share in producing the kind of depth-knowledge that serious narrative produces.

Thus the rationale for and the value of such a reading includes but goes beyond the new propositional insight it may produce, including that of solving an existing interpretive crux. As the theses enumerated above indicate, this study, combining the results of a rhetorical reading with results from other kinds of exegetical studies, does contribute to propositional knowledge about this discourse, but the potential benefit of such rhetorical readings exceeds this benefit. For example, such a reading can assess what the implied audience thinks, feels, and believes throughout the action of the discourse, as it asks what each utterance and group of utterances imply about the audience. Further, it can indicate the emphasis, or intensity, of expression and effect within a discourse by considering features beyond the quantity of the discourse expressly devoted to a particular thought or emotion. While the analysis of such a reading expresses such insights propositionally, the realities to which the propositions point are both supra-propositional and important features of human knowledge.

In different terms, a rhetorical reading re-presents a critically imaginative experience of a discourse. It is critical in the sense that it is conscious not only of what has been said and done in the discourse but also of why and of the ongoing interactions between rhetor, message, and audience. It is imaginative in the sense in which every performance of a drama or speech or musical composition or dance composed by someone other than the performer must infer coherences that cannot be rendered in script, text, score, or choreograph in order to perform it as a coherent whole. The process of the reading consists of an imaginative performance of the discourse. The reading is then presented in a study such as this one, inviting others to participate in the imaginative performance and to experience something of the discourse's power—its force and how it achieves its effect, while at the same time the study analyzes that power and its elements. These are authentic properties of the discourse, legitimate objects for observation and analysis, and objects that a rhetorical reading is designed to make visible.

Such an analysis that encourages a performance of the text (at least in the theatre of the mind) may result in (a) new understandings of the task the rhetor, or implied author, faced; (b) new understandings of the rhetor's choices in communicating with the audience (e.g., why he or she relies on certain types of argument or speech acts and not others); (c) new understandings of why the discourse would (or would not) accomplish its purposes with the audience implied; (d) new understandings of what message or what part of the message the discourse emphasizes most;

even (e) new understandings of the message itself. In addition to these potential results, rhetorical analyses benefit the quest for knowledge of discourses in these ways:

1. Rhetorical analysis provides topics and questions for analysis that can guide the interpreter to a nearly comprehensive reading. Three of the five canons of classical rhetoric—invention, arrangement, and style—help the interpreter today even as they guided the orator of antiquity by causing each to attend to thought (the “matter” of the discourse, including, from Aristotle’s perspective, logical, ethical, and emotional proof), then to sequence in expressing that thought, and finally to choices in diction, grammar, and syntax that help a discourse, whether spoken or written, to fulfill its creator’s purposes.<sup>30</sup> These canons provide general topics that can organize the act of analytical reading and identify features to which a thorough reading should attend. Some results of such readings include discerning emphases within a discourse, recognizing how the meaning effected by utterances depends in part on where the utterances occur within the discourse, and identifying and accounting for the cumulative effect of a discourse.
2. Rhetorical analysis of discourses contributes to the creation of history. It performs the most fundamental of historical readings by taking seriously the task of interpreting a document, whether or not literary. Every attempt to create history that depends on written documents confronts the historian with the challenge of interpreting each document. Rhetorical readings can interpret responsibly because, to be thorough, they must attend to multiple relations within the discourse, the relation between the discourse and the implied audience and between the implied author and the discourse. In this way, such readings recognize the to-be-determined nature of the relation between the discourse and the historical author, circumstances, and audience. Recognizing that this relation between discourse and historical reality outside the discourse may not be simple or obvious contributes to the creation of critical history. Moreover, such analysis itself may create the best micro-histories because texts are often the most significant remains with which historians can work to create history; and the well-analyzed text is itself a primary source for history. Regarding the interests of New Testament students, Burton Mack recognizes the historical value of rhetorical analysis

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<sup>30</sup> Of course, such analysis does not have to proceed in this order but may instead proceed recursively, beginning with any feature of the discourse and continuing with any other.

because analysis of a New Testament text helps us see a brief video clip, as it were, of a part of early Christianity forming itself as a social movement.<sup>31</sup>

3. Rhetorical analysis deepens a reader's experience of a discourse by supplementing the traditional focus on only the discursive "message" of a discourse. A rhetorical focus on the likely effect on the implied audience attends to *how* a discourse means, how it exerts an effect, as a key requisite for accounting for *what* is within its range of potential meanings and which are most plausible.
4. This deeper experience of a discourse can include, through rhetorical analysis, experiencing discourses as performances of potentially significant encounters among persons, including but not limited to only the communication of ideas. Rhetorical analyses are dramatic;<sup>32</sup> they conceive of the discourse as action, a sequence of acts expressed through language, usually between two or among more actors inscribed in the discourse. Such an approach to a discourse can join rigorous, critical efforts to create knowledge with a conception of knowledge that corresponds to the richness of human experience and is not narrowed to a quest for only propositional knowledge.

A from-within-the-discourse rhetorical reading brings to dramatic life dimensions of a discourse that other valuable exegetical methods do not. It can breathe into the text imaginative life that invites readers to experience the discourse as a live performance. Of course many dimensions of the original performances of an ancient biblical text may never be retrieved and performed again. But the work of many exegetical methods may be drawn upon to reconstruct plausible and perhaps probable dimensions of the earliest experiences of the reception of this discourse. These dimensions include, drawing upon the language of theatre, the stage, the characters of the cast, and the premises from which the play launches into live drama. With such dimensions reconstructed, a rhetorical reading becomes an analytical interpretive reading, explaining not only what is said and done in the discourse's own drama but also why utterances are as they are and located where they are in the chronological unfolding of the discourse, also what effects they aim to exert, both

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<sup>31</sup> Burton Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Guides to Biblical Scholarship; New Testament Series; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1990), 97–100

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Charles Altieri, *Act and Quality: A Theory of Literary Meaning and Humanistic Understanding* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 53–96.

immediately and also cumulatively as the discourse proceeds, and then finally how likely it is that the effects sought for would in fact occur with the audience the discourse implies.

5. Rhetorical analysis entails a kind of close reading that adds to a chorus of readings by similar or different methods that together approach expressing the potential meanings of a discourse, inviting comparison and contrast to enrich contemporary reception of a discourse.

### ***Resources for Analyzing Invention and Arrangement***

Classical rhetoric<sup>33</sup> organized the activities of the rhetor under five canons:<sup>34</sup> invention (εὐρίσις, *inventio*), which was the process of discovering arguments and other proofs; arrangement (τάξις, *dispositio*), which referred to the art of organizing the material that invention provided; style (λέξις, *elocutio*) referred to the expression the rhetor chose, including matters such as diction, sentence structure and rhythm, and figures of speech (tropes) and thought

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<sup>33</sup> The phrase “classical rhetoric” is a shorthand phrase that poses problems that this study does not seek to resolve. I use the phrase to refer conveniently to the rhetorical theory and practice that arose and accumulated within the Greek and Roman worlds beginning with fifth-century Greece BCE and ending, somewhat arbitrarily, with the important Christian response to the classical tradition by Augustine in the fourth century CE. Although Augustine critiques classical rhetoric severely in *De Doctrina Christiana* for its inherent mendacity (see, e.g., Jan Swearingen’s chapter on Augustine in *Rhetoric and Irony: Western Literacy and Western Lies* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991]), he is nevertheless a product of this tradition, having been himself a successful teacher of Latin rhetoric before becoming a Christian. But in a significant way classical rhetoric is complete in its development no later than the time of Augustine, so that one of its last American champions, John Quincy Adams, in his 1806 lectures as Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard College, can say that “A subject which has exhausted the genius of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, can neither require nor admit much additional illustration. To select, combine, and apply their precepts, is the only duty left for their followers of all succeeding times, and to obtain a perfect familiarity with their instructions is to arrive at the mastery of the art” (*Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory*, J. Jeffrey Auer and Jerald L. Banninga, eds. [New York: Russell and Russell, 1962] I:28–29). George Kennedy notes both the usefulness and the complexity of the phrase “classical rhetoric” at the beginning of his study, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*: “Classical rhetoric is superficially very easy to describe. It is that theory of discourse developed by Greeks and Romans of the classical period, applied both in oratory and in literary genres, and taught in schools in antiquity, in the Greek and western Middle Ages, and throughout the Renaissance and early modern period. Problems emerge, however, as soon as an effort is made to define the characteristic contents of this theory. How does it differ from universal or natural rhetoric anywhere else in the world? At what point in history, if ever, does the rhetoric taught in western schools cease to be ‘classical’ and begin to be predominantly some other, postclassical or modern rhetoric? Is this rhetoric an intellectual faculty, a science of persuasion, an art of speaking well, or a means of literary composition? The most famous discussion of rhetoric in Greek is surely that by Aristotle, but it was just as surely not rhetoric as described by Aristotle that was taught in schools for the next two thousand years. The most influential discussions of rhetoric written in antiquity are doubtless those by Cicero, but there is very little in Ciceronian rhetoric, which is original with Cicero, and as great as his influence was in the West, he was almost totally unknown in the Greek-speaking East. A definition of classical rhetoric that excludes Aristotle or excludes Cicero or excludes Byzantium is not a very satisfactory definition. This book as a whole is an attempt to define classical rhetoric and its tradition by examining the various strands of thought which are woven together in different ways at different times” (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 3.

<sup>34</sup> first organized in this way some two hundred years after Aristotle: Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 77.



(schemes); memory (μνήμη, *memoria*) concerned various ways the rhetor could memorize a speech; and delivery (ὑπόκρισις, *pronuntiatio*), which concerned the use of the voice and gestures, as well as the orator's physical appearance. The rhetorical analysis of a work may include one, all, or any combination of these, depending on the purpose of the analysis and on the materials available. Analysis of a written discourse must confine itself to the first three, with the possibility of imagining the potential for delivery, especially when, as is the case with 2 Corinthians 10–13, the discourse being analyzed was created to be delivered orally. This study emphasizes invention and arrangement, while attending to only the more significant matters of style (in order to keep it to a reasonable length), and it conjectures reasonably about delivery where the analysis suggests that a specific choice in delivery would determine what effect the discourse would produce on the implied audience.<sup>35</sup> As the study shows, each of these parts of classical rhetoric shows its importance in the discourse and as a topic for this analysis of it.

### Analyzing Argument

In analyzing invention, the study does not propose to account for how Paul discovered the arguments and other speech acts that 2 Corinthians 10–13 contains.<sup>36</sup> Instead, it “discovers” and describes or names the arguments and other speech acts that occur in the discourse. In discovering these, the study aims for these goals: (1) to identify all arguments present in at least a

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Richard F. Ward, *Paul and the Politics of Performance at Corinth: A Study of 2 Corinthians 10–13* (Ph.D. dissertation; Northwestern University, 1987).

<sup>36</sup> Brian Peterson's study centers on defining the rhetorical species and stases of 2 Cor 10–13, both of which are properly concerns of the rhetorical canon invention (*Eloquence and the Proclamation of the Gospel in Corinth* [SBL Dissertation Series 163; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1998]). It concludes that this discourse binds together judicial and deliberative rhetoric, constituting a discourse of mixed species (143–144). Regarding stasis, the discourse varies: The arguments expressed in 2 Cor 10.1–18 arise from the stasis of jurisdiction: Who is the legitimate judge in this situation, the critics and rivals, the Corinthian congregation, or Paul (148–151)? The arguments of 11.1–12.18 arise from the stasis of quality, specifically, of justification: What kind of ministry and minister does the Lord commend (152–157)? Finally, the arguments of 12.19–13.10 arise from the stasis of jurisdiction, again: God, not the congregation or the rivals, is the judge before whom Paul speaks (157–159). The present study concurs with Peterson's conclusions, yet it differs in its lower evaluation of the necessity or usefulness of mastering the complex theory of rhetorical stasis as a tool for analyzing rhetorical discourse. Stasis developed to help chiefly the orator defending the accused in court. It was a tool that helped create a speech, not one created to analyze a finished speech. While this study concurs with Peterson's conclusions on the basis of analyzing arguments and other speech acts and rhetorical arrangement, it does so without analyzing stasis. Stasis analysis may be able to add to the reading this study reports, but Peterson's study, excellent though it is, does not convince me that, used as a technique of rhetorical criticism, it leads to critical insights that one cannot discover by other means. Primary sources for the study of stasis include Cicero, *De Inv.* 1.8.10–1.11.16; 2.4.12–2.39.115; *Ad Herennium* 1.10.18–1.17.27; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.6.; secondary sources include Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 88, 92–95, 101, 103–104; idem., *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 97–101.

rudimentary form; (2) to identify other speech acts that do not appear as rudimentary argument but which I presume to function in some way toward the fulfilling of the purposes of the discourse, such as, for example, metaphors; (3) to assess the interrelation of these constructions in order to explain what produces the suasive force of the discourse; (4) to infer from these constructions what kinds of reasoning are typical of the discourse and what warrants it uses (their use indicating that the implied author believed that the implied audience shared the beliefs, attitudes, and values contained in those warrants); (5) in this way to contribute to an inventorying and mapping of the premises, evidence, and warrants effective in earliest Christianity, which is part of the as-yet-incomplete description of the rhetoric of earliest Christianity.

I have referred to this focus on invention with the phrase “arguments and other speech acts” rather than “arguments” alone in order to emphasize that the study examines more than those constructions that display, or express, the rudiments of argument. These rudiments are, at the least, a claim, plus some kind of expressed support for the claim, whether by reason or example.<sup>37</sup> Less than this does not constitute even rudimentary argument, yet expressions that lack either component may still exert suasive force within the whole of a discourse when they imply the elided component. For example, when Paul asserts that he betrothed the Corinthians to Christ, he performs at least two speech acts. First, his assertion supports the prior claim (10.12) that he dare not compare or classify himself with the super-apostles. The assertion is itself a reason supporting that prior claim, and it is also simultaneously evidence that the Corinthians have witnessed firsthand. This act is the first speech act. But the second act proceeds from unpacking the implications compressed into the metaphor expressed as a verb in “I betrothed you.” This metaphor compresses within itself any number of further assertions not expressed but arguably implied in its use. As this study argues in ch. 3, the betrothal metaphor supports but also intensifies Paul’s claim to have a unique relationship with the Corinthians, one that is not characterized by degrees that would allow rival ministers to add to Paul’s act of betrothal. The metaphor excludes, in its portrayal of the relations between Paul and the Corinthians, any other leader’s supplementing Paul’s act of betrothal. And this exclusive quality of betrothal goes unstated but arguably still rhetorically forceful in this discourse. As a result, to inventory all

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<sup>37</sup> Aristotle (*Rhet.* 3.13.1) reduces the arrangement of whole speeches to just these two elements: “It is necessary to state the subject [i.e., claim something], and then to prove it” [i.e., support it by reasons (rhetorical enthymemes) or examples (*Rhet.* 1.2.8)].

components of the discourse that contribute significantly to its suasive effects requires one to consider expressions, even one-word metaphors, that imply arguments that the discourse may not fully express.

Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca developed this kind of insight into the view of argumentation detailed in *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*.<sup>38</sup> Their work helped rescue rhetoric for the latter half of the twentieth century from the long-lasting effects of its sixteenth-century truncation by Peter Ramus<sup>39</sup> into only two canons: style (and this as mere ornamentation, irrelevant to argument) and delivery.<sup>40</sup> Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca put argumentation back at the center of rhetoric, going so far as to define rhetoric as audience-centered argumentation. This definition invigorated the viewing of all elements of discourse as contributing, in various ways, to the suasive effect of the discourse. Scholars continue to debate whether the New Rhetoric simply restates classical rhetoric within a different (our contemporary Western) culture or whether it fundamentally revises classical rhetoric by expanding its concept of argument.<sup>41</sup> Without constraining itself to the vocabulary of the New Rhetoric, this study proceeds in its spirit; but in order to use terms as near to their ordinary sense as possible, it uses “argument” without qualification for those structures within the discourse that express at least a claim with some kind of explicit support, without regard to the quality of the support or to the formal validity of the relation between one or more premises (appearing as support) and a conclusion (appearing as a claim). “Other speech acts” refers to other structures that express a claim without support or that do something else, such as instruct, direct, wish, and so forth. An ongoing aim of the study is to discern the act such structures perform and how their performances contribute to the purposes of the discourse.

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<sup>38</sup> John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver, transl. (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1969); originally *La Nouvelle Rhétorique: Traité de l'Argumentation* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1958).

<sup>39</sup> Ramus, following the lead of Rudolph Agricola a century earlier, split invention and arrangement off of rhetoric and reassigned them to philosophy and dialectic, leaving rhetoric with only three canons: style, memory, and delivery, of which only style pertained to creating the discourse. But without notions such as topics, or lines of argument, and good and bad forms of argument, and a theory of rhetorical proof, Ramus' amputation of the two canons from rhetoric created a form of rhetoric that came to deserve its reputation as little more than the art of flowery speech. Cf. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 208–213.

<sup>40</sup> Neoclassical rhetoricians such as Fénelon in France and George Campbell and Richard Whately in Britain succeeded in rejoining invention to rhetoric in different ways, but from Ramus forward, many in various periods, even to the present, have as their first thought about “rhetoric” that it is the art of excessively ornamented speech or writing.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Burton Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990) 15.

For argument in this narrower sense, Aristotle’s treatment remains the most famous from classical rhetoric. Because most of his *On Rhetoric* investigates and explains rhetoric philosophically,<sup>42</sup> his theorizing underlies most discussion of rhetorical argument since then and therefore deserves at least a brief summary here.<sup>43</sup> One of Aristotle’s signal contributions to rhetoric was the central role he assigned to proof (πίστις), thus launching a tradition of informal logic, or practical reasoning, alongside formal logic. He criticized earlier rhetorics for their reliance on appeals to emotion and prejudice without any rigor in reasoning or argument.<sup>44</sup> Aristotle defined rhetoric philosophically, as the theoretical art<sup>45</sup> of “discovering (θεωρεῖσαι) the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever,”<sup>46</sup> and he identified it as an “offshoot” of dialectic.<sup>47</sup> Dialectic is that form of reasoning arising from premises that are generally accepted and that deal with probabilities (things that can be different than they are), such as forms of government.<sup>48</sup> Aristotle distinguishes dialectic (διαλεκτική) from demonstration (ἀπόδειξις), which reasons from scientifically true premises about things that cannot be other than they are, such as mathematics.<sup>49</sup> Rhetoric is a form of dialectic, whose differences Aristotle does not stress, although some are clear: formally, rhetoric issues in continuous discourse, while dialectic occurs through debate. Rhetoric usually has one speaker addressing a group, while dialectic occurs between two persons or among a small group. “Dialectic is rigorous and constructs chains of argument; rhetoric is popular and expansive. It avoids complex

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<sup>42</sup> The *Rhetoric* is, at its core, philosophical, carrying out the theoretical program his definition of rhetoric expresses. But along the way, Aristotle seems not to be able to resist including practical, even prescriptive, materials to benefit the practicing orator, and the book’s focus on rhetoric as rational proof becomes somewhat fuzzy (Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 72).

<sup>43</sup> The debate about the extent to which Paul’s letters or other parts of the New Testament were written guided by the precepts of classical rhetoric is discussed below. More important than the resolution of that debate is the distinct issue of the usefulness of theories. It does not matter if, for example, Paul was or was not guided by any strand of classical or Hellenistic rhetoric if the theory of persuasion or argumentation or style from any one or more such strands persuades its users that it explains the pertinent phenomena in the discourses the critic studies. When a theory was propounded may not have anything to do with the breadth of phenomena it illuminates or explains.

<sup>44</sup> *Rhet.* 1.1.3–4: “proofs are the only things in [rhetoric] that come within the province of art; everything else is merely an accessory. And yet they [previous “Arts” of rhetoric] say nothing about enthymemes, which are the body of proof.”

<sup>45</sup> It is theoretical in Aristotle’s treatment because it consists of discovering and observing all the means of persuasion available and thus producing knowledge, one step removed from actualizing any of the means thereby discovered in an actual speech. Cf. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 63

<sup>46</sup> *Rhet.* 1.2; cf. 1.1.14

<sup>47</sup> as the ἀντίστροφος, or counterpart, of rhetoric (ῥητορικὴ); *Rhet.* 1.1.1. “Thus it appears that Rhetoric is as it were an offshoot of Dialectic and of the science of Ethics, which may be reasonably called Politics” (1.2.7).

<sup>48</sup> Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 63–65; Aristotle, *Topics* 1.100a25–b23

<sup>49</sup> ἀπόδειξις is the subject of Aristotle’s *Prior Analytics*; Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 62–63

argumentation and often employs things like maxims or fables which will appeal to an audience.”<sup>50</sup> This comparison of the two shows how important reasoning, or thought, was to rhetoric for Aristotle.

Rhetoric has two modes of proof: those which already exist and need only to be made use of, the non-artistic (ἄτεχνοί), or external, proofs, such as “witnesses, tortures, contracts, and the like”,<sup>51</sup> and those that have to be invented by means of the art of rhetoric (ἐντεχνοί), the internal proofs. Aristotle’s greatest contribution to rhetoric may be his working out a comprehensive system of artistic proofs and, among them, of logical proof. There are only three artistic proofs (πίστειων): Ethos (ἦθος) is that form of rhetorical proof that the moral character of the speaker produces through the delivered speech; persuasion occurs by means of pathos (πάθος) when the emotions of the hearer are aroused; and persuasion occurs by means of the speech itself (λόγος) “when we establish the true or apparently true from the means of persuasion applicable.”<sup>52</sup> Argument in the strict sense occurs as a part of only logical proof, while persuasion may result from ethical and pathetic proof, as well as from logical proof. It is for this reason that this study analyzes not only argument but also speech acts other than argument because they are capable of persuading, with argument or even by themselves.

Aristotle distinguishes between two forms of logical proof, deduction and induction, between reasons and examples. Induction (examples) may be actual and historical or invented.<sup>53</sup> Deductive proof divides into two forms: maxims are general statements (although not comprehensive in their coverage) that are premises or conclusions of rhetorical arguments without the additional parts that would make them complete arguments. For example, Aristotle gives as a maxim: “No man is really free.” But when he appends to it this expression—“for he is the slave of either wealth or fortune”—he has converted the maxim into a rudimentary rhetorical argument.<sup>54</sup> Maxims (including some proverbs) persuade “for because they are common, they seem to be true, since all as it were acknowledge them as such.”<sup>55</sup> The other form of deductive proof, to which Aristotle devotes greater attention, is the rhetorical argument, which he calls the

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<sup>50</sup> Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 66

<sup>51</sup> *Rhet.* 1.2.2

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 1.2.4–6

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 1.2.8, 19; 2.20

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 2.21.2

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 2.21.11

enthymeme. What exactly Aristotle means by the enthymeme and how it differs from the syllogism of demonstrative reasoning have provided an industry for scholars of Aristotle, philosophy, and rhetoric.<sup>56</sup> Rather than descend into the primordial depths of this debate, this study takes the view that the enthymeme is first of all any rhetorical argument an orator or writer would use in a rhetorical discourse (as opposed to a scientific-demonstrative discourse). It is analogous to the demonstrative syllogism, and Aristotle calls it a rhetorical syllogism.<sup>57</sup> But unlike the syllogism in dialectic and demonstration, with their greater logical rigor and their lack of audience-dependency that is characteristic of rhetorical argument, the enthymeme may occur in a rhetorical discourse (1) lacking a premise<sup>58</sup> and (2) displaying the qualities of mere probability in the premises and the conclusion; that is, the enthymeme may not (and usually will not) measure up to the higher standards of validity and veracity essential to demonstration and also, to a lesser degree, of dialectic.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, an enthymeme “begins with what is close at hand, with no concern for the ultimate basis of its argument [, and] . . . it skips steps that might have been thought necessary in the argument, provided the argument is clear, and the skipped steps are not controversial.”<sup>60</sup> In contrast, a demonstrative or dialectical syllogism must proceed from “the most basic principles at its disposal . . . and . . . in formulating the steps used to arrive at the conclusion, . . . state all of them.”<sup>61</sup>

Aristotle classifies enthymemes in two ways. The first way concerns the kinds of material that furnish the content of the enthymemes. These analyze into probabilities and signs.

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas Conley, “The Enthymeme in Perspective,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984) 168–187; Keith Erickson, *Aristotle’s “Rhetoric”: Five Centuries of Philological Research* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1975); Eugene E. Ryan, *Aristotle’s Theory of Rhetorical Argumentation*, (Collection Noësis; Montréal: Laboratoire de recherches sur la pensée d’Ottawa, Les Éditions Bellarmin, 1984) 29–37; Jürgen Sprute, *Die Enthymemtheorie der aristotelischen Rhetorik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).

<sup>57</sup> *Rhet.* 1.2.8

<sup>58</sup> although rhetorical enthymemes may appear with two premises and a conclusion as well, fully comparable, in this regard only, to the formal syllogism. As W. D. Ross argues, for Aristotle, the elision of an obvious premise in an enthymeme has nothing to do with the definition of an enthymeme and is instead “a purely superficial characteristic” (*Prior and Posterior Analytics* 500, cited by Ryan, *Aristotle’s Theory* 30).

<sup>59</sup> In rhetorical argument “conclusions should not be drawn from necessary premises alone, but also from those which are only true as a rule,” *Rhet.* 2.22.3. But a rhetorical argument is still called an enthymeme even if its premises are certain (*Rhet.* 1.2.14).

<sup>60</sup> Ryan, *Aristotle’s Theory* 41. Ryan continues: “Now if an enthymeme did not proceed in this way, it would lack clarity due to being too long, and it would be impossible for ordinary people to follow. If, on the other hand, it stated all that might have been thought necessary or useful for making the point, it would lose the interest of the listeners, since the speaker would appear to be prating in making everything explicit, even things about which there could be no dispute,” with reference to *Rhet.* 2.22

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

Probabilities consist of premises about things that are not certain and, in rhetoric, things taken as true by one's audience.<sup>62</sup> Signs divide further into those that are fallible, or probable<sup>63</sup> and those that are infallible, or necessary: τεκμήρια.<sup>64</sup> The second way of classifying enthymemes is by the argument pattern each follows. Aristotle's term for these forms of argument is τόποι,<sup>65</sup> and later teachers of rhetoric refer to this part of Aristotle's theory as his "topics." The term is misleading today because contemporary use normally intends something like "subjects" for "topics," and Aristotle's topics is not a list of subjects one may refer to to help prepare a speech. Instead they are an array of structures, or molds, for forming convincing rhetorical arguments that writers or speakers can use by inserting terms, or propositions, that will fit. Such *topoi* are divided into two groups: common topics (κοινοὶ τόποι) that are useful in any species of rhetoric and special topics useful only in discourses treating specific subjects.<sup>66</sup> The common topics are classified into four groups: past fact, future fact, possibility, and size. For each Aristotle provides a number of argument patterns. For example, under possibility, among other *topoi*, Aristotle gives a pair of similar *topoi* and a sample enthymeme produced by them: "When the end is possible, so also is the beginning; for all things arise from a beginning. And if that which is subsequent in being or generation can come into being, so then can that which is antecedent; for instance, if a man can come into being, so can a child, for the child is a beginning."<sup>67</sup> From Aristotle's observation of persuasive rhetorical argumentation, he analyzed what made such arguments convincing and invented the *topoi* discussed in the *Rhetoric*.<sup>68</sup>

Aristotle's theory of rhetorical argumentation accounts for what kinds of arguments convince the audiences of rhetorical performances and what components form those arguments. Its

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<sup>62</sup> Aristotle acknowledges that sometimes rhetorical arguments deal with certainties, but not usually (*Rhet.* 1.2.14). Usually rhetoric trades in what is commonly believed to be true and proceeds from this basis: "that which is concerned with things that may be other than they are" (*Rhet.* 1.2.15).

<sup>63</sup> A wet street signifies that it has rained; but this sign is fallible, because other causes may account for the wet street: it may have been sprayed by firefighters or errant landscape sprinklers.

<sup>64</sup> A fever signifies infallibly that one is ill. *Rhet.* 1.2.18. See the rhetorical analysis noting the use of infallible signs in William S. Kurz, S.J., "Hellenistic Rhetoric in the Christological Proof of Luke-Acts" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (1980) 171–195.

<sup>65</sup> lit. "a place to look for a store of something, and the store itself"

<sup>66</sup> Aristotle's *Rhetoric* lists special topics for each of the three species of rhetoric: deliberative (1.4–8), epideictic (1.9), and forensic (1.10–14). By the way he establishes these three, it is clear that he intends them as universal species, not restricted to any particular political or social arrangement (Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 72).

<sup>67</sup> *Rhet.* 2.19.5–7

comprehensiveness and applicability to arguments from any period in the western tradition of rhetorical discourse account for its continuing usefulness; and this study draws from this theory in its analysis.<sup>69</sup> This study draws upon one other theory of argument similarly well suited to rhetorical argumentation. The British philosopher Stephen E. Toulmin became interested in how people reason in everyday life, as well as in various disciplines. Convinced that such reasoning followed a logic of its own that differed from the often abstract calculations of formal, syllogistic logic, he studied the arguments people used and were satisfied with in such places, both familial-domestic and professional.<sup>70</sup> From such explorations, he wrote in 1958 *The Uses of Argument* and invented a model of argument useful for analysis of all kinds of arguments, including rhetorical arguments. The model of a complete argument involves six elements, the most important of which are these three: Data, or Evidence, (D), which support a Claim, or Conclusion (C). Justification for the movement from (D) to (C) is provided by a Warrant (W), a general hypothetical statement that causes (D) to exert rational force supporting (C). In circumstances in which (W) allows the movement from (D) to (C) only tentatively and not necessarily, a full argument requires the use of a Qualifier (Q), which, Toulmin explains, expresses “the degree of force which our data may confer on our claim in virtue of our warrant.”<sup>71</sup> A Rebuttal (R) may further qualify the Claim by “indicating circumstances in which the general authority of the warrant would have to be set aside.” Finally, a full argument offers Backing (B) for the Warrant: “Standing behind our warrants, . . . there will normally be other assurances, without which the warrants themselves would possess neither authority nor

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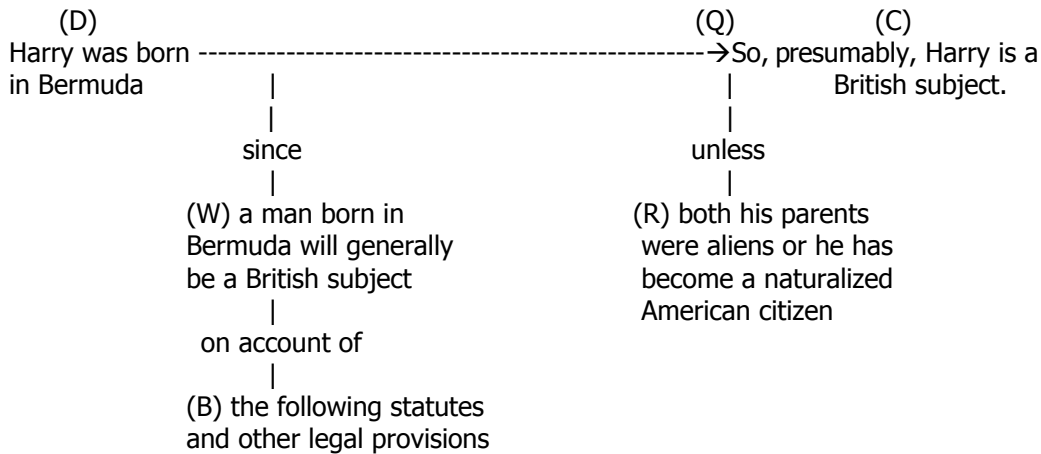
<sup>68</sup> The common topics are discussed in 2.18–19. After his fuller discussion of enthymemes (2.22), he returns to topics and treats twenty-eight of them (2.23). After discussing fallacious enthymemes (2.23), Aristotle includes some discussion of topics when discussing enthymemes for refutation

<sup>69</sup> Aristotle’s doctrines of enthymemes and topics are not used nearly as much as they could be because, I believe, authors of collegiate speech communication and English composition textbooks largely do not understand enthymemes in contrast to syllogisms or the topics as patterns for argumentation. Such books tend to introduce formal logic, seem to recognize that it differs categorically from rhetorical argumentation, then survey fallacies of argumentation (these are usually pertinent to rhetorical argumentation), and never mention or discuss Aristotle’s topics. Fortunately, some philosophers (such as Chaim Perelman and Stephen E. Toulmin) have shown interest in practical reasoning, alongside and distinct from formal logic, and from these students may infer kinds of good arguments, which they can find also in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* if they know to look there and are patient with its shifting focus (from philosophical to practical) and resulting unevenness.

<sup>70</sup> Toulmin includes in his study of actual argumentation areas of reasoning that Aristotle treated as dialectic (reasoning in any professional discipline, for example). Aristotle stressed that the typical audience he had in mind for rhetorical discourse was uneducated and, in his view, uneducable, requiring that discourses for them keep matters as simple, concise, and interesting as possible (*Rhet.* 2.22.3).



currency.”<sup>72</sup> Toulmin urges that this model is universal to all argument in all disciplines. What changes from one field to another are the criteria for assessing arguments and the Backing used for Warrants; these are “field-dependent” variables. Toulmin recognizes that effective arguments occur frequently without expressing all six elements; but for these, it is theoretically possible to discover the missing elements. An example of the model follows:



This study endorses Toulmin’s model as a way of identifying what elements of argument appear in each argument expressed in 2 Corinthians 10–13.<sup>73</sup>

### Analyzing Arrangement

Classical rhetoric arranged complete orations elaborately. Aristotle had insisted that a speech needed only two parts, the πρόθεσις, or proposition (or thesis), and the πίστις, or proof, although he allowed, at the most, two other parts, a προοίμιον (*prooemium*, or *exordium*) and an ἐπιλογος (*epilogue*, or *peroration*).<sup>74</sup> He discounted as ridiculous the more numerous divisions contemporary writers prescribed.<sup>75</sup> Yet what other writers were doing in his time they generally continued to do in later rhetorical handbooks. The technical, anonymous Latin work *Rhetorica*

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<sup>71</sup> Such qualifiers include “probably” and “presumably.” *The Uses of Argument* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 101

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 103

<sup>73</sup> Responses to Toulmin’s model along with other studies of argumentation, including bibliography, may be found in Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, eds., *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory: A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1996).

<sup>74</sup> *Rhet.* 3.13.4

*ad Herennium* prescribes six distinct parts for the courtroom speech, each with its own goals and methods: an *exordium* to introduce the speech and legal case; a *narratio* covering the events that led to the legal dispute; a *divisio* that outlined the points or steps in the argument to come; the *confirmatio*, the proof for the case; the *confutatio*, which refutes opposing arguments; and the *peroratio*, or conclusion with final appeals.<sup>76</sup> One stream of New Testament studies has applied classical rhetoric to Paul's letters with a goal (among others) of finding such speech parts in them. This practice acknowledges that letters are not merely written speeches but proceeds nevertheless with the hypothesis that, however the forms of New Testament letters vary from those of written orations, the letters still display significant characteristics of classical rhetoric that may be analyzed profitably through that perspective. Certainly the prototype, within the last quarter of the twentieth century, of such studies is Hans Dieter Betz's *Hermeneia* commentary on Galatians. Betz argued that Galatians was a hybrid of epistle and oration<sup>77</sup> that could be analyzed according to Greco-Roman epistolography and rhetoric.<sup>78</sup> Betz acknowledges both epistolary features and the *partes orationis* of the forensic speech throughout Galatians.<sup>79</sup> Through the remainder of the century, many studies followed Betz's example and the encouragement of the classicist George Kennedy<sup>80</sup> in applying the rhetoric and epistolography of classical and Hellenistic periods in various combinations to Galatians and nearly every other book of the New Testament.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 3.13.3

<sup>76</sup> *ad Her.*, 1.3.4; 3.9.16

<sup>77</sup> Following the work of historian of antiquity Arnaldo Momigliano, Betz describes Galatians as an "apologetic letter" that incorporates elements of autobiography and apologetic speech: *Galatians: A Commentary of Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (*Hermeneia*; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 14–15, 44–46.

<sup>78</sup> His commentary on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 in the same series followed in 1985.

<sup>79</sup> Here is his outline (*Galatians* 16–23):

Epistolary Prescript (1.1–5)

*Exordium* (1.6–11)

*Narratio* (1.12–2.14)

*Propositio* (2.15–21)

*Probatio* (3.1–4.31)

*Exhortatio* (5.1–6.10)

Epistolary Postscript (*Conclusio*, 6.11–18)

<sup>80</sup> *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984), which enlarges upon Kennedy's sketch of early Christian rhetoric in *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1980).

<sup>81</sup> Many of these are cited in D. F. Watson, "The New Testament and Greco-Roman Rhetoric," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31 (1988) 465–472 and *idem.* 33 (1990) 513–524, as well as G. Strecker, *Literturgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen, 1992) and D. F. Watson and A. J. Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

But a number of scholars familiar with New Testament-period rhetoric and epistolography object to such studies for various reasons. For some, the significant disagreements between analyses of the same discourses<sup>82</sup> based on the same rhetorical and epistolary sources show that the discourse theories<sup>83</sup> in such sources do not (and perhaps cannot) explain the canonical discourses effectively because New Testament authors evidently did not apply such theories when they composed their documents.<sup>84</sup> Others emphasize that instruction in rhetoric and in letter writing were fully distinct in antiquity, with rhetorical sources hardly mentioning letter writing<sup>85</sup> and epistolary handbooks similarly hardly referring to oratory<sup>86</sup> so that one should not treat Paul's letters as written speeches bracketed by epistolary prescripts and postscripts.<sup>87</sup> R. Dean Anderson objects further that the rhetorical sources most often cited by biblical critics analyzing Paul's letters, such as Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, while known during the New Testament period, nevertheless had limited influence during the time and should not be assumed to have been known by the canonical authors.<sup>88</sup>

Such objections may have sufficient answers: The objection to discrepancies among the analyses of the arrangement of discourses presumes wrongly that rhetorical theory prescribes that speeches mark the beginning and ending of each of their parts clearly; and it further overlooks the existence of similar variations among analyses of Greco-Roman orations composed by celebrated orators and analyzed by critics whose knowledge (orators and critics) of ancient rhetorical theory no one should doubt.<sup>89</sup> The objection that ancient rhetoric and epistolography

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<sup>82</sup> and especially of the division of those discourses into *partes orationis*

<sup>83</sup> The phrase "discourse theories" means rhetorical theory and epistolary theory together.

<sup>84</sup> The fullest critique of presuming that Greco-Roman rhetorical theory explicates Galatians is Philip H. Kern's *Rhetoric and Galatians: Assessing an Approach to Paul's Epistle* (SNTS Monograph Series 101: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>85</sup> except for discussions of style

<sup>86</sup> and saying nothing about arrangement in letters corresponding to its major role in oratory

<sup>87</sup> E.g., Stanley E. Porter, "The Theoretical Justification for Application of Rhetorical Categories to Pauline Epistolary Literature," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Stanley Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 115–116

<sup>88</sup> R. Dean Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul* (Leuven: Peeters, revised edition, 1999), 32–36 and throughout the book as a theme.

<sup>89</sup> E.g., George Kennedy analyzes Demosthenes' *De Corona* as follows:

Prooemium, §1–17

Narration, §18–52

Proof, §53–296 (dominated by Demosthenes' ethical defense of his actions)

Peroration §297–324

(*A New History of Classical Rhetoric* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994] 78–79, with § enumerated in the Loeb Classical Library edition by C. A. Vince and J. H. Vince.)

were fully distinct overlooks potential evidence to the contrary from, for example, Demosthenes' literary epistles and the apologetic and political letters of Plato, Isocrates, and Ps-Aeschines.<sup>90</sup> The final objection counts most if the analysis aims to show that the canonical authors knew the rhetorical sources in question and intended to follow their prescriptions; otherwise, the objection counts less and even less still when we acknowledge how rhetorical prescriptions arose: From the more philosophically theoretical (e.g., Aristotle) to the more practically theoretical (e.g., Quintilian), rhetorical description and prescription arose from observation and experience of what rhetorical practices were effective. Classicist C. Joachim Classen doubts that Paul knew or followed explicit rhetorical theory but believes, on the basis of Paul's effective Greek writing, that "he must have read a good deal of works written in Greek and thus imbibed applied rhetoric" from his reading and, I would add, from seeing and hearing daily speech in a culture in which rhetoric was ubiquitous and valued.<sup>91</sup> Paul knew more than a little about Hellenistic rhetorical practice (if not theory), because, as this study argues, he rejects in 1 Corinthians

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Yet Vince and Vince (LCL) assign only §1–8 to the exordium and assign §9–11 to responses to various charges; §12–17 introduce discussion of public policy; they label no section "narration"; instead, replies to charges are organized into three time periods: First Period, §18–52; Second Period, §60–109; Third Period, §187–251 (with general defense of Athenian policy of resistance in §188–210); attacks on Aeschines and further defense, §252–296; epilogue and recapitulation, §297–323; peroration in only §324 (*Demosthenes II* [Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann Ltd, 1953] 14–15).

Francis P. Donnelly, S.J., analyzes the speech as follows:

Exordium, §1–8

Proposition and Division, §9 (Narration absent)

Confirmation—Outside the Indictment, §10–52 (Kennedy has Proof [= Confirmation] begin at §53)

Confirmation—Inside the Indictment, §53–296

Peroration, §297–324

(*Demosthenes on the Crown*, transl. by Francis P. Simpson; rhetorical commentary by Francis P. Donnelly, S.J. [New York: Fordham University Press, 1941] 340–345; reprinted in James J. Murphy, ed., John J. Keaney, transl., *Demosthenes' On the Crown: A Critical Case Study of a Masterpiece of Ancient Oratory* [Studies in Speech; New York: Random House, 1967] 137–144).

My point is not to endorse one analysis over the other but to exemplify how experts in ancient rhetoric differ in analyzing an often-studied ancient oration whose composer we know to have been well trained in rhetorical theory and practice. If such experts can analyze such a discourse diversely, (a) similar differences among rhetorical analyses of New Testament documents discredit classical rhetorical analysis of them no more than these differences discredit the same analysis of *De Corona* and (b) well-composed orations may, as a matter of course, not mark the passing from one to another of the *partes orationis* as sharply as some critics of classical rhetorical analysis of New Testament documents presume that they do.

<sup>90</sup> offered by Frederick J. Long in his review of Philip H. Kern, *Rhetoric and Galatians*, in *Review of Biblical Literature*, <http://www.bookreviews.org>, accessed 27 March 2000.

<sup>91</sup> "St Paul's Epistles and Ancient Graeco-Roman Rhetoric," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Stanley Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 265–291. His observation in full appears on p. 269: "Anyone who could write Greek as effectively as St Paul did, must have read a good deal of works written in Greek and thus imbibed applied rhetoric from others, even if he never heard of

sophistic rhetoric as a means for proclaiming the gospel and responds in 2 Corinthians to rivals and critics who value sophistic rhetoric. In at least the canonical Corinthian correspondence, then, we should not be surprised to find Paul practicing elements of rhetoric even if in a campaign against sophistic rhetoric, even if he had never studied rhetorical theory. Moreover, apart from rhetoric's being a substantive issue in the Corinthian correspondence, we should similarly not be surprised if Paul's skillful writing and speaking, influenced by his location in rhetoric-saturated Hellenistic culture and by his intelligent observation, his reflection on his experience as a writer and speaker, and his natural aptitudes, practiced rhetoric, occasionally or more often, that those trained in theory would judge to be proper and effective, even if he knew no rhetorical theory.<sup>92</sup>

For this study, uncertainty about Paul's training in and relation to contemporary rhetorical theory does not interfere with reading the present discourse rhetorically. To some extent restating preceding claims, this study justifies its practice of rhetorical analysis in these ways: (1) This discourse, 2 Cor 10–13, is rhetorical, using words to accomplish specific purposes through a discernible strategy and with specific verbal tactics. It is therefore amenable to various kinds of rhetorical analysis. (2) The discussion above of resources for analyzing argument and arrangement uses rhetorical theory from antiquity and the twentieth century, as does this study. The study's use of ancient rhetoric without demonstrating that Paul followed rhetorical theory is appropriate for these reasons: (a) The provenance of the subject discourse is the Hellenistic world in which Greco-Roman rhetorical theory and practice was ubiquitous. Such rhetoric was therefore likely to influence how persons communicated, who, like Paul, engaged Hellenistic culture anywhere along its cultural spectrum. (b) Greco-Roman rhetoric (theory and practice) documents how skilled orators and teachers believed that communication and social conventions worked within that culture. This statement of belief and experience is valuable for reading a discourse from the same period and culture, even if the discourse was not composed according to

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any rules of rhetorical theory; thus, even if one could prove that St Paul was not familiar with the rhetorical theory of the Greeks, it can hardly be denied that he knew it in its applied form[.]”

<sup>92</sup> Other topics one may study to attempt to clarify Paul's relation to contemporary rhetorical training and theory include these: speculation on his own education and the nature of the rhetoric he experienced as a Pharisee with Roman citizenship in Tarsus and during whatever time he may have spent in Jerusalem before he became an apostle of Jesus as Messiah; how much the writing of an amanuensis for Paul skews our ability to describe his rhetoric; and how he learned to write Greek. Hellenistic (non-Jewish) sources indicate that students learned to write Greek within a curriculum imbued with explicit reference to and training in rhetoric.

that rhetoric and may vary from its prescriptions in a number of ways. As such a statement of belief and experience, this rhetoric can help interpreters imagine and describe how the rhetoric evinced in a period discourse (such as 2 Cor 10–13) would function and the effects it would achieve, with plausibility, if not probability, within that culture. (c) Moreover, Aristotle’s rhetorical theory, while incorporating his observations of fourth-century BCE oratory in Athens and his reading of other extant rhetorics, does not merely observe and report on successful contemporary oratory but theorizes philosophically about rhetoric in a way that invites readers to analyze rhetoric of other times and cultures using his system<sup>93</sup> (which has been done throughout the Western history of rhetoric into the present<sup>94</sup>). Thus Aristotle’s theory pretends to universality, transcending time and culture and useful in analyzing specimens of rhetoric composed without any knowledge of the theory. It is therefore proper to analyze 2 Cor 10–13 with it, without determining whether or not Paul composed those chapters with the aim of conforming to any version of Greco-Roman rhetoric. (3) As mentioned above, contemporary Hellenistic rhetorical practice confronts the reader of 1 and 2 Cor unavoidably, because (as argued below) Paul rejects sophistic rhetoric for gospel proclamation in 1 Cor, and he responds to sophistic rivals in the church at Corinth in 2 Cor 10–13.

The study’s use of some modern rhetorical theory along with ancient theory is likewise appropriate for these reasons: (1) Modern theory<sup>95</sup> extends the explanatory power of ancient theory and, as used in this study, helps readers of this study unfamiliar with ancient rhetoric to benefit from the study without greater knowledge of ancient rhetoric. (2) Modern theory treats arrangement less rigidly and more fluidly than do the ancient rhetorical handbooks. It therefore melds well with Aristotle’s philosophical, non-prescriptive approach to arrangement and at the same time meets the objection to the use of ancient rhetoric that Paul’s letters do not follow

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<sup>93</sup> Examples of this intent are (1) Aristotle’s description of the necessary parts of the speech: namely, only those truly necessary by virtue of their function—a statement, or proposition, then its proof, or support; and (2) his identification of three and only three species of rhetoric. Forensic, deliberative, and epideictic (or ceremonial) species envision the court, the *boulē*, and funeral and other ceremonial occasions of Aristotle’s times; but he does not distinguish the species by their differing fora. He distinguishes them instead by their differing listeners (judge of past events, judge of future events, and spectator, respectively), chief actions (accusation or defense, exhortation or dissuasion, or praise or blame), times (the past, the future, and the present, respectively), and ends, or ideal objectives (the just and the unjust, advantage and harm, and the honorable and the shameful), *Rhet.* 1.3.1–5.

<sup>94</sup> See, e.g., Marie Hochmuth Nichols, “The Neo-Aristotelian Approach: Lincoln’s First Inaugural,” in Bernard L. Brock, Robert L. Scott, James W. Chesebro, eds., *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth-Century Perspective* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., rev.) 32–63.

<sup>95</sup> exemplified in the works of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, Toulmin, and John Searle.

ancient prescriptions for the *partes orationis* convincingly. This study does not impose a classical rhetorical arrangement on the subject discourse, although it assesses for each section how well or poorly it fits the speech part that other interpreters claim to discern. A major goal of the study is to describe as objectively and insightfully as possible the argument (and other speech acts) and arrangement that constitute this discourse and that account in a major way for its implied effect, without regard to whether or not either or both conform to classical rhetorical rules consistently.

Beyond rhetoric (which emphasized oratory far more than writing in antiquity), ancient epistolary theory also helps explain the arrangement of 2 Cor 10–13. Important sources pertinent to Paul’s letters include the examples of the more literary letters of Seneca<sup>96</sup> and the Cynic epistles,<sup>97</sup> as well as the only two extant ancient epistolary handbooks, *τύποι ἐπιστολικοὶ* (*Epistolary Types*) from Ps.-Demetrius (c. first century BCE) and *ἐπιστολιμαῖοι χαρακτῆρες* (*Epistolary Styles*) from Ps.-Libanius (c. fifth century CE).<sup>98</sup> The work by Ps.-Demetrius describes and exemplifies twenty-one kinds of letters, while that by Ps.-Libanius defines and exemplifies forty-one kinds. Ps.-Libanius seems not to have known of Ps.-Demetrius, and while these two are all such handbooks extant, other evidence indicates that there were more Greek epistolary theorists.<sup>99</sup> Although this study does not draw from epistolary resources as often as from rhetorical resources, it notes throughout John T. Fitzgerald’s analysis of 2 Cor 10–13 using epistolary handbooks and endorses his views that examples from these handbooks illuminate various portions of this discourse and that this discourse is a mixed-type letter.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> used by Stanley Stowers in *The Diatribe and Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (SBLDS 57; Chico, CA: Scholars Press 1981) 69–75.

<sup>97</sup> including Socratic epistles, used by Benjamin Fiore in *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles* (Analecta Biblica 105; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1986). Text and translation available in Abraham J. Malherbe, ed., *The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition* (SBLBS 12; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977).

<sup>98</sup> used by John T. Fitzgerald in his essay “Paul, the Ancient Epistolary Theorists, and 2 Corinthians 10—13: The Purpose and Literary Genre of a Pauline Letter,” in David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, Wayne A. Meeks, eds., *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) 190–200. Text and translation available in Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (SBLBS 19; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1988).

<sup>99</sup> Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory* 114–115 and n. 21.

<sup>100</sup> This study might be stronger if it explored ancient epistolography more, but I became convinced too late in my writing that ancient epistolary theory and practice was potentially as important to understanding the rhetoric of this discourse (with rhetoric defined as consciously using language, oral or textual, to accomplish specific purposes) as was ancient rhetorical theory. Yet from what I have explored, using epistolary sources more would not have modified key claims of this study. For example, this study finds the key acts of the discourse to be the same as those Fitzgerald lists on the basis of his analysis guided by the ancient epistolary sources: namely, appeal, threat, defense,

## METHOD OF THIS STUDY

This study moves from close readings that inventory what is present in the discourse to reflection on the function, structure, and purpose of these discourse components, with these considered recursively and not in a strict hierarchical sequence. Specifically, each discourse unit is analyzed in these ways:

1. *Analysis of the discourse into shorter units, using established criteria of form.* It analyzes such sections and sub-sections according to the following steps before synthesizing them into the whole.
2. *An inventory of surface linguistic acts expressed through grammatical and syntactical analysis.* Analyzing the linguistic acts means discerning whether a clause or sentence declares, directs, or interrogates, etc. This analysis is usually obvious so that this written study does not report it except when it is significant to the following steps in the study.
3. *Identification and assessment of the speech acts performed on or through the linguistic acts.* Speech acts are the performative dimensions of language, the way, as J. L. Austin said, that people do things with words.<sup>101</sup> For example, Paul's expression at 11.21—"To my shame, I

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counterattack against rivals, and reproach and accusation toward the Corinthians ("Ancient Epistolary Theorists" 193–200).

<sup>101</sup> Because this study performs a practical act of criticism, that is, because it offers a specific kind of reading, it does not examine the philosophical basis of speech act theory as developed by J. L. Austin and John Searle and applied to literary studies by Mary Louise Pratt (*Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* [Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1977]) beyond applying its most basic insights. The fundamental insight is that utterances (whether written or spoken) may perform speech acts quite different from the linguistic acts they embody. It is this quality of human language that makes all but the most controlled linguistic interactions among persons dramatic. They are dramatic in the sense that utterances are performed, and what meanings and effects the performer intends are usually more and other than those meanings and effects indicated by discerning only the grammar, syntax, and most common semantic senses of the words that constitute the utterance. Searle, in his later study revising and extending his original theory, identifies five categories of illocutionary acts: "We tell people how things are (Assertives), we try to get them to do things (Directives), we commit ourselves to doing things (Commissives), we express our feelings and attitudes (Expressives), and we bring about changes in the world through our utterances (Declarations)" (*Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979] viii). Adequately discerning the performer's intentions requires interpreting also pertinent features of the communication situation and drawing upon a cultural grammar of speech acts which together guide the recipient to likely interpretations that may match or nearly match the intent of the performer. The work of psycholinguists such as Deborah Tannen (e.g., *idem.*, ed., *Gender and Conversational Interaction* [New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1993]) and Suzette Haden Elgin (e.g., *Genderspeak: Men, Women, and the Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense* [New York, N.Y.: Wiley, 1993]) explain how American women and men intend different speech acts through identical linguistic acts. For example, a husband and wife driving in a car may have this interchange: She says to him, "Wouldn't you like to stop for a cold drink?" He hears the linguistic act of asking a question and interprets the speech act identically. He answers, "No." But she intended a speech act other than identifying his wish: She meant, "Would you please stop so I can have a cold drink?" and "I would like for you to want one and



must say, we were too weak for that!”—as a linguistic act is a declarative or exclamatory statement; but as a speech act, it is an ironic concession. What Paul does through the linguistic act is to concede, tongue in cheek, that he is weaker than his rivals. But he concedes this weakness in a dramatic context that forcefully implies the superiority of non-abusive weakness over abusive power. At this step, the study integrates literary, rhetorical, and social conventions, along with insights from other readings of the same sections and sub-sections. Identifying (and naming) the speech acts is the greatest challenge of this step and of the study as a whole. The process is more art than science, as are acts of humanistic interpretation, whether of visual, dramatic, literary, or musical arts. But one can move from considering the linguistic acts through a recursive and ill-defined process of weighing the rhetorical and dramatic situation one discerns at a specific point in the discourse, along with other readings of the same portion, to imagining various dramatic performances of the portion. Each distinct, imagined performance enacts a speech act, and one may judge which seem to cohere better or worse with immediate and then broader contexts in order to decide on the one or two that seem to synthesize the immediate context with the purposes of the discourse and a plausible response from the implied audience that would likewise help fulfill the discourse purposes. Literary critic George Steiner asserts that performance is the best interpretation.

4. *Synthesis of sections and sub-sections into larger discourse units, assessing how groups of such acts function as sub-units and then larger units.* The study then integrates pertinent conventions and insights from other readings as in the previous step. It considers these topics and, where the results of this analysis warrant it, reports them in the written study:

Translation: The Greek text is translated into English with the purpose of expressing features that seem to be rhetorically significant.

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enjoy having a break from driving by enjoying a drink with me.” Her linguistic act of asking what he would like to do was a speech act requesting him to do something with her and to enjoy it. This example shows how complex an even simple linguistic interchange can be when speakers and auditors fully understand the other’s vocabulary, language, and general culture. This study presumes that the use of language in antiquity is similarly complex and that the attempt to understand such language requires of today’s readers no less of an openness to the dramatic dimensions ancient texts bear than do texts produced in one’s native, contemporary culture. This study is the smallest of gestures towards such a depth understanding of the dramatic acts performed in the subject discourse, 2 Corinthians 10–13. But it is an effort to show that what interpreters have accepted as traditional exegesis can be broadened to acknowledge the dramatistic character of the language of human interaction and to benefit from the enhanced understandings of biblical discourses that such speech-act-enriched exegesis can produce.

Speech Acts: As discussed above, each phrase, clause, and sentence is analyzed two ways: (1) what is the linguistic act it expresses? (declaration, exclamation, request, command, interrogation, etc.); leading to (2) what is the speech act that linguistic act performs? The goal is to identify what the micro-unit does rhetorically.

Coherence: Words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are analyzed to see how by thought or diction they cohere with preceding expressions in the discourse. This step of inventory helps the interpreter to note chains of recurring words or ideas, to see how various textual units relate and function together, and to elicit potential linking ideas that, as is normal in informal discourse, may be elided but truly implied. The inventorying of occurrences of coherence is often a heuristic task that gives the interpreter a way of attending to textual features closely. Sometimes this practiced attention yields insights other than identifying features that cohere.

Pertinent Background—Terms and Concepts: As needed, this category is used to accommodate usually lengthy discussions that fit better apart from “Rhetorical Structure and Development” because the terms treated apply to more than one textual unit.

Intertextuality: Words and ideas that allude to or expressly refer to or quote other discourses are noted and the possible rhetorical interaction between the discourses in the thought of the present writer or his/her audience is explored.

Rhetorical Structure and Development: This most important step seeks to apprehend the subsuming form of the discourse by identifying structures at or above the sentence level in which speech acts at the sentence-level (or lower) function. For example, a full, if brief, argument must include a claim supported by a reason or some other kind of evidence. Other structures include speech acts that involve more than one sentence. Once such supra-sentence-level structures are identified, the interpreter queries their function in executing the discourse purpose and goals and traces how the rhetoric of the discourse is developing. (E.g., this study shows a progression in the acts of ministry Paul narrates (10.13—11.21) as he demonstrates his beneficial, self-less service to the Corinthians and contrasts that with the harmful acts of his opponents. It argues that each following act narrated in some quasi-logical way goes beyond the immediately preceding narrated act.) It is at this step that one begins to apprehend the plausible cumulative, overall effect of the discourse.

Rhetorical Style: The interpreter examines words, phrases, and clauses alone and in relation to other similar components selectively to see how sub-sentence-level structures contribute to

the rhetorical force of the discourse. The components the interpreter looks for includes figures of speech (tropes) and figures of thought (schemes). The goal is not merely to label occurrences but to consider how such art in the details of the discourse helps fulfill the purpose of the discourse. Because this study focuses on sentence-level and larger structures, examination of style is selective, not comprehensive.

Implications: Effective rhetoric proceeds from the beliefs, attitudes, and values of the audience to the purpose and goal toward which the speaker or writer aims his or her rhetorical efforts. By the nature of rhetorical discourse, in its contrast with formal philosophical, mathematical, or scientific demonstration, rhetorical argumentation often elides, or implies, ideas and expressions that the rhetor's knowledge (presumed or actual) of the audience allows him or her not to have to express fully. But to a hearer or reader not part of that audience implied in the discourse, such implications may be neither obvious nor shared. To apprehend the intended rhetorical transaction, the interpreter attempts to discern the stock of shared and implied beliefs, attitudes, and values that complete the rhetorical discourse to make it more fully intelligible to a later audience. These implications may point to the deepest shared beliefs that supply claims, evidence, and warrants that make abbreviated, rhetorical argument effective, despite its failing to express each such claim, item of evidence, or warrant.

Rhetorical Effects: In this most conjectural of the steps in this analysis, the interpreter moves from the effects inscribed in the text (what the discourses desires the discourse to accomplish, with the desires constructed from the analysis of the discourse) toward a necessarily subjective assessment of what the discourse likely could have accomplished with the audience implied in it. Rhetoricians, perhaps beginning with Aristotle, attended to the characteristics of one's audience in an effort to construct rhetorical discourse that would fit it and appeal to it in ways that would move it to the desired response. Aristotle in his *Art of Rhetoric* of 2,400 years ago and authors of today's speech communications textbooks offer general psychologies of various ages, genders, and motivational types to help speakers adhere their theses to the present commitments of their audiences. Information such as this helps the interpreter suggest, with some rational basis, the likely effect of components of rhetorical discourse and of such discourses as a whole.

Recapitulation of Rhetorical Performance: After a group of discourse sub-units that cohere into a unit, the interpreter seeks to discern and communicate the rhetorical force the discourse has accumulated to that point.

Relation to Ancient Rhetoric: Where appropriate, the analysis of sub-units and units queries how these components do or do not express the claims and prescriptions of classical and Hellenistic rhetorics. Of special interest throughout this study is the question of whether or not 2 Corinthians 10—13 conforms to the *taxis*, or *dispositio*, of forensic or deliberative speeches as prescribed by Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks and extant discourses.

5. *Assessment of larger units within the discourse* in order to clarify what are the purposes, structures, functions, and effects on the implied audience of discourse parts and the discourse as a whole.
6. *Comparison of results of this study with other readings and suggestions for further study.* The study compares its own reading with readings offered by other scholars, especially when such readings make similar or different claims on especially the theses enumerated at the beginning of this chapter. This comparison occurs sometimes in the main text and sometimes in footnotes.

#### **BACKGROUND OF THE THESES SUPPORTED BY THIS STUDY**

Of the six major theses stated above, the first, second, and fifth and sixth together benefit from being developed further before presenting this study's reading of 2 Cor 10–13. The other theses require no other development now and are supported within the reading that fills chapters two through five of this study.

##### ***Background to Thesis One:***

*Paul responds to the criticism that he is too weak to lead with both denial and acceptance.*

Most, if not all, of the criticisms of Paul expressed in 2 Cor 10–13 cohere with the several explicit references to Paul as weak.<sup>102</sup> This criticism therefore imbues the whole discourse. Other studies agree that the criticisms in the discourse attack Paul's claim to be an authentic apostle

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<sup>102</sup> The charges related to money (11.7–11; 12.16–18) may or may not relate directly to the charge of Paul's weakness. The rest of the criticisms relate to "weakness" directly.

(perhaps even an authentic Christian),<sup>103</sup> but this study argues that the issue is even more specific: From the perspective of the discourse itself, the fundamental charge is that Paul is weak (in various ways) and that his weakness disqualifies him from being the apostle he has claimed to be. How accurate this representation is historically is another matter; what this study attends to is how “weakness” is the central criticism and the focus of Paul’s response in the discourse. “Weakness” expresses various meanings in this discourse. Beyond commonly accepted senses of “without strength, feeble, sickly; poor; insignificant,”<sup>104</sup> Christopher Forbes’ 1978 Macquarie University BA thesis argues that Greek terms for “weakness” (and “strength”) often serve to express judgments about the social status of persons in Greek antiquity.<sup>105</sup> Recent studies of 2 Cor tend to accept this broadened semantic range for ἀσθένεια and its cognates and to relate Paul’s weak rhetoric to his being looked down on by critics who denigrate him as their social inferior.<sup>106</sup> Anitra Bingham Kolenkow’s essay on this topic further specifies the most pertinent semantic range of “weakness” in this discourse. She challenges the view that Paul represents early Christians who follow “the model of a suffering Christ” while his rivals in 2 Cor 10–13 “seek a power based exclusively on miracles and visions.”<sup>107</sup> Such a view leads to the common interpretation that the hardship list in the Fool’s Speech contrasts Paul’s life of suffering apostleship over against the (presumed) triumphalist, wonder-working life of his rivals. But

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<sup>103</sup> especially pertinent at 2 Cor 10.7, where Χριστοῦ εἶναι is taken by some to refer simply to being a Christian [e.g., Oostendorp, D. W., *Another Jesus: A Gospel of Jewish Christian Apostolic Authority in II Corinthians* (Kampen: Kok, 1967) 18–19; E. Käsemann, *Die Legitimität des Apostels* (Darmstadt, 1964) 11–12], by others to refer to Paul’s claim to be an apostle [e.g., Dieter Georgi, *Di Gegner des Paulus im 2 Korinther* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964) 227; H. D. Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus and die sokratische Tradition: eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner ‘Apologie’ 2 Korinther 10–13* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1972) 133–134; Ralph Martin, *2 Corinthians* (Word Biblical Commentary; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986) 308–309].

<sup>104</sup> *A Lexicon Abridged from Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871)

<sup>105</sup> “‘Strength’ and ‘Weakness’ as Terminology of Status in St Paul: The Historical and Literary Roots of a Metaphor, with Special Reference to 1 and 2 Corinthians.” Forbes studies such terms in Greek writings at every period to conclude that they often express the judgment of others about one’s social location and, consequently, the extent to which others accept or reject one. In such uses, a weak person is viewed as socially inferior and unacceptable for the relationship of friendship, which exists, ideally, among social equals. (I was not able to borrow this BA Honours thesis and have had to rely on references to it in other literature, including Forbes’s other writings. WorldCat, the international library database, shows no library holding the thesis except Macquarie University, Australia, the school for which Forbes wrote it.)

<sup>106</sup> One notable exception is David Alan Black’s *Paul, Apostle of Weakness: Astheneia and Its Cognates in the Pauline Literature* (American University Studies Series, 7; Theology and Religion, 3; New York: Peter Lang, 1984). This study omits considering the social-world dimensions of the term and its cognates and thus fails to communicate crucial dimensions of Paul’s experience of weakness as an apostle.

<sup>107</sup> “Paul’s Opponents in 2 Cor 10–13 — *Theioi Andres* and Spiritual Guides,” in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World* (Lukas Bormann, Kelly del Tredici, and Angela Standhartinger, eds.; Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 351–374; here, 351.

Kolenkow's wide-ranging study of early New Testament and other Christian texts, as well as her anthropological study of spiritual guide-leaders in various faith traditions and times lead her to different conclusions. Study of the hardship catalogs throughout Paul's letters and of "Q's" catalog of sufferings shows that meekness and suffering are as much criteria for legitimate apostleship as are miracles and gospel proclamation and lead to this conclusion:<sup>108</sup>

There was a common expectation (and pattern) that Christian apostles not only perform miracles but suffer deprivation as well, and there are various verbal structures [such as hardship catalogs] with which these demands are conveyed. These latter serve as the common ground between Paul and his opponents – the basis upon which Paul attempts to justify himself in 2 Cor 10–13.

Thus as Paul faces his rivals, he shares with them lineage (being a Hebrew), deprivation (expressed in the hardship catalog of the Fool's Speech), visionary experiences, and miracles. What divides them is not these properties but their differing ways of expressing authority and governing churches. Paul is accused of acting in a worldly, shameful, duplicitous way because he claims power when absent by means of his letters (2 Cor 10.10) but does not actually wield it when in person at Corinth (10.1–2, 10).<sup>109</sup>

In Paul's presentation of the opponents, they are strong, they accept money (11:20, cf. 12:13–15; hence they are γοήτεες), and they are willing to apply force and authority. They have moved into Paul's mission territory and seized power. Paul knows that they consider him weak (yet strong *in absentia*). Paul maintains a consistency in weakness: he is weak with the churches, he was weak at the time of his commissioning, and, indeed, he was ordained to weakness. On the very issues of money and judgment (as well as the bad behavior of followers), he himself uses terms related to ταπεινός, a term used in the lowliness catalogues of 11:7, 12:21. In 11:30–12:12, Paul resumes his defensive stance (weakness and signs). Two more issues enter here, each heightened by Paul's announcement of a "third coming" after having raised issues of burdening (12:14–18) and behavior (13:1–11); he is accused of not keeping order and not having power. The central issues of 2 Cor 10–13, then, pertain to church government.<sup>110</sup>

Most interpreters of this discourse do not express the social dimension of weakness and strength as often as it is pertinent, and they frequently refer to Paul's weakness(es) without specifying which senses from its semantic range are most pertinent in specific occurrences of the terms.

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<sup>108</sup> Q texts include Luke 6, Matthew 4, 5, 10; other pertinent early Christian texts include *Herm. Man.* 11.7–16, *Did.* 3, *Acts of Thomas*, 85–86, 94, etc; also 1 Cor 13.1–3 gives "the most comprehensive list of attributes of persons of power, from eloquence, prophecy, miracle-doing, to being poor and giving one's body to be burned," Kolenkow, "Paul's Opponents," 354–364

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 364

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 364–365

Consequently, such interpretations fail to communicate how serious, specific, and comprehensively condemning was the charge that Paul was weak. This study identifies the senses of the lexicon of weakness and strength most pertinent in occurrences throughout this discourse.

This study further discerns a strategy by which the discourse responds to this charge: First, 10.1–11.21a denies that Paul is weak in any way that keeps him from being an effective missionary-apostle. The discourse denies his weakness explicitly in 10.3–6, 8, and 11. It then demonstrates this denial through a running *synkrisis* that contrasts Paul’s ministry in the past and present with the activities of his rivals: Paul brought the gospel to Corinth first, while rivals violated the divine assignment by inserting themselves into an established work; Paul betrothed them to Christ, while rivals seduced them to another Jesus, spirit, and gospel; Paul humbled himself to serve them in the gospel as a gift, relying on support from other churches, while the rivals burdened believers; and he loved believers, while his rivals abused them (10.13–11.21a).

Most other studies do not discern how denial of the main charge of weakness unifies this portion of the discourse.<sup>111</sup> Such studies either overlook or minimize the denials that Paul is weak at the beginning of the discourse (10.3–6), and they do not treat Paul’s contrast between himself and his rivals (10.13–11.21a) as support for the thesis expressed in 10.12—that Paul dare not compare or classify himself with his rivals. They further do not relate the explicit denials of weakness before 10.12 to the function of the ongoing contrast (10.13–11.21a) as specific examples of Paul’s effective apostleship that refute the charge of weakness. Instead, such studies rightly note Paul’s two requests that believers bear with his foolishness (11.1, 16) but claim that at one or both of these requests he actually begins his performance of that foolishness. As a result, they focus on Paul the fool too soon and minimize the persuasive force of his straightforward denial of weakness supported by strong evidence that the believers have witnessed firsthand.

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<sup>111</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians* 299, recognizes the importance of the criticism of Paul’s weakness, expressed in 10.10, as the grounds for critics rejecting Paul, although he does not synthesize all the criticisms expressed in 10–13 under the rubric of weakness, as this study does; so also Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Harper’s New Testament Commentaries; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973); Frederick W. Danker, *II Corinthians* (Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989); Brian K. Peterson, *Eloquence and the Proclamation of the Gospel in Corinth* (SBLDS 163; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); and H. D.

Second, after denying straightforwardly that Paul is weak, the discourse accepts the charge of weakness ironically through the foolish discourse of 11.21b–12.10. It first parodies the boasting of rivals by matching (11.21b–22) and then exceeding (11.23–29) their boasts by far. The hardship catalog of 11.23–29 does not boast in weakness, contrary to majority scholarly opinion. Instead, it demonstrates that Paul is a better servant of Christ than his rivals. (The study explores the simultaneously straightforward and ironic effects Paul’s consciously adopted role of the Greco-Roman mimic fool exerts throughout the hardship list.) At 11.29 Paul confesses his weakness, and at 11.30 Paul takes what his critics consider his vice and transforms it into virtue by beginning to *boast* of his weakness. Paul the mimic fool boasts of his escape from Damascus and of his exceptional visionary experience that leaves him mute and divinely chastened by a painful thorn. Paul’s prayer brings no deliverance, but instead, in the climax of Paul’s response to his critics, the divine oracle commends Paul in his weakness. Because believers tend to accept such charismatic utterances, the discourse rightly expects that they would accept the oracle as genuine. It meets the criterion of 10.18 and shows that the Lord refutes Paul’s critics.

The remainder of this discourse performs two other key acts concerning weakness: One, it locates weakness within Christ (13.3–4), warranting it christologically, in addition to evaluating it properly by the oracle of 12.9. Two, it defines by use one sense of weakness as leniency, an attitude for the good of believers, regardless of how well or poorly they evaluate Paul’s identity and performance as apostle (13.6–11), joining the end of the discourse to its opening note of “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (10.1).

Much more occurs in the discourse than responding to criticism, and this study makes these other acts explicit as well; however, this study emphasizes what other studies have not, namely, this macro-strategy in the discourse as a response to the criticism that Paul is weak.

### ***Background to Thesis Two:***

*Paul the weak leader in this discourse hardly resembles the Paul portrayed and critiqued on ethical grounds in recent studies.* Considered by Burton Mack to be “devastating” in its force,<sup>112</sup> *The Cost of Authority: Manipulation and Freedom in the New Testament*, by Anglican

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Betz, *Der Apostel*. The chief study that highlighted weakness as subsuming all, or nearly all, the criticisms expressed in 2 Cor 10–13 is Anitra Kolenkow’s “Paul’s Opponents.”

<sup>112</sup> *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) 23.



clergyman and college chaplain Graham Shaw, examines Paul's letters and the Gospel of Mark to show that the New Testament witnesses to a gospel of freedom and reconciliation but also betrays it, starting the history of Christianity's failure to fulfill its promise.<sup>113</sup> Shaw aims to appraise these texts that assert and exercise Christian authority by a standard of "how authority is to be authenticated and used legitimately."<sup>114</sup> Using "authority" and "power" synonymously, Shaw postulates the following about power: (1) Because the exercise of human power is ubiquitous and unavoidable, we critique only its uses, not its existence. (2) "The oppressive use of authority derives from the determination to perpetuate a position of power which is threatened by an instability it cannot ultimately evade."<sup>115</sup> That instability is, humanly, mortality, and institutionally, the impermanence of social arrangements. Illusions of permanent power blind secular ideologies, such as Stalin's, but also appear in the New Testament: "Jesus lives. Christ is declared to be the same, yesterday, today and forever. Jesus is represented as saying that 'heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away'. The eternity and unchangeability may be attributed to God, but his human representatives easily appropriate to themselves something of the same qualities."<sup>116</sup> Such illusions foster insecurity, which resists criticism. This resistance prohibits, silences, and censors; it demands undivided attention, nervously warns of false prophets, and excludes critics by anathema.<sup>117</sup>

Paul's letters and the Gospels consolidate and defend power, illegitimately, in Shaw's view, by similar means: "the manipulation of eschatological anxiety, and the offer of privilege in another world; the divisive emphasis on divine judgment to provide sanctions to control behaviour, the stress on secrecy which gives to the initiates a special status, the prestige derived from persecution, and explanations of dissent, which render it harmless; . . . a stress on internal unity at the cost of external antagonism, the fusion of the crucified identity with asceticism, the legitimation of the New Testament by reference to the Old, the exploitation of the social impact

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<sup>113</sup> (London: SCM Press, 1983) 2–12. Shaw rejects these efforts to evade the failure of Christianity to perform the ideals it professes: a "selective focus on good and suppression of the bad in history and experience"; historical relativism that spares condemning acts of the past using today's moral standards; and denial that "whatever offends 'is not really Christian,'" promoting a self-justifying sectarianism that denies history and fails tests of truth and reconciliation. His brief recital of the history of Christianity's failure leads him to conclude "that the origins of the problem lie in the New Testament. As long as the New Testament remains fundamentally uncriticized, it will function as a carrier of those destructive attitudes which have surfaced repeatedly in Christian history" (11).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. 14

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 17

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. 17

of prayer; above all a continuity in the conception of the Christian privilege, as sonship, inheritance, election, and the possession of the Spirit.” Both groups of documents express “ambivalence towards the audience, and . . . distrust of the world. Cosmic dualism and the unresolved conflict between flesh and spirit mark the Gospels as deeply as the epistles. Both sets of documents assert the miraculous.”<sup>118</sup>

This summary of Shaw’s general critique shows how much he finds wrong with the faith and the authority these documents express. Yet Shaw finds in the Jesus he retrieves from the Gospels an example of proper authority and power: Jesus anticipated and accepted his death and was thus liberated to use his power for the freedom and reconciliation of others. Because he accepted the temporary nature of his power, Jesus did not need to repress criticism, but could listen to it. “He lives surrounded by questioners and dies to a background of abuse.” His parables “do not look to another world for vindication” but seek “assent from the listeners’ experience of a world . . . common to speaker and audience alike. The emphasis on the neighbour, on the public fruits of religion as well as its secret motives, the confidence in everyday perceptions as a guide to religious truth, are all important correctives to the esoteric and privileged tendencies of much New Testament teaching. For unlike the esoteric and privileged versions of that teaching, they facilitate criticism rather than evade it.”<sup>119</sup>

This study intersects Shaw’s work on two levels: First, it responds to his commentary on the subject text, 2 Corinthians 10–13, showing by its reading that Shaw’s reading of Paul as manipulative and oppressive is improbable because it ignores much exculpatory evidence and it imputes to Paul ill motives without arguing for them. As an example of ignoring exculpatory

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid. 18

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. 24

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. 20–22. Shaw continues: “Authority which recognizes the temporary nature of its position of power is not threatened by the outlook and experience of others. It can therefore adopt a much more open and inclusive social stance because it knows that its own identity cannot be preserved indefinitely. It has no need to foster antagonism or insecurity. Instead it can use its power to encourage the autonomy of others, while respecting their integrity. . . . [I]t can sit loosely to all forms of visibility because it does not need continually to draw attention to itself. . . . [M]uch in the New Testament . . . reflects this. Jesus’ eating with publicans and sinners deliberately questions the rigid distinctions of contemporary religion, and the church’s openness to Gentiles is only an extension of the same attitude. The teaching of forgiveness is subversive of all legal distinctions, and the criticism of Sabbath observance, circumcision and food laws all repudiate a divisive visibility. The teaching on rank, reinforced by the parable of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, extends this teaching to religious authority itself—the distinction between disciples and master is deliberately confused. In one sense the whole insistence on incarnation is the culmination of this liberating reversal. Orthodox stress on the otherness of God tends to legitimate social alienation. In the New Testament it is replaced by a radical identification of God and man. I John [4.9–11] correctly sees this as the legitimation of the inclusive, forgiving love which is one of the distinguishing marks of the New Testament.”

evidence, Shaw does not credit Paul with consciously not influencing followers through esoteric, privileged knowledge, even though this decision looms large in the Fool's Speech. Paul shares his visions and revelations minimally and only because he believes circumstances require such foolishness; but he shares only as a fool, only to boast in his weaknesses, and in contrast to his principle that believers should evaluate him only by the "everyday perceptions," to use Shaw's term, of what they can see and hear of him firsthand (2 Cor 12.6). The contrasting readings—this study's and Shaw's—will show that Shaw's decision not to converse with current New Testament study in his reading discouraged him from exploring and appraising perspectives other than his thoroughly suspicious view.<sup>120</sup> Second, the study notes what Shaw's reading leaves out and what it imports: His reading leaves out any serious reckoning with the nature of the opposition Paul faced, which would provide a contemporary standard for appraising Paul's rhetoric and other acts. Shaw bypasses the issue not only of the identity of Paul's opponents, which admittedly has been a major problem in Corinthian studies, but also of the nature of their opposition. As a result, Shaw publishes a reading of Paul that he thinks, oddly, to be better for not having examined its polemical context and its implications for Christian faith. If, as this study argues, the opposition to which this text responds is sophistic, readers who want to appraise Paul well would want to know what were the alternatives between Christian life and faith advocated by Paul and by his sophistic rivals. This study argues that between these two (as represented in this text), Paul's gospel affords more freedom and reconciliation than its competitor, but because Shaw has read superficially, he judges Paul to be manipulative and says nothing about Paul's rivals, concerning whom the evidence of the Fool's Speech is strong that they sought to impress and influence believers on the basis of their privileged, esoteric knowledge and experiences. At the same time, Shaw imports his own faith, which is at odds with Paul's in numerous, crucial ways.<sup>121</sup> Part of Shaw's faith, or his ideology, is a notion of freedom

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid. vii. Shaw further claims that "the questions with which this book is concerned have not received close attention, and those questions have themselves suggested a distinctive method of understanding the New Testament," one in which Shaw by-passes conversation with scholars of Mark and Paul, as well as studies on authority and power in Paul's letters. Related studies were available before Shaw's work was published: John Howard Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); and Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980). Shaw acknowledges neither.

<sup>121</sup> Among the differences are Shaw's denial of the Resurrection or of the Spirit and of their importance to the gospel of "human freedom and of reconciliation between men" (13): "Once it has been granted that charismatic phenomena have a social rather than a supernatural origin . . . , much of Paul's gospel crumbles. The divisive and repressive

and reconciliation that he does not define, argue for, or treat as at all complex in its relation to authority, sin, evil, or salvation. This study demonstrates that Paul's discourse expresses this relationship with greater complexity and subtlety, which Shaw's study neither discerns nor matches.

Also cited by Mack as devastating in its force is Elizabeth Castelli's study, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power*.<sup>122</sup> Using Foucault's notions of discourse and power relations, this study locates Paul's calls to imitation<sup>123</sup> within the ancient discourse of imitation that usually presumes and endorses an ontologically hierarchical cosmology.<sup>124</sup> Situated thus, the Pauline call to imitation produces several crucial effects: It valorizes and continually drives toward sameness and marginalizes and devalues difference;<sup>125</sup> it creates or supports hierarchy in Pauline communities because Paul's asserting his status as model-to-be-imitated distinguishes him from believers,<sup>126</sup> who must attempt continually the finally impossible task of fully conforming to the model, which is itself poorly defined in the calls to imitation;<sup>127</sup> and it supports and enhances Paul's authority through the striving of believers to imitate Paul, an authority that believers soon perceive to be natural and inevitable and not as one of several possible ways that power might be arranged in the young Christian communities.<sup>128</sup> As perhaps the most crucial, enduring effect on earliest and subsequent Christianity, the Pauline call to imitation supports Christianity's developing into a religion of exclusivity, with it alone offering access to salvation and consequently distinguishing sharply between Christian and non-Christian.<sup>129</sup> Following Derrida's deconstructive aim, Castelli aims to "complicate the call to sameness" characteristic of "Western (Christian) culture," in order to "reinscribe difference as itself a multiplicity constituted by both

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aspects of the Spirit in Paul's thought may make this seem but a slight loss, but with the Spirit must also disappear the most widespread basis for belief both in the resurrection of Jesus and in our own life after death. The excitement of the privilege which Paul offered his followers was the participation in Jesus' Spirit: that assured them of both Jesus' life and their own life beyond death. Once that Spirit has been explained in social terms the privilege he proffered has proved specious and the promise illusory" (167)

<sup>122</sup> Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* 23

<sup>123</sup> 1 Thess. 1.6; Phil. 3.17; 1 Cor. 4.16; 11.1

<sup>124</sup> Castelli, *Imitating Paul* 60–87; against representing this discourse as univocal and monolithic, 59, 86

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* 21–22, 114–117

<sup>126</sup> Because Paul confuses his identity with that of Christ and God and because hierarchy in the ancient discourse of mimesis is usually ontological, Castelli's study implies that Paul's discourse of mimesis distinguishes him from follower-believers not merely economically but ontologically.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* 16, 105, 109–111, 114

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 116–117

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* 56–57, 96–97, 103, 114–115

similarities and differences,” “to think differences differently” for the good of at least Western culture.<sup>130</sup>

Castelli’s study reads Paul’s calls to imitation in light of theories of Foucault and, to a lesser extent, Derrida and is therefore more explicit about the theoretical basis for its reading than is Shaw’s study. While differing in this important regard, Castelli carries forward Shaw’s notions of Paul’s occasional but important confusion of his identity with Christ and God,<sup>131</sup> of the inability of Paul’s exercise of authority to tolerate significant differences in faith and practice, and of the New Testament’s own contribution to the forming of Christianity as a religion that fails to reconcile persons as much as it divides them antagonistically.

Castelli’s study intersects the present study chiefly in its judgment that Paul exerted his authority wrongfully because he enhanced it while excluding and suppressing difference. Her study does not read any portion of 2 Corinthians, but it does read Paul’s call to imitation in 1 Corinthians 4.16 somewhat closely<sup>132</sup> and 11.1 more briefly.<sup>133</sup> Responding to Castelli’s reading is complicated by the significant differences in method distinguishing her study from the present study. Castelli’s study makes explicit power relations invoked by Paul’s call to imitation to which other scholarly studies have not attended through the theoretical lenses of Foucault and Derrida. Her study makes its ultimate aim<sup>134</sup> most explicit in the final section of the final chapter.<sup>135</sup> The aim is to change fundamentally what the study terms “the dominance of the binary structures that frame conventional thought in the West”<sup>136</sup> and that produce, inevitably, “Christian discourse [that] is radically overextended in the area of identity.” Paul’s call to imitation is only one, but a key, instance of this discourse.<sup>137</sup> Castelli’s study thus builds the case that such binary structures dominate conventional Western thought by constructing “the ancient discourse of mimesis,” which expresses and implies such structures and into which Paul’s call to imitation is located, showing that Christian discourse transmits with a new religious authority the already-existing ideology of exclusivism and sameness. With such an ideological and

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 134–136

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 32, 91, 95, 110–111

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 97–111

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. 111–115

<sup>134</sup> Summarized at the end of the second paragraph before this one in this study

<sup>135</sup> Castelli, “Reading Mimesis Otherwise or, What’s the Difference?” in *Imitating Paul* 124–136

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 135

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 134–135

philosophical focus and aim, Castelli's reading of Paul attends to features of his texts that correspond to the ideology that it disapproves of and desires to "complicate," while it skirts features of his texts that, read more carefully, would complicate its portrayal of Paul's "discourse of power." Further, while Castelli's study supports its reading of Paul's texts at times with traditional exegetical criteria, at other times it dismisses readings supported in that way in favor of readings that are determined by weighing extra-textual constructs (e.g., "the ancient discourse of mimesis") more heavily. The study thus expresses a theoretically unresolved tension between (a) readings derived from historical exegesis that weigh the particulars of a specific text more than an extra-textual construct invoked to help read the text and (b) others that weigh the particulars of a specific text less and impute to the specific text meanings derived from an extra-textual construct. Because the present study reads its subject text by means of rhetorical exegesis, a form of historical exegesis, the differences in theory and method distinguishing the two studies make it difficult to relate their readings and results in a dialogue that would satisfy both authors. Nevertheless, Castelli's study attends to important dimensions of Paul's texts as they have been received by generations of readers and listeners. These have been taught, preached, and heard in oppressive ways, and Castelli's study explains with theoretical sophistication how Paul's texts have produced such effects. The present study will provide a largely contrasting reading of 2 Cor 10–13 that attends to different dimensions of this discourse and therefore discovers different effects.

Sandra Hack Polaski's study *Paul and the Discourse of Power* follows Castelli's in her use of Foucault's notions of discourse and power relations but differs in two key ways: (1) by locating Paul's texts not within the ancient discourse of mimesis but instead in the ancient discourse of revelatory authority;<sup>138</sup> (2) by acknowledging that Foucault's perspectives and methods do not produce good exegesis of single, ancient texts.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, unlike Castelli, Polaski does not target the binary structure of conventional Western thought as unethical, focusing instead on reading Paul's texts closely. Her chief aim is to "uncover" and describe "certain relations of power"<sup>140</sup> implied or expressed in Paul's texts. Polaski's study intersects the present study in these ways: (1) It affirms the value of rhetorical readings in making explicit

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<sup>138</sup> Sandra Hack Polaski, *Paul and the Discourse of Power* (Gender, Culture, Theory 8; The Biblical Seminar 62; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 43.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. 18–20

assertions and strategies of power deployed through texts,<sup>141</sup> and it interprets texts by reading them closely more than by imputing to them readings of other related texts. (2) It reads various Pauline texts persuasively in showing how expressions that may seem inert to modern readers express Paul's claim to and exertion of authority and power.<sup>142</sup> In this way, it shows how religious language may be used to conceal assertions of authority and power that non-religious language would reveal and, revealed, likely elicit resistance from addressees.<sup>143</sup> Polaski acknowledges Paul's success in exerting authority and describes how he may be a worthy example for others: "In Paul's writings I find evidence of an individual who was able, despite numerous limitations imposed on him by legal and traditional authority, to locate and use his power to further the purposes to which he believed he had been divinely called. This Paul is an example for persons who experience even greater opposition, oppression and the denial of their ability to make a difference."<sup>144</sup>

This study responds to the intersecting claims of Polaski's study in the same terms as it does to Castelli's: From the perspective of 2 Cor 10–13, Paul the weak leader correctly excludes sophistic values and behaviors from those deserving to be called "Christian" and correctly valorizes sameness by calling believers to follow his example instead of the example of his sophist rivals.

### ***Background for Theses Five and Six:***

These theses contain three key assertions. Assertion 5(b) sets the rest of the study in a specific historical location that requires evidence and argument to establish its probability. Development of assertion 5(b) is consequently somewhat lengthy, and its exposition of sophistic culture provides sufficient background for arguing Thesis 6 in the body of this study. All discussion follows this statement of the assertions:

5(a) *Paul's rivals are Jewish Christians.* This study agrees with the numerous studies that affirm that 2 Cor 11.22 conclusively identifies Paul's rivals as Jewish Christians.

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid. 49

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. 47, 59

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 35. Polaski notes modern distinctions between "authority" and "power" as discussed, e.g., in Sally Purvis, *The Power of the Cross: Foundations for a Christian Feminist Ethic of Community* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1993).

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. 135

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 136

5(b) *They value and practice rhetorical eloquence and therefore may be called sophists. They are either precursors of or early participants in the Second Sophistic movement.*

6 *From Paul's perspective, the conflict between him and his rivals centers on incompatible understandings of authentic Christian spiritual leadership. Paul condemns his rivals because they think and lead as sophists more than as Christians and have consequently imported a different Jesus, spirit, and gospel into the Corinthian church.*

*Paul's Rivals Are Sophists: Rhetoric in the Situation at Corinth*

That Paul faced a sophistic culture in his mission to Corinth is not a new assertion from New Testament scholars. Nearly fifty years ago, Johannes Munck described the situation expressed in 1 Cor 1–4 as follows:<sup>145</sup>

Because [the Corinthian Christians] know only the popular philosophy and the professional orator or sophist, who understood how to captivate a Greek audience by his learning and eloquence, the outward form<sup>146</sup> is conclusive for them. The apostle, who has not forgotten the apprehension with which he began to preach about Christ in Corinth,<sup>147</sup> suddenly sees himself compared with a professional sophist who, with painted face and theatrical gestures, invites an audience of a thousand people to suggest to him a theme on which to improvise.

Even Walter Schmithals and Ulrich Wilkens recognized sophistic influence at Corinth, although neither of these nor Munck developed their observations.<sup>148</sup> But four recent doctoral studies of 1 Corinthians have probed the influence of Greco-Roman rhetoric in the church at Corinth: Stephen Pogoloff's *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (1992), Duane Litfin's *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation: An Investigation of 1 Corinthians 1–4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (1994), Michael A. Bullimore's *St. Paul's Theology of Rhetorical Style: An Examination of 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 in the Light of First Century Graeco-Roman Rhetorical Culture* (1995), and Bruce W. Winter's *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (1997). Both Litfin's and Winter's works are revisions of their dissertations, published a decade or more after

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<sup>145</sup> Munck, *Paul and Salvation* 153

<sup>146</sup> that is, of "certain elements of that [Hellenistic] milieu which falsify the Gospel": Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1959; ET of *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte* [Universitetsforlaget, Aarhus, Ejnar Munksgaard, Copenhagen, 1954], Frank Clarke, trans.) 152

<sup>147</sup> 1 Cor. 2.3–5

<sup>148</sup> Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971) 142: "Paul sets himself against the rhetorically elaborated eloquence which the Hellenist treasured in the highest manner and regarded as a necessary precondition for any genuine education." Wilkens, *Weisheit und Torheit* (J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1979) 505.



completion of their originals. In his published work, Winter shows that he was aware of and drew upon the work of Pogoloff and Litfin, but the works seem otherwise to have been completed independent of each other. It is therefore somewhat remarkable that all of them would be published in the same decade and be united in their rejection of the trend to understand 1 Cor. 1–4 through Philonic and Gnostic Wisdom hypotheses that had gained prominence as a result of Ulrich Wilcken’s *Weisheit und Torheit* and Walther Schmithal’s *Gnosticism in Corinth*. Apart from Bullimore’s thesis that Paul rejected only the florid Asianist style of Hellenistic rhetoric, the three other studies agree that when Paul protests that his proclamation was οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου (1 Cor. 1.17) and not ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων (2.5), he disavows any reliance on contemporary rhetorical practice for his mission among the Corinthians.<sup>149</sup>

#### Sophists at First- and Early Second-Century CE Corinth

Because Winter’s study benefits from Pogoloff’s and Litfin’s and because it argues more fully that Paul’s rivals were sophists, the following summary of aspects of the historical and rhetorical background to 2 Cor 10–13 depends on his work more than on the work of the others.<sup>150</sup> The present study could proceed directly to its rhetorical analysis without advancing

<sup>149</sup> Pogoloff’s survey of Greco-Roman rhetorical sources demonstrates that Hellenistic readers would understand the important phrase σοφία λόγου (1 Cor. 1.17; 2.1, 4, 13) to refer to rhetoric, specifically to “sophisticated speech”: *Logos and Sophia* 109; see survey in 108–127, 129–143. Laurence Welborn agrees: “The σοφία which Paul fears will undermine the community is nothing other than rhetoric,” “On the Discord in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 1–4 and Ancient Politics,” *JBL* 106 (1987) 102, cited by Pogoloff 111. Others concurring with this or a similar translation of the phrase include C. K. Barrett (“rhetorical skill”), *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* London and New York: Harper & Row, 1968 and A. & C. Black, 1971) 49; A. D. Litfin (“the dynamic of Greco-Roman rhetoric”), *St Paul’s Theology of Proclamation* (SNTSMS 79; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 188–192; Gordon D. Fee (*sophia* in 1 Cor. “reflects the Greek philosophical or sophist tradition,” adopting J. Munck’s position), *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 64–65, n. 79; and Bruce W. Winter (“rhetorical skill”), *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (SNTSMS 96; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 187.

<sup>150</sup> Pogoloff develops a notion of sophistic influence on the rhetorical situation at Corinth, pertinent to 1 Cor. 1–4, but he cites the standard studies that date the genesis of the Second Sophistic to a century after Paul (*Logos and Sophia* 65, 95). Litfin’s views cohere largely with those of Winter, except that Litfin does not use the catalog of primary materials he compiles to argue for the existence of the Second Sophistic movement during the time of Paul in Corinth as Winter does (*St Paul’s Theology of Proclamation* 187–201). Litfin wrongly excludes the ‘Diogenes speeches’ of Dio because he thinks they refer to 4<sup>th</sup>-century BCE Corinth, but Dio uses Diogenes “as a mouthpiece for critical comments” on 1<sup>st</sup>-century CE Roman Corinth (Litfin, *St Paul’s Theology* 146, n. 39; Winter, *Philo and Paul* 8–9; cf. C. P. Jones, *Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* 47). Others whom Winter cites as overlooking the Corinthian evidence for the existence and activity of sophists include these: George A. Kennedy, who uses Paul’s letters for studies in rhetorical criticism, but who “makes no mention of their witness to the sophistic movement in Corinth during an important period of its development” (both *Classical Rhetoric* (London: Croom Helm, 1980) 130–132 and *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) esp. chap. 7; C. P. Jones, who wrote chapters on cities in Dio’s world, did not write on Corinth, because

this historical and rhetorical construction, and its analysis could arguably be completed without risking any kind of specific historical reconstruction. But I have chosen to acknowledge the reconstruction that on the whole lurks in my mind while analyzing the rhetoric of 2 Cor 10–13. I believe that its main assertions are probable and that they allow the rhetorical analysis that follows to reveal a sharper, fuller image of the transactions occurring between Paul and his converts at Corinth.<sup>151</sup>

Winter first argues that we have substantial primary sources showing that the Second Sophistic movement was already underway in Alexandria (three sources) and Corinth (six sources) during the times of Philo and Paul. The sources that indicate that sophists were influential in Pauline Corinth are these: (1) two orations of the former sophist turned anti-sophist Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 6 and 8, the “Diogenes speeches,” which describe sophistic activity in Corinth during his exile from Rome, c. 89–96 CE; (2) the Corinthian oration of the noted sophist and pupil of Dio, Favorinus, the Roman Hellenophile who experienced both the highest acclamation and the fickle disparaging of the Corinthians; (3) an epigraphic description of Herodes Atticus, famous sophist and benefactor of Corinth and centerpiece of Philostratus’ account of the Second Sophistic in his *Lives of the Sophists*; (4) Plutarch’s “slight evidence” from his visits to Corinth that indicates the status enjoyed by Corinthian sophists; (5) Epictetus’ familiarity with Corinth and his discussion with a rhetoric student from Corinth that inform us about conditions at the end of the first century CE; (6) Paul’s Corinthian letters, which themselves point to sophistic activity in the city and in the church.<sup>152</sup> Except for Paul and his opponents, all these were literary men of public standing whose lives were intertwined. Opponents of the sophistic movement were Epictetus, Dio, Plutarch, and Paul; proponents were Favorinus, Herodes Atticus, and the Jewish Christian ministers whom the Corinthian church

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he rightly credits Dio’s oration on Corinth to Favorinus, Dio’s pupil; J. Murphy-O’Connor collected literary and epigraphic evidence, but he lacks Epictetus and any comments about the sophistic movement (*St. Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, Wilmington: Glazier, 1983). G. Anderson, *The Second Sophistic* (205) comments that “Christianity harboured a suspicion that anything that could be regarded as worldly wisdom was foolishness in the sight of God.” Anderson cites 1 Cor. but does not mention rhetoric or the sophistic in connection with 1 and 2 Cor.

<sup>151</sup> If readers find any parts of this reconstruction implausible, I invite them to evaluate the rhetorical analysis of the following chapters apart from those parts of the reconstruction that they may find unconvincing.

<sup>152</sup> *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 7–8

embraced after Paul left Corinth. Except for Epictetus (and perhaps Paul), all were trained in Greek rhetoric.<sup>153</sup>

Winter sets for himself these tests to ensure that the portrait of sophistic activity and culture at Corinth truly pertains to the church issues expressed in 1 Corinthians 1–4, 9, and 2 Corinthians 10–13: (1) that the strife (ἔρις) and jealousy (ζήλος) expressed in 1 Cor. 1.11 and 3.3 “are clearly related to the sophistic movement”; (2) that Paul’s manner of ministry, according to 1 Cor. 2.1–5, answers to “the conventions of sophists ‘coming’ to a city and operating in it”; (3) that he critiques the sophistic movement in 1 Cor. 1–4; (4) that “his own ministry has been critiqued by those trained within the sophistic tradition using its canons in 2 Corinthians 10–13”; and (5) that his response to opponents in 2 Cor 10–13 shows that he is arguing with “Christian orators or sophists who are now within the Christian community.”<sup>154</sup>

#### *Five Witnesses to Sophistic Activity in First-Century Corinth*

From these, as well as other contemporaneous sources, arises a portrait of sophistic culture. Epictetus’ essay “On personal adornment” (Περὶ καλλωπισμοῦ) deals with the personal appearance, public presence, and career expectations of a young rhetoric student from Corinth. The student was overdressed, with coiffed hair, heavy use of jewelry, and body hair plucked for audience appeal. Epictetus argues that true excellence consists of virtues, not hair, jewelry, clothing, or pandering to an audience; and he points out that a hairless body would be a liability if one seeks the highest office. This exchange indicates careers open to students of rhetoric later in life: They could become (in an ascending order of importance) an ‘administrator of the city’ (ἀστυνόμος), ‘the superintendent of the *ephebi*’ (ἐφήβαρχος), ‘a magistrate’ (στρατηγός), or ‘superintendent of the games’ (ἀγωνοθέτης); and Epictetus reminds him that his son could become a ‘fine citizen’ (καλὸς πολίτης), ‘a senator’ (βουλευτής), and ‘an orator’ (ρήτωρ).<sup>155</sup> As evidence from Epictetus and from E. L. Bowie’s study “The Importance of Sophists” indicate, sophists came from “the powerful and wealthy families.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid. 114–115

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. 13–14

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. 115–117, 119, 121; Epictetus III.1.1

<sup>156</sup> Winter, *Philo and Paul* 116–121; Bowie, *Yale Classical Studies* 27 (1982), 30

In “To those who read and discuss for the purpose of display” (Πρὸς τοὺς ἀναγιγνώσκοντας καὶ διαλεγόμενους ἐπιδεικτικῶς, 3.23), Epictetus accurately depicts sophists’ activities, including declamations.<sup>157</sup> Winter finds Epictetus’ purpose to be either setting boundaries for declamation by philosophers or attacking sophistic declamation, convincing philosophers “of the inappropriateness of the sophists’ methods for [philosophical] discourse.” Epictetus (#33-34) refers to four discourse types, or styles (χαρακτήρ): exhortation (προτρεπτικός), refutation (ἐλεγκτικός), instruction (διδασκαλικός), and display, or declamation (ἐπιδεικτικός). He notes that a crowd hardly attends to exhortation, seeking happiness in the “wrong place,” a large hall used for declamations (#35).<sup>158</sup> “To achieve [happiness] must a thousand benches be placed, and the prospective audience be invited, and you put on a fancy cloak, or a dainty mantle, and mount the speaker’s stand, and paint a word-picture of how Achilles died?” Contrasting sophists from true philosophers,<sup>159</sup> Epictetus concludes, “Is this what listening to philosophy amounts to?” (#38), expecting a vigorous “No!” in response. Epictetus asks why he should listen to a declamation (ἐπίδειξις), and he receives no answer, except “but praise me” (ἀλλ’ ἐπαινεσόν με), which means “Bravo!” or “Marvellous!” (#23-24, 32). Such praise is the task of disciples, or students, and sophists are commonly critiqued because they clamor for such praise (#9).<sup>160</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Winter (121–122) cites these reasons why this discourse has been largely overlooked for its evidence about sophistic declamation: because (1) Epictetus does not refer to any sophists by name, though he does mention philosophers and orators (Epic. 3.5, 20, 27, 30, 38; Stanton, “Sophists and Philosophers” 358, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> cent CE: philosophers may be referred to as “orators” but not as “sophists”); (2) the Loeb trans. by Oldfather obscures: it renders ἐπιδεικτικός as ‘display,’ not ‘declamation’; and ‘discussion,’ not as the preferable ‘discourse’ or better ‘lecture’ (see #23; there Epictetus uses διαλέγειν, ‘to discuss,’ when the following section explains it as ἐπιδείκνυμι. Philostratus uses διαλέγειν to refer to delivery of a formal διάλεξις (*Lives of the Sophists*, 604); (3) “because of the deliberate distancing of the philosophers from the sophists,” philosophers didn’t “disparage rhetoric even if they did criticize its misuse by their opponents,” cf. Epic. 2.23.46. So Cicero: philosophers are to benefit from oratory and orators/sophists from philosophy. Also Seneca the Elder acknowledges the value of declamations at Rome (J. Fairweather, *Seneca the Elder* (Cambridge, 1981) 118–119, 320–323.) Winter notes, “Even philosophers were forced to respond to audience demands” (122).

<sup>158</sup> Russell, *Greek Declamation* 76, n. 14: Declamations were attended by 1,000 or more in large, splendid halls; so Lucian, *De domo*, I.58; also Dio, *Or.* 32.8–9.

<sup>159</sup> Winter 122–123. Here are Winter’s reasons that Epictetus refers to sophists, not philosophers: (1) philosophers did not send invitation; sophists did (#27; also Aristides, *Or.* 51.29); (2) sophists dressed elaborately; philosophers didn’t; (3) declamations did not lead to changed conduct in listeners; they only judged the performance; (4) Epictetus’ conclusion: “Is this what listening to a philosopher amounts to?” requires a “No!” But such judgment (although with an affirmative response expected by the speaker) of the performance was what it meant to listen to a sophist declaim.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 124. Epictetus (3.23.10–11) describes a sophist’s soliciting praise: “The other day, when your audience gathered rather coolly, and did not shout applause, you walked out of the hall in low spirits. And again the other day, when you were received with applause, you walked around and asked everybody, ‘What did you think of me?’ ‘It

The 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> orations of Dio of Prusa (c. 40–112 CE) reflect the sophistic movement in Corinth in the late first century. Dio, under Domitian, is exiled (c. 89-96) and writes with the persona of the founder of the Cynic sect, Diogenes of Sinope (c. 400-325 BCE),<sup>161</sup> but he describes the Corinth of his own day.<sup>162</sup> *Or.* 8, “On Virtue,” describes sophistic activity during the Isthmian games in Corinth. Dio seeks to give Corinth wisdom, but they reject his treatments for “folly, wickedness and intemperance”; no one would listen to him (#8). Through Diogenes’ voice, Dio contrasts the superficiality of the sophists with his aim of steering people to virtue (8.9). Sophists rival each other, as do their students and disciples, sometimes expressed in professional quarrels of factional and political or intercity rivalries.<sup>163</sup> Officials, even the emperor, could intervene because of, in Bowersock’s words, “the very eminence of the sophists.”<sup>164</sup> In his first discourse on kingship, Dio uses ζηλωτής to indicate the degree of commitment involved in being a μαθητής of a sophist.<sup>165</sup> Dio combines the two terms to characterize the ideal king’s devotion to Zeus. But directed toward sophists, this zealous discipleship results in “great personal δόξα for sophists who, like ‘gorgeous peacocks’ are ‘lifted a lot on the wings of their fame (δόξα) and their disciples.’”<sup>166</sup> Dio, the anti-sophist, does not recruit disciples, because he, like Socrates, denies having anything to teach (Cf. *Or.* 12.13). Dio similarly critiques forensic orators who pervert justice through their arguments.<sup>167</sup> They stroll the temple precincts during the games, not to advise potential clients but in order to present

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was marvelous, sir, I swear by my life.’ ‘How did I render that particular passage?’ ‘Which one?’ ‘Where I drew a picture of Pan and the Nymphs?’ ‘It was superb.’”

<sup>161</sup> Winter 126–127: Literature about this device in Dio’s orations: C. P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard U. Press, 1978) 47, 49; also *LCL*, vol. I, p. 249. But A. D. Litfin, *St Paul’s Theology of Proclamation* (p. 146, n. 39), misinterprets this device and takes the persona of Diogenes as not a persona but Diogenes’ voice and the descriptions as of the Corinth of Diogenes’ time.

<sup>162</sup> so J. Murphy-O’Connor, *St Paul’s Corinth* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1983) 94-95 re *Or.* 6.3-4; Winter 127.

<sup>163</sup> Winter 128; cf. Bowersock’s *Greek Sophists*, “Professional Quarrels”

<sup>164</sup> Winter 128; Bowersock, *Greek Sophists* 100; he discusses the social status of sophists at 32-36, and Bowie’s careful analysis of sophists in “The Importance of Sophists” confirms and amends Bowersock’s discussion.

<sup>165</sup> Winter 130. cf. Dio *Or.* 55.3

<sup>166</sup> Winter 130; cf. Dio *Or.* 12.5 and G. Anderson, *Philostratus: Biography and Belles Lettres in the Third Century A.D.* (London: Croom Helm, 1986) 48: “the prestige of the sophist began with his pupils.”

<sup>167</sup> Winter 130. στρέφειν here for “pervert justice” is used of a wrestler trying to avoid an opponent and metaphorically of arguments; therefore, wrestling with justice by trying to avoid it.

*controversia*, speeches on legal topics for display, referred to in Quintilian and papyri.<sup>168</sup> Orators engaging in *suasoria* or epideictic<sup>169</sup> also declaim and engage in rhetorical tricks, θαῦμα.

Dio's Corinth is flush with sophists, orators, and poets. Rivalry abounds among sophists and their 'disciples.' Because of their educational prowess, sophists thought they knew more than others. They are pictured most clearly at the Isthmian games, *Or.* 8.9, but also as part of everyday life in Corinth, *Or.* 6.21. They swell with pride when the crowd acclaims them but shrivel up when not praised (#32–33).<sup>170</sup> Dio's final words, through the persona of Diogenes, have him describe the sophists, raising "their din, like frogs in a pond when they do not see the water-snake" (8.36).

Favorinus of Arles (c. CE 80–150) was from the Roman equestrian order and a leading pupil of Dio Chrysostom.<sup>171</sup> He visited Corinth three times, and his Corinthian oration (*Or.* 37) was delivered on his final visit. On his first visit he had "impressed the δῆμος and magistrates with his eloquence (λόγος)" and won their friendship (#1, 9). On his second visit, the Corinthians tried to get him to stay and erected a bronze statue of him, placed prominently in their library, to feature him as a model for Corinthian youth. The inscription described him as "the noblest among Greeks" (ἄριστος Ἑλλήνων, #22), "high praise indeed for a Roman," Winter notes.<sup>172</sup> Favorinus adopted Greek ways religiously (#25), at great economic and political cost to himself. He studied oratory in Athens and athletics in Sparta, persuaded many barbarians to study Greek wisdom (#26), and believed the gods had equipped him to be an example (παράδειγμα) to all; yet his statue was overthrown, for no clear reason (#20).<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> referred to in *P.Oxy.* 2190. Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.4.33; 4.2.94, 97

<sup>169</sup> despite LCL's translation 'jugglers'; θαυματοποιεῖν is used of orators who 'strain for the marvellous'; Winter 131.

<sup>170</sup> Winter 132

<sup>171</sup> For more on Favorinus, see Jones, *Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*, 58, 78; Winter's "Favorinus" in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting* (Eerdmans, 1993) 196–205; also M. W. Gleason, "Favorinus and his Statue," chap. 1 in *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. 133

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. 134. The removal of his statue baffled Favorinus, who saw the act as, in Winter's words, "an affront to 'the Greeks' and their sense of right, which was something he could not bear from a city renowned for justice" (136). Other cities were employing him in embassies and honoring him with statues, but the Corinthians "in effect banished him" by removing his statue (#16, 37). He knew of no charge against him. Loeb translator H. Lamar Crosby links Favorinus' reference to Aphrodite to the possible charge of immorality [Dio Chrysostom IV (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946) 1 and *Or.* 37, #33, n. 7]. Philostratus says he was charged with adultery with wife of a consul (*Lives of the Sophists* 489–90). Litfin observes that the Corinthians "had not the slightest compunction about standing in judgment on the orators who came before them" but attributes the judgment against

Favorinus' Corinthian Oration (*Or.* 37) witnesses to the Corinthians' embrace of the sophistic movement not long after the time of Paul. They—including women and children—received Favorinus' oratory with great enthusiasm during his first two visits (#1, 8–9, 33). Litfin says of this evidence that the Corinthians “loved eloquence, lionized its practitioners, and were concerned that their own youth excel in it,” an attitude “broadly based among the Corinthian populace.”<sup>174</sup> Part of this embrace of sophistry included participation in rivalries among leading sophists. Philostratus describes Favorinus' prolonged professional quarrels with one sophist Polemo of Laodicea. The city of Ephesus favored Favorinus, and Smyrna favored Polemo. Bowersock identifies these as rivals for pre-eminence in Asia Minor.<sup>175</sup> When the pair went to Rome, the rivalry intensified, and their speeches were filled with an invective that overshadowed the question of the truth of their claims. Philostratus shows that the rivalry was sustained and intensified by students of the sophists and by their appreciative listeners of high social standing—in Rome including “consulars and sons of consulars.” Having such partisans increased the reputation of both sophists, as well as that of their followers.<sup>176</sup> Beyond this specific rivalry, Philostratus identifies rivalry generally as an identifying mark of a true sophist: “When people called Favorinus a sophist, the mere fact that he had quarreled with a sophist was evidence enough.” He also cites Hesiod, who observes that one always competes with others in same craft.<sup>177</sup> Philostratus does not fault sophistic rivalry itself, which can be forgiven, because “human nature holds that the love of glory never grows old.”<sup>178</sup> He censures instead the invective that this specific rivalry produced, which, in Bowersock's words, “kindles the keenest envy and malice in the hearts of wise men.”<sup>179</sup>

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Favorinus not to his rhetoric but to his personal conduct and poor relations with the Emperor Hadrian (*St Paul's Theology* 146).

<sup>174</sup> Winter 135, citing Litfin, *St Paul's Theology of Proclamation* 144–145. Other values of Favorinus' *Or.* 37 include these: It 1) evidences the degree to which an orator could be praised and why: Favorinus masters Greek rhetoric to the point that he inspires Greeks and their children (#26); 2) shows the extent to which Greek culture became *de rigueur* in Rome: Favorinus refers to his serving as role model for Romans—encouraging them to value Greek *paideia*—and how he had taken “Rome by storm” when he spoke there in Greek, acclaimed even by those could not understand Greek; 3) shows that Greek *paideia* was exported to peoples beyond the Romans: Favorinus says that he is a paradigm also for Celts and barbarians, who also can attain Greek *paideia* (#27).

<sup>175</sup> Winter 136, citing Bowersock, *Greek Sophists* 90; Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 490–491

<sup>176</sup> Bowersock, *Greek Sophists* 91

<sup>177</sup> Winter 137; *Lives of the Sophists* 491, citing Hesiod, *Works and Days* 25

<sup>178</sup> Winter 137; Philostratus, *Lives* 491

<sup>179</sup> *Greek Sophists* 91; cited by Winter 137

The fourth witness to the first-century sophistic movement at Corinth is the most eminent of Favorinus' pupils, Herodes Atticus (c. 101–177 CE), the sophist and benefactor specifically of Corinth. For Philostratus, who treated him at greatest length in his *Lives of the Sophist*, Herodes is at the center of the Second Sophistic.<sup>180</sup> He was a wealthy benefactor from Athens who donated, among other things, the theatre at Athens and the roofed theatre at Corinth. The high esteem in which Corinthian leaders held Herodes is indicated by the *boulē's* inscription on the statue of his wife Regilla that Herodes gave to be displayed in Corinth. The inscription reads, in part: [Ἰ]ΑΤΤΙΚΟῦ Ἡρώδης μέγας ὡπασεν ἕξοχος ἄλλων / [παντ]οίης ἀρετῆς εἰς ἄκρον εἰκομενος—“It was given by great Herodes Atticus, pre-eminent above others, who had attained the peak of every kind of virtue.” Winter puts this praise in context: “No other extant Corinthian inscriptions of the first half or middle of the second century surpass the superlatives heaped upon Herodes.”<sup>181</sup> Philostratus says that “youths from all parts of the world hung on his lips, and they flocked to Athens in their desire to hear his eloquence.”<sup>182</sup> Such testimonials witness to the fame and status of sophists among Corinthians. According to Philostratus, Herodes enjoyed and was not the least embarrassed by any praise he received, including that of being counted among the ten Attic Orators. He thought of himself as better than Andocides, the Attic orator that Greek and Roman critics accused of stylistic faults. Herodes' own *synkrisis* of himself with Andocides was judged ἀστειότατος (most pretty, most elegant and refined) by Philostratus.<sup>183</sup>

Herodes had many rivalries and loyal students, among whom his most distinguished student Amphicles led in the humiliation of the sophist Philagrus of Cilicia.<sup>184</sup> In one instance, Herodes' students baited Amphicles to declaim on a topic on which he had declaimed elsewhere and even published it. Amphicles began speaking and continued until opposing students began reading the declamation aloud.<sup>185</sup> They laugh and he raged, because such recycling of declamations breached the rules of declaiming in Athens, and the students' response was typical of an audience to a such a recycling. “These incidents . . . aimed to humiliate and drive out other sophists and illustrate the lengths to which followers would go to gain victory through the permanent humiliation of

<sup>180</sup> Winter 137, citing Anderson, *Philostratus* 108; and *Lives of the Sophists* 545–566

<sup>181</sup> Winter 138–139; cf. J. H. Kent, *Corinth: Inscriptions 1926–1960* (Princeton: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1966) no. 128 (above) and, for comparison, nos. 226,

<sup>182</sup> *Lives*, 562; referring to Herodes' style of oratory, 564–565; cited by Winter 139

<sup>183</sup> *Lives*, 564

<sup>184</sup> Winter 140; *Lives* 203, 578–579



rival sophists. . . . Herodes Atticus epitomizes all that a virtuoso rhetorician should be. . . . Of his success as a declaimer there is no doubt. Furthermore he was well born and had vast financial resources. . . . E. L. Bowie’s discussion of the status of sophists surely finds its focus in this man who may rightly be called wise, powerful, and well-born.”<sup>186</sup>

Plutarch of Chaeronea, Greece (c. 50–120 CE), corroborates Dio’s observations of the presence of orators and sophists at the Isthmian games and their high social status in *Quaestiones Convivales* (99–116 CE) and *Moralia*.<sup>187</sup> Plutarch visited Corinth often, especially during the games, having as a friend the three-times *agonothete* Antonius Sospis, along with many other friends of high status at Corinth. His *Moralia* 675d, 723 records two meals where leading officials dined with orators.<sup>188</sup> Plutarch further illuminates the relations between teacher-sophists and their students. He mentions a student’s presenting his award from an oration at the games to his teacher, Herodes Atticus, as a special honor to the teacher, who accepted the honor and returned the palm frond and plaited wreath award.<sup>189</sup> Such an honor recognizes that the teacher was responsible ultimately for the prize. Beyond describing the activity of sophists, Plutarch, like Dio and Philo,<sup>190</sup> criticizes them often, noting that some orators and sophists are “led by ‘repute and ambition’ (δόξα καὶ φιλοτιμία), others by ‘pecuniary interests’ (μισθός), and still others . . . [by] rivalries for political supremacy.” Plutarch contrasts sophists against philosophers, showing the former to “be motivated by selfish ambition and to care little for their audience or their disciples’ welfare.”<sup>191</sup>

In summary, Dio and Plutarch, according to Bowersock, performed on “the eve of the most colourful period of the Second Sophistic; and although not a part of it, their lives adumbrated many of its pronounced characteristics”: They performed imperial service, addressed magistrates and citizens of cities, and socialized among the elite of the East and emperors of Rome.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Winter 141

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.; Bowie, “The Importance of Sophists,” *Yale Classical Studies* 27 (1982) 50

<sup>187</sup> Winter 141; *Moralia* 676c, 723–724f.; cf. recent treatments of Plutarch by C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); D. A. Russell, *Plutarch* (London: Duckworth, 1972); also Bowersock, *Greek Sophists* 110–117.

<sup>188</sup> Winter 142

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. 143

<sup>190</sup> Winter treats Philo while discussing the witnesses to sophistic activity in the Roman East, particularly at Alexandria. Of greatest value to this study is Philo’s contrast between sophists and their opponents in *Det.* 33–34. See discussion below.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., also citing *Moralia* 131a; Stanton, “Sophists and Philosophers” 351–353; Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* 14

<sup>192</sup> Winter 143; Bowersock, *Greek Sophists* 112

Epictetus shows a student of rhetoric preoccupied with sophistic concerns in Corinth. Dio and Plutarch present orators and athletes as major public figures in Corinth, with orators more influential. Orators were highly esteemed, as the example of Favorinus shows. He was enthusiastically accepted by all levels in society and became the paradigm for all peoples in Corinth—Greeks, Romans, and barbarians. Both he and Herodes were highly praised in public statues and inscriptions, signifying probably the opinion of the city fathers. Dio notes jealousy among sophists, and Philostratus documents such rivalry in detail, in the cases of Favorinus and Herodes Atticus. Plutarch’s “table talk” indicates that orators and sophists had ready access to Corinthian upper society.<sup>193</sup>

*Paul and 1 Corinthians as a Witness to Sophistic Activity in Corinth*

Winter argues that 1 Corinthians 2.1–5 and 1 Corinthians 9 defend Paul’s consciously anti-sophistic mission to Corinth. The former passage expresses his anti-sophistic coming to Corinth, while the latter expresses the non-sophistic basis of his ongoing work in Corinth.<sup>194</sup> These readings, as well as this study’s reading of 2 Corinthians 10—13, presume that these texts respond to the expectation of some influential believers at Corinth that Paul would work among them as a sophist.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Winter 144

<sup>194</sup> Regarding Paul’s coming, Winter 147–161; regarding his ongoing work there, Winter 162–176

<sup>195</sup> Sharing this presumption, E. A. Judge claims that Paul would have been seen as a sophist “in his social position at any rate,” on the basis of Judge’s study of the names of persons appearing in Paul’s letters. Judge counts some forty persons as financial supporters of Paul, patrons who remained in one location but contributed toward Paul’s itinerant work, and another forty as Paul’s professional following, those who traveled and worked with him. “The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community: Part II,” *Journal of Religious History* 1 (1960) 130–134. This quotation elaborates the sense in which Judge labels Paul a sophist (135–136): “What other touring preacher established a set of corporate societies independent of himself and yet linked to him by a constant traffic of delegations? . . . [Paul] is always anxious about the transmission of the *logos* and the acquisition of true *gnosis*. . . . The Christian faith, therefore, as Paul expounds it, belongs with the doctrines of the philosophical schools rather than with the esoteric rituals of the mystery religions. . . . A study of Paul’s peers and rivals would also sharpen the point. [Paul attacks] points of academic belief and moral practice [, while] the religious activities of the Christian societies, the organization and conduct of the cult, are only of minor concern. Paul frequently denounces his opponents as sophists in the most pejorative sense, and in the same connection vehemently dissociates himself from their methods. Paradoxically, all of Paul’s protests about not having professional qualifications or using the accepted methods of persuasion imply the opposite. They make it clear for one thing that he was himself attacked on the same charges that he brought against his competitors. . . . [I]t can be shown that he only refused [financial maintenance] to make a point, that he always insisted on his right to support, and did in fact accept it in the normal way where it was not an issue. . . . [H]is direct renunciations of sophistry are explicitly made in order to cast the opprobrium of professionalism on to his opponents, and lead not to the claim that he was incompetent, but, ultra-sophistically, to the claim that his skill was by special endowment and, therefore, in fact superior to theirs. The final answer to this question lies, of course, in the literary appraisal of Paul’s own work, which would easily demonstrate that his style

### Paul Flouts Sophistic Conventions: 1 Corinthians 2.1–5 and 9

A sophist in the first or second centuries CE could win high honors from a city if he established himself in both *politeia* and *paideia*. Citizens would of course expect the sophist to reciprocate by benefiting the city by being politically useful in an embassy and providing benefactions to the city. Cities would then, in turn, grant citizenship to such sophists.<sup>196</sup> Establishing himself required a sophist to come to the city in a conventional way. On the initial visit, the sophist would demonstrate his eloquence in a preliminary way. If he was successful, the citizens would endorse him, and the door would be open to his benefiting the city and benefiting from it. Following are examples of sophists visiting Corinth and other cities:

On his third visit to Corinth, Favorinus reminds the Corinthians of his initial visit and the sample of his eloquence that established friendly relations among him, the *demos*, and magistrates.<sup>197</sup> D. A. Russell cites Aristides' initial visit to Smyrna, c. 176 CE: People come out to greet him, and the most distinguished young men offer themselves as his students; a lecture is planned and invitations issued. But before the scheduled time, Aristides dreams that he should declaim earlier, at 10 o'clock that day. The earlier time is advertised and his "impromptu" appearance hastily arranged. The council chamber is packed. He delivers his first speech sitting down, but the second—the declamation—standing up, and the audience receives his speeches and himself enthusiastically. Aristides therefore triumphed over a rival Egyptian sophist declaiming the same day.

Philostratus describes the coming of three sophists to Athens. On his first visit to Athens, Polemo broke convention in several ways: He did not give an encomium, which would have been easy with Athens as the topic. He did not deliver a lengthy oration about his own renown—the *διάλεξις*—which was customary among sophists in order to win favor for their declamations.<sup>198</sup> His neglect was attributed to arrogance, as was his declaiming immediately after agreeing on the topic, when sophists usually took a day after the naming of the topic to prepare

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possesses a versatility and force, unconventional maybe by the standards of professional rhetoricians, but so effective as to rank him as an orator and writer of rare distinction."

<sup>196</sup> Winter 149

<sup>197</sup> *Or.* 37.1 and Winter 149

<sup>198</sup> Winter 150; also Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 535; Russell, *Greek Declamation* 79; E. Anderson, *Philostratus* 45

their declamations.<sup>199</sup> According to Philostratus, Polemo succeeded in spite of violating various conventions.

But Philagrus of Cilicia, a reputed sophist, failed to impress Athenians because of the effects of his quarrel with Herodes Atticus. While he first elicited their disapproval because he digressed at length in his encomium to the citizens in order to lament his late wife, he caused his coming to Athens to fail by delivering as an original oration one that had been published elsewhere. As mentioned above, while delivering this oration, Herodes' disciples read aloud from their copy of the published speech while Philagrus was yet delivering it. These acts tarnished his reputation irreversibly. Philostratus says further that he had unbecoming appearance and a weak voice, which Athenians would condemn, because they insisted on an appropriate "presence" (ὑπόκρισις). Philagrus later became the chair of rhetoric in Rome, but despite this glory, he continued to be remembered in Athens for his professional misconduct and humiliation.<sup>200</sup> Alexander of Seleucia succeeded in his coming to Athens because, according to Philostratus, his διάλεξις praised Athens, and his ἀπολογία flattered the Athenians by explaining why he had not visited earlier.<sup>201</sup>

Dio's turn-of-the-century 47<sup>th</sup> *Oration*, delivered after his return home from exile, shows what reception a famous orator could expect to receive when visiting great cities of the empire. Responding to the suggestion that he abandon his beleaguered efforts to complete the campaign to beautify his city, Prusa, Dio visualizes the option of traveling as an orator to cities where he would be "escorted with much enthusiasm and éclat (θιλοτιμία)," his hosts grateful for his visit, begging to be addressed and advised (λέγειν και συμβουλεύειν), flocking at his doors from early morning, all without his "having incurred any expense or having made any contribution."<sup>202</sup> But despite having experienced such favor earlier in his life, Dio distances himself from the sophistic conventions that elicited such favor from the leading citizens of major cities. Dio warns his audience not to expect an extraordinary or remarkable discourse (as sophists would strive to provide) and not "one composed to produce a kind of pleasure or to exhibit beauty or σοφία."<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> *Lives of the Sophists* 535; Russell, *Greek Declamation* 80

<sup>200</sup> Winter 151; *Lives of the Sophists* 579–580

<sup>201</sup> Winter 151; *Lives of the Sophists* 572

<sup>202</sup> Winter 151; Dio, *Or.* 47.22. Epictetus 3.23.23 mentions the convention of inviting a speaker into a private home for a performance.

<sup>203</sup> *Or.* 47.1

He used to be able to declaim, to deceive “the public and all the cities,” but he no longer remembers how. Instead, he promises an “amateurish and commonplace” speech, fitted to the concerns of the speech—overcoming lately developing resistance to his Prusan beautification campaign<sup>204</sup>—and not to the largely entertainment aims of sophistic declamation.<sup>205</sup> Dio’s “feigned loss of memory concerning declamation” was thus a calculated tactic in his invective, focusing attention on the absurdity of his opponents and “denying the audience what they most desired from this golden-tongued orator: a declamation.”<sup>206</sup> In his Corinthian letters, Paul likewise has reasons for not expressing his message in sophistic rhetoric.

Several expressions in 1 Corinthians 2.1–5 bear important rhetorical senses that fit well with the hypothesis that Paul responded to sophistic culture in this discourse.<sup>207</sup> First is the language of his coming to Corinth. Verse 1 does not focus on the simple fact that Paul arrived in Corinth as much as it stresses “the stance he adopted when he arrived”:<sup>208</sup> Κάγω ἐλθὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ἦλθον οὐ καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας καταγγέλλων ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ. Some of the rhetorical potential in this verse is realized by Hans Conzelmann’s translation of part of the v.: “When I came to you I did not come in such a way as to distinguish myself in eloquence or wisdom<sup>209</sup> [while proclaiming to you the witness/mystery<sup>210</sup> of God].” With this

<sup>204</sup> Ibid. 47.8

<sup>205</sup> Winter 152, citing and quoting B. F. Harris, “Bithynia: Roman Sovereignty and the Survival of Hellenism,” *ANRW* II.7.1 (1980) 892. Cf. also Jones, *Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* 113.

<sup>206</sup> Winter 153. Aristides similarly refuses to declaim because the young men of the city in ingratitude have neglected his lectures: *Or.* 33.24–25

<sup>207</sup> Following Winter 153–154. Others Winter cites who see in this passage Paul’s response to one or more aspects of Greco-Roman rhetoric include C. M. Horne (“The Power of Paul’s Preaching,” *Bulletin of the Evangelical Society* 8 (1965) 112, 115), Paul Marshall (*Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul’s Relations with the Corinthians* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1987] 389), E. A. Judge (“Paul’s Boasting in Relation to Contemporary Professional Practice,” *Australian Biblical Review* 16 [1968] 38), J. Weiss (*Der erste Korintherbriefe* [repr. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977] 51), T. H. Lim (“Not in Persuasive Words of Wisdom, but in Demonstration of the Spirit and Power,” *Novum Testamentum* 29.2 [1987] 147–148), Lars Hartman (“Some Remarks on 1 Cor. 2.1–5,” *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 39 [1974] 117), and H. D. Betz (*Der Apostel Paulus and die sokratische Tradition: eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner ‘Apologie’ 2 Korinther 10–13* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1972] 55–57).

<sup>208</sup> Winter 156

<sup>209</sup> taking καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν with ἦλθον and not καταγγέλλων, so that *kata* refers to the manner of Paul’s coming—“not with the superiority of eloquence or wisdom” (cf. *BAGD* #5.b.b). Cf. Conzelmann, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, ET (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 53, n. 2.

<sup>210</sup> The choice between μυστήριον and μαρτύριον is close. Nestle’s 26<sup>th</sup> reads the former, while the 25<sup>th</sup> edition read the latter. Gordon D. Fee favors the latter on textual grounds, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 63, and it accords well with the rhetorical significance of the passage. The sophist’s μάρτυς—the witness of his successful lifestyle (cf. Philo, *Det.* 33)—vouched for the truth of his method. Paul, of course, proclaims a far different witness, that of God’s power through the crucified Messiah (1 Cor. 2.1c–2).

rendering, καθ' ὑπεροχὴν is connected with ἦλθον rather than with καταγγέλλων, and κατά refers to the manner of Paul's coming. ὑπεροχὴν is rendered variously: by E. A. Judge as [not with] “‘excessive’ reliance on speech or wisdom”;<sup>211</sup> by Aristotle as the superiority men feel based on γένος, δύναμις, and ἀρετή,<sup>212</sup> a sense well fitted both to this clause—“not with superiority of speech or wisdom”—and to the immediately preceding context of 1.26, which notes how few Corinthian believers were persons of high social status. This sense expresses Paul's rejection of a sophistic coming to Corinth, with all of its performance expectations. While Dio notes how (possibly Corinthian) sophists sought the esteem of the crowds as eloquent men of superior knowledge, Paul seeks nothing of the kind.<sup>213</sup> Γὰρ at the beginning of 2.2 indicates that v. 2 supports the claim of v. 1, in this case explaining why Paul did not rely on oratory to fulfill his purpose for coming to Corinth: Paul limits his communication with them to a single topic, Jesus, the crucified Messiah. Like Dio in *Or.* 47, Paul here indicates that his speech is fitted to its topic, which does not fit with the self-display characteristic of sophists.

The contrast with sophistic behavior continues in v. 3. Paul characterizes his coming—ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ καὶ ἐν φόβῳ καὶ ἐν τρόμῳ πολλῶ—in terms opposite those of sophists: Philo contrasts the ἰσχὺς of the sophists against the ἀσθένεια “at this sort of thing” of those without rhetorical training.<sup>214</sup> Sophists were presumed to exude confidence, forcefulness, and persuasiveness.<sup>215</sup> Peter Marshall labels the series of adjectives in v. 3 the “trilogy of shame” and aligns them with the rivals' criticisms of Paul as servile, weak, and contemptible in 2 Cor 10.1, 10.<sup>216</sup> Paul clearly did not project the characteristics of an orator that would elicit cries, as Epictetus described, of “Bravo!” or “Marvelous!”<sup>217</sup> Verse 4 contains terms (underlined) common in the semantic field of rhetoric: Paul's speech and proclamation were not ἐν πειθοῖ σοφίας ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμει. πειθῶ often denotes “persuasiveness” and appears often in definitions

<sup>211</sup> “The Reaction Against Classical Education in the New Testament,” *Journal of Christian Education Papers* 77 (7, 1983) 11.

<sup>212</sup> *Rhet.* 2.2.7. See other comments below on 1 Cor. 1.26–28.

<sup>213</sup> *Or.* 6.21; Winter 157

<sup>214</sup> *Det.* 35

<sup>215</sup> Winter offers an example: “Philostratus describes the late first-century sophist Scopelian as one who argued ‘with great skill’ in his *διάλεξις*, and then was ‘even more impressive and vigorous’ when he stood to declaim. He did not need time to compose the suggested topic but began immediately in an ‘extremely melodious voice’ with ‘charming pronunciation’ and excelled in ‘covert allusions.’ He did not have the bearing of a ‘timid speaker’ but ‘entered the lists to win glory for himself.’” Winter 157–158, citing *Lives of the Sophists* 519.

<sup>216</sup> ταπεινός, ἀσθενής, ἐξουθενημένος; *Enmity in Corinth* 389.

of rhetoric.<sup>218</sup> ἀπόδειξις, “proof” or “demonstration,” is important in the rhetorical tradition, with a range of nuances: For Aristotle, rhetorical “proof is a sort of demonstration” (ἡ δὲ πίστις ἀπόδειξις τις), although Kennedy notes that “Aristotle here inconsistently uses the word *apodeixis* to include probable truth.”<sup>219</sup> Aristotle usually reserves ἀπόδειξις for the sense of demonstration from scientifically true and certain premises.<sup>220</sup> To Quintilian it means “a clear proof,” “a method of proving what is not certain by means of what is certain”; to Cicero, “a process of reasoning that leads from things perceived to something not previously perceived.”<sup>221</sup> Winter notes these rhetorical uses of δύναμις: Aristotle defines rhetoric as the “faculty [or power] of discovering the possible means of persuasion,” and Quintilian draws upon δύναμις when he identifies “the power of persuasion” (*vis persuadendi*) as a common definition of rhetoric. Dio Chrysostom calls the gift of eloquence δύναμις.<sup>222</sup>

Verses 4 and 5 put these rhetorical terms to an anti-sophistic use: The demonstration, or clear proof, is not from dialectic or rhetorical eloquence but from the Spirit and (presumably, the Spirit’s) power, with this result: believers’ πίστις rests on God’s power,<sup>223</sup> not in human wisdom, that is, in the effects of rhetoric as persuasion, “with its strategy of ingratiation.”<sup>224</sup> While elsewhere in Paul’s letters πίστις may not occur within the semantic field of rhetoric, here a sense common to rhetorical use fits.<sup>225</sup> As discussed above, one key contribution of Aristotle to rhetoric was his theory of proof, comprising three proofs (πίστεις τρία) whose aim is persuasion (πιθανόν).<sup>226</sup> The Spirit effects clear proof (or demonstration, ἀπόδειξις) with or through Paul’s proclamation, resulting (ἴνα) in conviction (πίστις) residing in believers, resting on, or arising from, God’s power and not from the art of rhetoric.<sup>227</sup> Paul accepts the end of rhetoric,

<sup>217</sup> Winter 158; Epictetus 3.23.23–24.

<sup>218</sup> including Aristotle’s definition, τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν, *Rhet.* 1.2.1; Winter 155; see R. G. A. Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy: A Study of peitho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 10–20, 48–53.

<sup>219</sup> *Rhet.* 1.1.11; *Classical Rhetoric* 67

<sup>220</sup> *Rhet.* 3.13.2

<sup>221</sup> Winter 154; *Institutes* 5.10.7; *Academica* 2.8

<sup>222</sup> Winter 154–155; *Rhet.* 1.2.1; *Institutes* 2.15.2–4; Chrysostom, *Or.* 33.3.

<sup>223</sup> especially as expressed and revealed in “the word of the cross,” 1 Cor. 1.18

<sup>224</sup> Winter 159

<sup>225</sup> The same sense, i.e., “conviction,” fits other Pauline uses of πίστις, but these occur in contexts that probably do not express the topic of rhetoric.

<sup>226</sup> *Rhet.* 1.2.3; 1.2

<sup>227</sup> The study of contemporary rhetorician James Kinneavy supports this reading: *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Because Kinneavy is not a biblical scholar nor a regular contributor to biblical studies, his study been overlooked unfortunately by students of rhetoric and the New

conviction, but he rejects it as the means to this end. Paul hereby forestalls a consequence unacceptable to the life of faith in God’s power through Christ: If the “human wisdom” of rhetoric convicted initially, believers would rely on rhetoric to sustain such conviction; and God’s power, as Paul conceives of it, would be a lesser cause, at best, or not a cause, at worst, for their conviction. Identifying how this text may envision the Spirit’s accomplishing this “demonstration”—for example, through which features of Paul’s preaching or of its observable effects, or through which works of power perhaps accompanying Paul’s preaching<sup>228</sup>—deserves its own study. The important point for the present study is Paul’s awareness and rejection of sophistic eloquence because it is unsuitable for proclaiming “the word of the cross” and thereby for establishing the Corinthian church.<sup>229</sup>

Paul fails to fulfill contemporary economic and social expectations of the coming of a sophist in two other ways: He promises no material benefaction to the city and thereby loses an effective *entrée* into the city’s favor.<sup>230</sup> Instead, he offers the gospel itself as his gift (δωρεᾶν).<sup>231</sup> The economic manner by which he offers the gospel further distinguishes him from sophists. Paul works with his hands, “night and day” to support himself,<sup>232</sup> and his language in 2 Cor 11.7 shows that he knows that his gift of the gospel, supported by his own labor, transgresses a social more: “Did I commit a sin by humbling myself . . . ?” High-status Greeks and Romans disdained manual labor as something for slaves and women,<sup>233</sup> an attitude Plutarch elaborates:

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Testament. A more traditional study of πίστις in Paul by a biblical scholar overlooks both this text and the possibility of any overlap in religious and rhetorical semantic fields: H. Ljungman, *Pistis: A Study of Its Presuppositions and Its Meaning in Pauline Use* (Acta 64; Lund: Gleerup, 1964).

<sup>228</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 12.12; Rom 15.18–19; Gal 3.5

<sup>229</sup> Lars Hartman notes that this passage “provides a theological interpretation of [Paul’s] behaviour when[,] defending himself in the first chapters of 1 Corinthians[,] he became a kind of ‘anti-rhetorician’ in order that it might be evident from whence came the power and the effect,” “Some Remarks on 1 Cor. 2.1–5” 120, cited by Winter 161.

<sup>230</sup> This common practice of sophists is exemplified by Herodes Atticus (see discussion in previous section), by Dio Chrysostom (cf. *Or.* 47), and by the unnamed Egyptian sophist Aristides describes, who led his Smyrna hosts to believe that he would act in various ways to benefit the city (*Or.* 51.30). Important studies on benefaction in antiquity include C. P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*; Frederick Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1982); A. R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968); Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens: Early Christians in the Graeco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids and Carlisle: Eerdmans and Paternoster, 1994); cited by Winter, *Philo and Paul* 162.

<sup>231</sup> 2 Cor 11.7

<sup>232</sup> 1 Thess 2.9; 1 Cor 4.12; 2 Cor 6.5; cf. Acts 18.3; 20.34

<sup>233</sup> Albert A. Bell, Jr., *Exploring the New Testament World: An Illustrated Guide to the World of Jesus and the First Christian* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) 187, who cites J. H. D’Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), and D. W. Reece, “The Technological Weakness of the Ancient World,” *Greece and Rome* 16 (1969) 32–47. Dale Martin refers to important evidence that laborers



While we delight in the work [of craftsmen artisans], we despise the workman. . . . Labour with one's hands on lowly tasks gives witness, in the toil thus expended on useless things, to one's indifference to higher things. . . . [I]t does not necessarily follow that, if the work delights you with its graces, the one who wrought it is worthy of your esteem.<sup>234</sup>

As we shall see later in this study, Paul could have relied on the support of Corinthian believers, but he argues in 1 Cor. 9—against a dominical command he bypasses<sup>235</sup>—that he is free, for the sake of the gospel (9.23), both to benefit from his right to be supported and also not to benefit from that right. So Paul both works to support himself and offers the gospel free of charge (9.18; cf. 4.12), not accepting support from the Corinthians while residing with them, two behaviors that distinguish him from contemporary sophists, who, according to Philo, “knew nothing of labour”<sup>236</sup> and could become wealthy from teaching and declaiming.<sup>237</sup>

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themselves and others of lower classes would look differently at Paul's labors, including some of these classes who are part of the Corinthian church (“Book Reviews: *Enmity in Corinth*,” *JBL* 108 (1989) 544).

<sup>234</sup> *Lives. Pericles*, i.4–ii.1.2; cited in Winter 163. Ronald Hock's *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) argues that Paul's choosing to support himself by manual labor forestalls the criticism that he offers the gospel for personal gain (61), which would ally him with sophists (although Hock portrays Paul as following the Cynic tradition, not as opposing the sophistic tradition). It also places him in a social status lower than at least some of his converts at Corinth and is part and parcel of his understanding of spiritual leadership that follows the example of Jesus, the crucified Messiah. The question of the effect of his refusing Corinthian support is discussed later in this study.

<sup>235</sup> See discussion by Gerd Theissen, “Legitimation and Subsistence: An Essay on the Sociology of Early Christian Missionaries,” in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, John H. Schütz, ed. and trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 27–67, especially 42–54. But see also Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* 243–250, who identifies 1 Cor. 9 as a hypothetical *apologia* and asserts that it is historically implausible that Paul responds, in 1 Cor., to the charge that he took no money from the Corinthians. Mitchell (246, n. 332) critiques Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth* 174, 242, for reading back into 1 Cor 9 the later issue of Paul's refusal to receive the Corinthians' gift expressed in 2 Cor 11.7–15 and 12.11–15. Mitchell describes 1 Cor. 9 as argument that supports Paul's example in 8.13 of not taking advantage of his freedom and authority when doing so would hinder the gospel (246, 249). Mitchell's depiction of 1 Cor. 9 as an exemplification of 8.13 is convincing, but she dismisses the possibility that critics criticized Paul for not taking Corinthian money without considering how the sophistic practice of students paying their sophist-teachers would socialize followers of Paul to expect to pay him for his gospel declamations and teachings while resident at Corinth. While 1 Cor. does not refer to Paul's refusing to receive Corinthian gifts, 2 Cor does, and that leaves open the question of whether or not that act occurred before the writing of 1 Cor. and is not addressed because Paul does not yet know that some Corinthians felt wronged by his refusal.

<sup>236</sup> *Det.* 34

<sup>237</sup> Evidence that sophists received fees for declamations and for teaching is ample. G. B. Kerferd's study, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 27–30, reports that from the late fifth century BCE onward, sophists were considered professionals because they charged fees for their instruction. They earned more from teaching in their schools than from public display lectures (ἐπίδειξις). Philostratus says that fees originated with the early sophist Protagoras, and the sophists of the mid-first century CE his *Lives of the Sophists* describes charged fees, a practice he defends (*Lives* 495). This practice attracted ongoing criticism from Plato's time until the early third century CE. Winter summarizes: “Two widely-held perceptions circulated by the first century AD. Firstly, only the wealthy could afford instruction in the sophists' schools. Secondly, the sophists were impostors and flatterers motivated by love of glory and money” (164–165, citing E. L. Bowie, “The Importance of Sophists,” *Yale Classical Studies* 27 (1982) 21, and G. W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 21, 49–50, 95–97).

Beyond contrasting how he came to Corinth and how he lived while at Corinth from a sophistic coming and lifestyle, 1 Cor. also witnesses to other aspects of sophistic culture as it impinged upon the church. Sophists enrolled students in their schools as μαθηταί;<sup>238</sup> and they were also described as ζηλωταί because they expressed loyalty to their teachers and zeal for their reputations that led to open rivalry (ἔρις or ἐριστός<sup>239</sup>) among students of different sophists.<sup>240</sup> The sophist Aristides speaks of the “distinguished young men [who] offered [or “gave,” δοῦναι] themselves [as students]” to him even before he reached the city gates on his coming to Smyrna.<sup>241</sup> Language and expressions in 1 Cor. appear to portray similar relationships and acts in the church at Corinth. Paul cites believers quarreling (ἔριδες) among themselves over the leaders to which they belong (1 Cor. 1.11–12; 3.4), and he considers that behavior to express ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις among them, which he takes as indicating that they are still σαρκικοί . . . καὶ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε, “behaving in a thoroughly secular fashion” (3.3–4, 1). The believers relate to their spiritual leaders the same as secular Corinthians do to their sophist teachers. Clarifying this rivalry among followers of church leaders ties 1 Cor. 1–4 to sophistic culture more strongly. Paul’s appeal to stop dissensions lists four leaders in 1.12, but when the topic is resumed directly in 3.4–6 and later in 4.6, only Paul and Apollos are mentioned (although Cephas is mentioned with Paul and Apollos in 3.22). This evidence suggests, with further details about Apollos, that rivalry among followers of Paul and Apollos constituted the chief problem, from Paul’s perspective.<sup>242</sup> Acts 18.24–28 describes Apollos’ entrance into Paul’s sphere of ministry at Corinth: He is an Alexandrian Jew and an “an eloquent speaker” who used Scripture effectively in public debates. Rhetorical activity was flourishing at this time in Alexandria, called by F. H. Colson “the chief centre of Hellenistic culture.”<sup>243</sup> ἀνὴρ λόγιος, used here of Apollos, is

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<sup>238</sup> Winter 129–130, 170

<sup>239</sup> Philo, *Det.* 36, 45, *Mut.* 10, *Her.* 246, and Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* 62–63, cited in Winter 93, 129–130, 170–171

<sup>240</sup> Dio, *Or.* 11.8; also “Professional Quarrels” in Bowersock, *Greek Sophists* 89–100, which discusses the rivalries between Herodes Atticus and Polemo and between Favorinus (Ephesus) and Polemo (Smyrna), among others.

<sup>241</sup> *Or.* 51.29

<sup>242</sup> so also Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 56: “Indeed, the most natural understanding of 4:6 is that Paul for all practical purposes has narrowed the issue in chaps. 1–4 to himself and Apollos and that Corinthians are ‘puffed up’ in favor of the one (Apollos) against the other (Paul).”

<sup>243</sup> *Philo* I (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929) ix

the same phrase Philo uses to refer to those with rhetorical training.<sup>244</sup> Apollos could have been seen as a Christian minister comparable in rhetorical and leadership skill to contemporary secular leaders and orators and therefore desirable to those believers who liked their church leaders being much like their secular, civil leaders. The rivalry Paul combats in 1 Cor. 1–4 may then have developed primarily between those loyal to Apollos and those loyal to Paul, with the result that Apollos, deferring to Paul, refuses to return to Corinth, despite his followers’ request (1 Cor. 16.12b).<sup>245</sup> That request would signal that Paul is not welcome by some at Corinth, an attitude consonant with the criticisms to which 2 Cor 10–13 responds.

### Paul Critiques Sophistic Conventions: 1 Corinthians 1–4

First Corinthians 1–4<sup>246</sup> deals with overcoming dissensions within the church that were aided by sophistic culture. From them we see that Paul not only flouts sophistic conventions in his coming to Corinth, but he also critiques three sophistic attitudes and practices harming the Corinthian church: (1) the conceit arising from sophistic status, with the corresponding sense of inferiority felt by those without it; (2) the self-serving relation between sophists and students; and (3) sophistic boasting.<sup>247</sup> Paul’s critique of sophistic culture binds together the opening thanksgiving (1.4–9), the thesis of the letter (1.10), and the first major section of the epistle (1.10–4.21).

1. Paul thanks God because God has enriched believers ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ πάσῃ γνῶσει, with the result that they lack no χάρισματι (vv. 5–6).<sup>248</sup> Winter cites numerous sources expressing

<sup>244</sup> *Post.* 53, which so describes men practicing σοφιστικὰ τεχναί; cited by Winter 176, n. 144. E. A. Judge cites Augustus’ praise of Cicero with the identical phrase—ἀνὴρ λόγιος—in Plutarch, *Cicero* 49.5; “The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community: Part II,” *Journal of Religious History* 1 (1960) 40.

<sup>245</sup> Winter 175–176. Judge suggests that it was Apollos’ “powers of persuasion” that “conceivably played a part in arousing the fastidious Corinthians to dissatisfaction with Paul’s performance. Yet Paul clearly held Apollos himself in high regard, as he did many others whose names we know and who must from their social location have been rhetorically literate. . . . [I]t is beyond doubt that Paul was, in practice at least, familiar with the rhetorical fashions of the time.” “The Early Christians . . . : Part II” 41

<sup>246</sup> arguably all the chapters in 1 Cor.: cf. Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* 1–5, and the many studies she cites.

<sup>247</sup> This section depends on, and summarizes much of, Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* 179–202. It relies on his work in order to construct the background pertinent to this study’s reading of 2 Cor 10–13 conveniently. Winter uses many of the same sources and shares many observations with A. D. Litfin, *St Paul’s Theology of Proclamation*, but Winter focuses the evidence to portray more sharply the sophistic cultural location in which Paul struggles with the Corinthian believers.

<sup>248</sup> The key acts of the thanksgiving are these: Paul gives thanks (4a); Reason for thanksgiving (4b): because of grace given them; Amplification of the reason (5): the grace has enriched them with all speech and knowledge;

the sense of inferiority felt or placed upon those who lack Greek *paideia* that featured rhetorical training.<sup>249</sup> Dio Chrysostom gives a syllabus of readings to such a man who desires no longer to be “looked down on” (καταφρονεῖσθαι) because of his lack of rhetorical training in youth.<sup>250</sup> Demosthenes charges Aeschines with lacking education and only pretending to have culture, while Isocrates contrasts the Lacedaemonians, “who have ‘fallen behind’ in *paideia*,” with the Athenians, who excel as either disciples or teachers.<sup>251</sup> And Philo shows how sophists characterized their opponents, “the so-called lovers of virtue,” as “almost without exception obscure people, looked down upon” by others who, like the sophists, are “men of mark and wealth, holding leading positions, praised on all hands.”<sup>252</sup>

As examination of 1 Cor. 1.26–28 will show, Paul portrays the majority of the believers as persons without high status or the benefit of *paideia*, and these could feel culturally inferior and be looked down upon by others of higher status. Verses 4–6 thus apply Paul’s gospel to such believers and assure them that, in Christ, God has enriched them in every way, including speech and knowledge, two terms of particular import in sophistic culture. Both terms occur together again in the Corinthian letters only in 2 Cor 11.6, where this study argues that they bear the specifically rhetorical sense of “effectively delivered speech and rhetorical knowledge.” The same or a similar sense, along with the semantic field of rhetoric and rhetorical education, fits the context of the present text as well. As a result of this divine enrichment, believers do not fall short of anyone else<sup>253</sup> and are thus empowered to resist viewing themselves as inferior to others because they lack *paideia* and the rhetorical training and resulting social status it included.<sup>254</sup>

2. Paul’s response to the dissension between followers of Apollos and of himself critiques students’ commitment to and zeal for their sophist teachers as both harmful and idolatrous.

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Paraphrase of 1 Cor. 1.26–28: Parenthetical comparative (6): they were enriched in the same manner in which [or at the same time that] the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them; Result of grace given (7): they in no way lack any *χάρισματι*, while awaiting the revelation of Christ; Amplification of Christ’s function (8): he sustains them, guiltless until the day of Christ; Warrant of assurance (9): God is faithful, who called them to Christ.

<sup>249</sup> Winter 182–183

<sup>250</sup> *Or.* 18.1–2 and note by J. W. Cohen, *Dio Chrysostom*, LCL, II, 209; Winter 182

<sup>251</sup> Demosthenes, *De Corona* 128; Isocrates, *Panathenaicus* 209; Winter 182–183

<sup>252</sup> *Det.* 34; Winter 183. Further similar expressions occur in Plato, *Republic* 53c, and Epictetus, *Discourse* I.8.10

<sup>253</sup> the sense preferred by Gordon Fee over its alternate (that they do not fall short of normal Christian experience), which he recognizes as the majority view but declines in favor of the former sense because it restates the affirmation of v. 5, only negatively; *First Epistle* 41.

<sup>254</sup> Winter 182

The sophistic milieu can illuminate the connection between ἔρις (1 Cor. 1.11) and baptism (vv. 13–17). As students committed to a sophist, enrolling in his school and beginning to attend his public declamations, so Corinthian converts at baptism allied themselves with and began receiving instruction from their Christian teachers.<sup>255</sup> When Paul emphasizes that none were baptized in his name (v. 13), “J. Munck suggests that Paul criticises converts who have put ‘the teachers they invoke—he mentions himself as an example (1.13)—in the place of Christ.’”<sup>256</sup> As part of Paul’s critiquing this idolatrous attachment of converts to Christian teachers, he rejects the sophistic pattern in which disciples belong to the sophist and exist for his glory. In the community of the gospel, everyone belongs to Christ, Christ to God (3.23), and all for the glory of God. Converts may not boast in or of their leaders (3.21), because they do not belong to them. On the contrary, Christian leaders—“whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas”—belong to believers (3.22) and are God’s servants (3.5; 4.1)<sup>257</sup> assigned to serve the needs of the community. Christian teachers exist to benefit converts and the church: In the church, “‘the sophist’ belongs to the μαθηταί,” not the sophistic reverse.<sup>258</sup>

3. In 1 Cor. 1.17–31 Paul critiques sophistic rhetoric and its inherent boasting as inimical to the “word of the cross” in more than one way.<sup>259</sup> First, as already discussed, using rhetoric to convict (or, persuade) hearers of the truth that Jesus crucified is Christ empties the cross of its power (1.17); it bypasses God’s power as the agent producing conviction (πίστις; 1.18; 2.4–5), leaving the convert dependent on human wisdom (2.5), on rhetoric with its display of the orator’s skill and charm, to sustain conviction. But second, such rhetoric manifests human wisdom through which the world (ὁ κόσμος) has not known God (1.21). Citing Isa 19.14b, Paul claims that God has destroyed worldly wisdom, rendering it truly foolish and weak, by saving Jews and Gentiles alike through the weakness and folly (from the perspective of worldly wisdom) of Jesus crucified, the Christ of God (1.18–19, 20–25). Verses 20 and 26–29 speak directly to the culture that accompanied sophistic rhetoric. Three of the four

<sup>255</sup> Winter 185: “Where household baptisms occurred, the entry of a teacher into that social unit had its cultural precedent in the sophistic movement,” citing Hock, *Social Context* 53–54, and Stanley K. Stowers, “Social Status, Public Speaking and Private Teaching: The Circumstances of Paul’s Preaching Activity,” *NovT* 26 (1984) 66 and n. 40.

<sup>256</sup> Winter 185, citing Munck, “1 Thess. 1.9–10 and the Missionary Preaching of Paul: Textual Exegesis and Hermeneutic Reflexions,” *NTS* 9 (1962–3) 105.

<sup>257</sup> 3.5c,d: διάκονοι δι’ ὧν ἐπιστεύσατε, καὶ ἑκάστῳ ὡς ὁ κύριος ἔδωκεν

<sup>258</sup> Winter 195

rhetorical questions in v. 20 refer to categories of persons who represent worldly wisdom opposed to the “word of the cross”: the σοφός, the γραμματεὺς, and the συζητητῆς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου. Scholars have identified these terms in numerous ways.<sup>260</sup> E. A. Judge considers these to be the “three main types of tertiary scholar of [Paul’s] world: the rationalistic philosopher (“the wise”), the Jewish legal expert (“the scribe”) and the rhetorician (“the debater of this age”).”<sup>261</sup> Verses 26–29 illuminate the identity of the final category, the category most important to this study. Recent work on sophists by G. W. Bowersock and E. L. Bowie shows that the key adjectives in v. 26—σοφοί, δυνατοί, and εὐγενεῖς—refer widely among first-century writers to sophists and their students and to the high social class from which sophists came, which, in specifically the eastern cities, was the ruling class.<sup>262</sup> Contemporary critics of such references include Dio of Chrysostom, who objects to using social strata and wealth as criteria for identifying who is “well-born” (εὐγενεῖς) and “noble” (γενναῖοι), as well as ignoble (ἀγενεῖς) and mean (ταπεινοί).<sup>263</sup> Also Philo denounces “those who spring from great houses, who ‘boast and glory’ in the splendour of their race.”

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<sup>259</sup> Winter 186–194

<sup>260</sup> For which see the commentaries.

<sup>261</sup> “The Reaction against Classical Education in the New Testament,” *Journal of Christian Education*, Papers 77 (7/1983) 11

<sup>262</sup> Bowersock, “The Cities of the Sophists,” in *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 21–29, and Bowie, “The Importance of Sophists,” *Yale Classical Studies* 27 (1982) 29–59, confirming J. Munck’s earlier similar claims based on third-century CE evidence in “The Church without Factions,” 161, n. 2, cited by Winter 189 (also 190–194). Beyond the following citations of Dio and Philo, the above studies cite numerous writers from the first century and other times confirming the accuracy of the references claimed for these terms, including Plutarch, *Fragments* 139–140; Thucydides, 1.89.3, 1.126.3 (reference to Cyclon as εὐγενής τε καὶ δυνατός), 102.2 [cf. A. Lintott, *Violence, Civil Strife and Revolution in the Classical City* (London: Croom Helm, 1982) 92–94]; A. Sängler, citing Josephus, who notes that the οἱ δυνατοί had status based on wealth, which, with reputation, made them εὐγενεῖς, “Die δυνατοί in 1 Kor. 1.26,” *ZNW* 76 (1985) 285–291; Isocrates (links “well-born,” “of reputation,” with wisdom and eloquence), *Antidosis* 308; P. A. Brunt, who reports evidence from the Roman imperial period that assemblies of cities continued to elect “members of the local ruling class, men of good family and property,” “The Romanization of the Local Ruling Classes in the Roman Empire,” in D. M. Pippidi, ed., *Assimilation et résistance à la culture gréco-romaine dans le monde ancien: Travaux du VI<sup>e</sup> Congrès International d’Etudes Classiques* (Paris: ‘Belles Lettres,’ 1976) 161, 164, 166; J. H. Kent, whose catalog of Corinthian inscriptions shows, in Winter’s words, “that orators contributed to the political life of the city and would have been regarded as among the δυνατοί, εὐγενεῖς and the σοφοί,” *Corinth: Inscriptions 1926–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) nos. 226, 264, 307; R. MacMullen, who notes that men of standing in the city must express “great power as a speaker, style and taste in one’s address,” *Roman Social Relations 50 BC to AD 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) 107; all cited in Winter 189–192.

<sup>263</sup> *Or.* 15.29–32; also 31.74, 47.14, 52.16, cited by Winter 190

Stark evidence of the boasting of sophists and of their unrelenting attitude of superiority over their moral critics and social inferiors comes from Philo’s portrayal of sophists and non-sophists represented allegorically in the dispute between Cain (the self-lover) and Abel (the God-lover) in *Quod Deterius Potiori insidiari solet* (“That the Worse Is Likely to Attack the Better”).<sup>264</sup> Sophists defend their lifestyle in this way: Because the body is the soul’s house, physical senses surrounding the soul are its allies and friends and are equal in value to the soul. Because nature intended that pleasures appeal to our senses, they must be legitimate; therefore, the πλοῦτος, δόξα, τιμή, ἀρχή and “everything else of that sort” exist for the sophists’ security, but also for their happiness (*Det.* 33). Their success “proved that they were right while their opponents—the so-called seekers after virtue—were wrong.” Sophists proclaim themselves to be, in Philo’s words, “men of mark and wealth, holding leading positions, praised on all hands, recipients of honours, portly, healthy and robust, reveling in luxurious and riotous living, knowing nothing of labour, conversant with pleasures which carry the sweets of life to the all-welcoming soul by every channel of sense” (*Det.* 34b). Via antonyms Philo’s sophists portray opponents as “almost without exception obscure people, looked down upon, of mean estate, destitute of the necessities of life, not enjoying the privileges of subject peoples or even of slaves, filthy, sallow, reduced to skeletons, with a hungry look from want of food, the prey of disease, in training for dying” (*Det.* 34a).<sup>265</sup> These sophists would be properly described by the adjectives of 1 Cor. 1.26—σοφοί, δυνατοί, and εὐγενεῖς—according to the “worldly standards” of secular Corinth. To these sophistic qualities, Paul lists his own antonyms (vv. 27–28): τὰ μωρὰ τοῦ κόσμου, τὰ ἀσθενῆ τοῦ κόσμου, τὰ ἀγενῆ τοῦ κόσμου, τὰ ἐξουθνημένα, and τὰ μὴ ὄντα. Although the “debaters of this age” boast in their μάρτυς—their successful life of wisdom, power, and noble birth—God, according to Paul’s gospel, shames these boasters by calling their inferiors, characterized by opposite qualities, so that no one “may boast before God” (v. 29), particularly those who, like the sophists, believe themselves worthy of being called by God.

<sup>264</sup> *Philo* II (LCL) #33–34; Winter 107–109, 192–193

<sup>265</sup> *Det.* 34: sophists v. opponents: ἐνδοξοί v. ἄδοξοι, πλούσιοι v. εὐκαταφρόνητοι, ἡγεμόνες v. ταπεινοί, ἐπαινούμενοι v. τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐνδεεῖς, τιμώμενοι v. ὑποκόων καὶ δούλων ἀτιμότεροι, υγιεινοί v. ρυπόωντες,

## CONCLUSION

This study seeks to make visible the rhetorical form, or logic, of this discourse so that it can account for the rhetoric of the discourse. Its method is eclectic, rhetorical in the sense that it seeks to discover how the discourse works, what it attempts to do, and how and with what likely effect on its implied audience. It proceeds from recognizing that the discourse responds to criticisms that Paul is too weak to lead and to the request or demand that Paul boast about his ministry in the way that his rivals have boasted of theirs. Of the six topical theses the study supports, two advance recent claims about Paul and this discourse. Anitra Bingham Kolenkow has shown that the weakness Paul manifests is, most importantly, his lenient manner of governing the church, which critics misunderstand as debilitating weakness. So this study will seek to show what senses of “weak(ness)” are most pertinent throughout the discourse. Bruce W. Winter has documented for the first time the existence of the sophistic movement in mid-first-century Corinth.<sup>266</sup> His description of sophistic attitudes, social location, and practices mesh with evidence in 2 Cor 10–13 to identify Paul’s rivals with some confidence as sophists or as orators influenced heavily by the nascent Second Sophistic. This study synthesizes the Kolenkow and Winter theses in explaining the criticisms of Paul, the comparison he finds himself forced to perform, and the rhetorical logic of this discourse.

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πίονες v. ὄχροί, ἐρρωμένοι v. κατεσκελευμένοι, αβροδίαιτοι v. λιμόν ὑπ’ ἀστρίας ἐμβλέποντι, θρυπτόμενοι v. νοσερώτατοι, πόνον οὐκ εἰδότες, ἡδοναίς συζῶντες v. μελετῶντες ἀποθνήσκειν

<sup>266</sup> Winter’s monograph has just been released in a second edition, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). G. W. Bowersock, expert on the Second Sophistic, writes in the Foreword: “[T]hrough his mastery of both New Testament scholarship and Roman history Bruce Winter has succeeded in documenting, for the first time, the sophistic movement of the mid-first century. Inspired by a remarkable papyrus from Oxyrhynchus and supported by a rich documentation for Philo’s Alexandria and Paul’s Corinth, Winter has uncovered the foundations of the Second Sophistic.” Because this edition arrived so late, all references in this study are to the first edition, published by Cambridge University Press.



## CHAPTER II

### BEFORE THE “FOOL’S SPEECH”: A SELECTIVE RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF 2 CORINTHIANS 10.1–18

With this study’s aim of discerning the functioning rhetorical form of this discourse—how it works<sup>1</sup>—analysis of the beginning of the discourse is especially important to discern important features. These include the rhetorical stance of the rhetor, which is, in this case, a writer; aims of the discourse; and evidence of the kinds and combination of rhetorical proof the discourse will use—how it will argue and what other speech acts it combines with argument. This study’s analysis of the first chapter in this four-chapter discourse will show the following: First, that Paul approaches the criticisms of his weak leadership and the enmity between him and the Corinthian church offensively more than defensively, even though dimensions of the discourse seem like an apology. Instead, his rhetorical stance is more that of a prosecutor and judge than of a defendant hoping to win acquittal from a judge and jury. This stance produces rhetoric that expresses Paul’s confident authority much more than his hope to persuade others holding authority over him to use it in ways beneficial to him. The *Exordium*, for instance, bristles with expressions of Paul’s authority, yet it qualifies that authority by key virtues that Paul wishes to remain the side of himself that the Corinthians will continue to experience. Contrary to what I thought when I began studying this discourse, Paul does not approach this situation with hat in hand, as it were, looking for the right mixture of persuasive appeals and tactics by which to disarm a hostile congregation ready to end his leadership. Whether or not they have the power to dismiss Paul, the discourse presumes that Paul has divinely granted power that he will exert as strongly as he must. It portrays Paul initially as a soon-to-arrive military general warning the citizenry that he can dictate and enforce harsh terms of surrender but wishing instead to enjoy reconciliation with them, not harsh surrender. In this portrayal lies the chief aim of the discourse: to move the Corinthians to prepare for Paul’s upcoming visit so that he will be able to continue to govern the church “with the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” not with severity.

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<sup>1</sup> as opposed to simply labeling the form, for example, “apology,” but then not accounting for how it defends the rhetor effectively: that is, with an effort to explain its likely effect and, from this, its likely success or failure

This discourse is, as Elizabeth Castelli and Sandra Hack Polaski have labeled other of Paul's letters, a discourse of power.<sup>2</sup> As such, assertions of authority undergird and arch over all other speech acts, expressed especially through numerous structures that emphasize assertions and through emotional appeals. But there are others: there is explicit argument that supports a claim with publicly observable evidence and reasoning; and there is implicit argument with appeals to tacit premises and warrants concerning, especially, equity and justice, what Paul and the Corinthians would agree is right in a particular case. But forceful expression of authority based on Paul's divine commission eclipses the others in frequency and emotional intensity.

This reading analyzes 2 Corinthians 10 into three units: 10.1–6; 10.7–11; 10.12–18. This division expresses the different speech acts these units perform; however, the discourse also joins the first two units in an *inclusio* that should be noted before analyzing the units themselves. The *inclusio* is bounded by diction that expresses presence vs. absence and strength with letters vs. weakness with in-person speech:

vν. 1–2	vν. 10–12
κατὰ πρόσωπον / παρών / ταπεινός	ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενῆς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος / παρόντες τῷ ἔργῳ
ἀπὼν / θαρρῶ	Αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ . . . βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραὶ / τῷ λόγῳ δι' ἐπιστολῶν ἀπόντες

The *inclusio* signals that the similar diction at the beginning and ending of this macro-unit refers to the same acts and qualities (although Paul and his critics interpret these contradictorily). The present reading of this discourse suggests that what vν. 1–2 express briefly and somewhat generally vν. 11–12 amplify with greater specificity and force.

### PAUL APPEALS AND THREATENS (10.1–6; an *Exordium*)

#### *Text*

10:1 Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς διὰ τῆς πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιεικειᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀπὼν δὲ θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς· 2 δέομαι δὲ τὸ μὴ παρῶν θαρρῆσαι τῇ πεποιθήσει ἢ λογίζομαι τολμῆσαι ἐπὶ τινας τοὺς λογιζομένους ἡμᾶς ὡς κατὰ

<sup>2</sup> respectively, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991); and *Paul and the Discourse of Power* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

σάρκα περιπατοῦντας. 3 ἐν σαρκὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦντες οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατευόμεθα, 4 τὰ γὰρ ὄπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν οὐ σαρκικὰ ἀλλὰ δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων, λογισμοὺς καθαίρουντες 5 καὶ πᾶν ὑψωμα ἐπαιρόμενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντες πᾶν νόημα εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 6 καὶ ἐν ἐτοιμῷ ἔχοντες ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν παρακοήν, ὅταν πληρωθῇ ὑμῶν ἡ ὑπακοή.

### ***Translation***

(1) I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the gentleness and kindness of Christ—I who am “timid and unimpressive” when face to face with you but “bold and commanding” when away from you. (2) I beg of you that when I am [next] with you I will not have to be as bold as I will dare to be toward those who think that we are living according to worldly standards. (3) Of course we live *in* this world, but we do not wage war in a worldly way, (4) for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but powerful for God for the destruction of fortresses: We destroy arguments (5) and every proud conceit raised up against the knowledge of God; we take prisoner every thought to make it obedient to Christ; (6) and we stand ready to punish every act of disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

### ***Analysis***

#### *Speech Acts*

These few vv. effectively introduce several dimensions of the complete discourse. They express its central tensions and its mixture of persuasion and compulsion. Here are the chief speech acts of these vv., followed by analysis of each:

- 10.1a Appeal, with agent emphasized
- 10.1b Appeal qualified: διὰ τῆς πραύτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ
- 10.1c-d Repeating of criticism, either in acceptance or in sarcasm
- 10.2a Resumptive plea for Corinthians to help Paul (avert confrontation)
- 10.2b Threat of bold confrontation when present
- 10.2c Identification of object of threatened confrontation (τινας τοὺς λογιζομένους) and restatement (or repeating of additional) criticism (ἡμᾶς ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας)

- 10.3a Concession (ἐν σαρκὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦντες) followed by
- 10.3b Threat in a claim (expressed in apparently broken parallelism [οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατευόμεθα])
- 10.4a Claim to support preceding claim
- 10.4b–6a Amplification of purpose phrase (πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων) of preceding claim, v. 4
- 10.6b Implied demand for obedience (restating plea, v. 2)

### Coherence

1. Παρὼν θαρρήσαι in v. 2 plays on ἀπὼν δὲ θαρρῶ in v. 1.
2. The request of v. 2 coheres conceptually with the threat of punishment in v. 6. Verse 2 requests action that will enable Paul to avert disciplinary boldness when present among the Corinthians, and v. 6 refers to their obeying Paul fully, likely referring to the action requested in v. 2.
3. Verse 3 coheres with v. 2 by means of an initially parallel construction (v. 2: κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας || v. 3a: ἐν σαρκὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦντες) that breaks parallelism in diction in v. 3b (οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατευόμεθα). This reading argues below that vv. 3b–5 do in fact complete the parallelism conceptually because the weapons (v. 4) are, or include, Paul’s faithful performance of his life as an apostle; therefore, v. 3b amplifies the unexpressed component that would manifest parallel diction (i.e., στρατευόμεθα amplifies περιπατοῦντας).
4. Other lexical repetition causes this unit to cohere: λογίζομαι and λογιζομένους, v. 2, and λογισμοὺς, v. 4; καθαίρεσιν and καθαιροῦντες, v. 4; ὑπακοήν, v. 5, and ὑπακοή, v. 6.

### Pertinent Background—Terms and Concepts

1. *Military imagery*: Interpreters have proposed a variety of associations for the vocabulary and images of vv. 3–6. Abraham Malherbe proposes that Paul borrows from Stoics when he portrays opponents as fortified by their reason (λογισμοὺς, v. 3) and from Cynics when he implies that his armament “powerful for God” (δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ, v. 4) is his manner of life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “Antisthenes, Odysseus, and Paul,” in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) 91–119, here 117; reprinted from *HTR* 76 (1983), 143–173. I concluded that Paul’s weapons are the manner of his life as an apostle of Christ independent of Malherbe’s study, after noting the broken parallelism of diction in vv. 2b but

Hans Windisch, Hans Dieter Betz, and Victor Paul Furnish propose viewing Paul as in some sense adopting the language and stance of a philosopher, perhaps like Philo, over against sophistic opponents.<sup>4</sup> A number of scholars find the pertinent background in Jewish wisdom, with texts such as LXX Proverbs 21.22.<sup>5</sup> Frederick W. Danker suggests that the imagery of these vv. is widespread and familiar to Corinthian believers from both Jewish scriptural and Greco-Roman philosophical traditions.<sup>6</sup> For a rhetorical reading, we are less interested in isolating only one best referent than we are in acknowledging the plausible range of associations early hearers of this discourse would make. Apart from identifying such associations, Bruce Winter follows evidence presented in chap. 1 of this study that the opponents of Paul were Christian sophists, and he reads the key nouns in vv. 4–6 as an attack on the sophistic methods Paul’s opponents practiced in Corinth. The nominal vocabulary fits a sophistic opposition well: The fortresses would be λογισμοὺς (sophistic arguments, v. 4d), πᾶν ὑψῶμα ἐπαϊρόμενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ (sophistic conceits, v. 5a), and πᾶν νόημα disobedient to Christ (v. 5b). These vv. exploit a single image, the tearing down of a fortress, and three of the following four parallel participial constructions do not express carefully distinguishable meanings that hearers need to keep separate<sup>7</sup> so much as they pile up functionally similar terms that sustain the image of militant destruction through amplification, a core rhetorical technique.

Amplification consists of expanding the presence of one particular idea in the minds of hearers by unpacking it in any of a variety of ways. The amplification of military actions—“destruction” (v. 4) amplified by “destroying,” “taking captive,” and “being ready to

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hypothesizing that the concepts remained parallel and then reflecting on the whole of chaps. 10–13 in light of other self-portrayals of Paul (e.g., 2 Cor. 2.14–17).

<sup>4</sup> Hans Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1924; reprint ed. Georg Strecker, 1970), 298; Hans Dieter Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition: eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner ‘Apologie’ 2 Korinther 10–13* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1972), 68–69; Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (Anchor Bible 32A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 462.

<sup>5</sup> “A wise man assaults fortified cities (ὄχυράς) and demolishes the fortification (καθεῖλεν τὸ ὄχυρῶμα) in which the ungodly trusted (ἐπεποίθεισαν).” These include J. W. McCant, “Paul’s Thorn of Rejected Apostleship,” *NTS* 34 (1988), 562; F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971), 230; R. P. Martin, who cites 1 Macc 5.65; 8.10, *2 Corinthians*, 305; R. Bultmann, who cites Odes of Sol 10.3–4; 29.8–9, *Second Letter*, 185–186; and Ben Witherington, who cites Eccl 9.14–16, *Conflict & Community*, 438.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick W. Danker, *II Corinthians* (Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 151–153; Malherbe, “Antisthenes,” surveys Prov and Philo but finds only Stoic and Cynic texts as sources, 91–95.

<sup>7</sup> But Malherbe considers each to portray a stage of attack: “demolishing fortifications, taking captives, and punishing resistance,” “Antisthenes” 112.

punish”—along with the amplification of targets—“fortresses” (v. 4) amplified by “arguments,” “every proud conceit,” “every (disobedient) thought,” and “every disobedience”—all these piled up serve to emphasize and endow with palpable presence the kind of boldness (v. 2) Paul is prepared to show on his next visit toward those opposing him.<sup>8</sup>

### *Intertextuality*

1. The criticism v. 2 expresses, ἡμᾶς ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας, may echo the similar language in 2 Corinthians 1.17b: ἢ ἂ βουλεύομαι κατὰ σάρκα βουλεύομαι. Paul appears to defend against the criticism that his change of travel plans, perhaps to avoid another painful encounter at Corinth (2.1–9), indicated that he operated κατὰ σάρκα. If so, the criticism expressed in 10.2 is similar and may evoke the criticism expressed in 1.17b.
2. As discussed above, the military language and images may evoke a mixture of Jewish and Greco-Roman texts, from LXX Proverbs 21.22 to Philo’s *On the Confusion of Tongues* (128–131), which comments on Genesis 11.4 in its attack on sophists, to Greco-Roman imagery of siege craft<sup>9</sup> and Cynic and Stoic philosophical backgrounds.<sup>10</sup> While Malherbe insists that the Cynic and Stoic sources provide texts that most nearly approximate Paul’s use of military language here, Paul responds to sophistic issues throughout the discourse more than to distinctively Cynic and Stoic issues; therefore, the influence of those philosophical traditions on vv. 3–6 should not be seen as silencing any others. Paul seems to attack the Stoic’s impregnable fortress of reason in v. 4 and throughout the discourse much less than he attacks attitudes and practices consistent with the behavior of sophists without regard for their philosophical commitments, if any. Danker’s observation, noted before, is best: The images

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<sup>8</sup> George Kennedy describes the importance of amplification in rhetorical discourse: “Most of what goes on in rhetorical composition is *amplification* of the basic thesis of the speaker[,] . . . necessitated by the oral nature of the situation and by the constraints on the audience. . . . The speaker must . . . develop his subject repeating his basic ideas several times in different words, illustrating what he means, relating it in some way to the experience of his audience. All speech thus involves the ‘working out’ (*ergasia*) of its inventional topics,” *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) 21–22. Amplification is discussed by several ancient rhetorical handbooks: Aristotle, *Rhet.*, 1.9.38; 1.14.5; *Ad Heren.*, 2.19.30; 2.29.46–2.30.49; 3.13.24; Cicero, *De Oratore*, 2.26.104–2.26.108; Quintilian, *Institutes*, 8.4.3–29, who subdivides *amplificatio* into four kinds: *incrementum*, *comparatio*, *ratiocinatio*, *congeries*.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Aeneas Tacitus, *On the Defense of Fortified Positions*, 32.2; 40.1; Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.90.3; 1.91.1; 2.75.6; cited by Malherbe, “Antisthenes,” 92–93

<sup>10</sup> Malherbe investigates several such philosophical texts, focusing most on Antisthenes, Epictetus, and Seneca; “Antisthenes,” 98–105.

and language of these vv. would have evoked various associations in the minds of the earliest recipients of this discourse.

### *Rhetorical Structure and Development*

1. *The hortatory character of the discourse:* The opening main verbs of this discourse, παρακαλῶ (10.1, “I appeal”) and δέομαι (10.2, “I beg”) signal that this discourse is itself primarily an appeal, a call to action. This study will point out other verbs and constructions throughout the discourse that confirm this claim. To confirm the claim tentatively beyond these opening verbs, it is sufficient to cite the directions appearing in the conclusion of the discourse (13.10–11). There Paul explains that he has written so that he will not have to exercise his authority with severity when he visits (13.10); and then follow as many as five imperatives, of which one may be translated “pay attention to my appeals”<sup>11</sup> (13.11). Much interpretation overlooks the importance of such verbs in signaling the chief task and the dominant rhetorical species of these chapters. For example, the scholar of classical rhetoric George Kennedy identifies these chapters as forensic, or judicial, rhetoric, in which the key issue would be Paul’s guilt or innocence of the charges opponents have leveled against him.<sup>12</sup> Recently, however, interpreters using various methods have interpreted such verbs, specifically these occurring at the beginning of these chapters, as indicating reliably how the remainder of this discourse should be received. Lars Hartmann examines the linguistic surface structure of the discourse and takes various markers as indicating what the discourse intends to do. Παρακαλῶ in 10.1 indicates that a *paraclesis* follows; ἀφροσύνης in 11.1, that what follows is foolishness; ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑμῶν οἰκοδομῆς, not ἀπολογούμεθα in 12.19, that what precedes is not for Paul’s defense but for the building up of the Corinthians. Interpreters will want to see if such indicators reliably name the actions to which they point, but Hartman’s point is that interpreters should first identify such markers and give them their due weight in their acts of interpretation.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> So Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 581; NIV; NRSV.

<sup>12</sup> *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 86–96.

<sup>13</sup> “A Sketch of the Argument of 2 Cor 10—13” in *Text-Centered New Testament Studies: Text-Theoretical Essays on Early Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (David Hellholm, ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 235–252; also John T. Fitzgerald, “Paul, the Ancient Epistolary Theorists, and 2 Corinthians 10—13: The Purpose and Literary Genre of a Pauline Letter,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks, eds.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 193–194; Furnish, *II*

## 2. *Analysis of the unit:*

### 10.1a Appeal, with agent emphasized

The unit begins with Paul's emphatic self-reference—*Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος*— unique among his writings.<sup>14</sup> Such emphasis expresses Paul's authority and calls for the listeners' attention, both of which are appropriate for the introduction, or exordium, of a discourse.<sup>15</sup> The appeal is more tactful than a demand would be, although it is clear from the next few vv. that Paul expects the Corinthians to do what he wants from them. But the appeal allows Paul both to assert his authority and to ask for his hearers' aid, the latter as the handbook *Rhetorica ad Herennium* suggests for gaining a favorable hearing without arrogance.<sup>16</sup>

### 10.1b Appeal qualified: *διὰ τῆς πραύτητος καὶ ἐπιεικειίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ*

The appeal invokes virtues of Christ, *πραύτητος καὶ ἐπιεικειίας*. This invocation may endow the appeal with good will toward the recipients, as one would expect an effective exordium to do. But as following vv. and discourse units will show, good will may be scarce among the implied recipients, and the discourse does not go to further lengths here to elicit good will, certainly not by ingratiating Paul with the addressees. Eliciting good will is less important than another aim: namely, that of anchoring the discourse from the beginning in these virtues. In this discourse, Paul responds to the single, all-subsuming criticism that he is too weak to lead properly.<sup>17</sup> These virtues authorize Paul's allegedly weak leadership. It is

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*Corinthians*, 48, who recognizes the “hortatory character” of these chapters; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 129, who identifies the purpose of these chapters as hortatory; and Verena Jegher-Bucher, “‘The Thorn in the Flesh’/ ‘Der Pfahl im Fleisch’: Considerations about 2 Corinthians 12.7–10 in Connection with 12.1–13” in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, eds.; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1997), 388–397, who points out that in the FS “Paul does not make primarily a speech in his own defence” (396).

<sup>14</sup> While elsewhere Paul refers to himself emphatically, e.g., Gal. 5.2; 1 Thess. 2.18; Phlm. 19, only here does he use an emphatic *αὐτὸς* in referring to himself.

<sup>15</sup> The *exordium* is treated in Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.14.1–12; *Ad. Her.* 1.4.6–7, 11; Cicero, *De Inv.* 1.15.20—17.25.

<sup>16</sup> 1.5.8 (Caplan, LCL); also Cicero, *De Inv.*, 1.16.22 (Hubbell, LCL); and Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 302, cited by Brian K. Peterson, *Eloquence and the Proclamation of the Gospel in Corinth*, (SBL Dissertation Series 163; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998) 76. Peterson also points out that Galatians is the only Pauline letter in which *παρακαλῶ* does not occur, and there “such tact was not what was called for.”

<sup>17</sup> The key texts expressing, implying, or clearly responding to criticism of Paul's weakness are these, which are analyzed throughout this study: 10.1–6, 10; 11.5, 7, 21a, 29, 30; 12.9–10, 11, 20–21; 13.3–4, 9. Except for poor speaking, the other leadership weaknesses are discussed by Anitra Bingham Kolenkow, “Paul and Opponents in 2 Cor 10–13 — *Theioi Andres* and Spiritual Guides,” in Lukas Bormann, Kelly del Tredici, and Angela Standhartinger, eds., *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition the New Testament World* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) 351–374. She argues that the chief charge against Paul in these



ministry διὰ τῆς πραύτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ that Paul will explicate in this discourse, with the aim of transforming addressees so that they will identify these virtues with the meekness and gentleness of Paul that critics have wrongly characterized as weakness. These comments arise from a reading of the whole discourse; at this point in the discourse, recipients will not know what lies ahead.

These virtues occur elsewhere in Greek literature, although unrelated to Christ. For example, Paul’s contemporary Plutarch (c. 46–120 CE) praises the Athenian general Pericles for way he constrained his “vast power” by the same pair of virtues: “[T]he man is to be admired not only for his reasonableness and the gentleness [οὔ μόνον τῆς ἐπιεικείας καὶ πραύτητος] which he maintained in the midst of many responsibilities and great enmities, but also for his loftiness of spirit, seeing that he regarded it as the noblest of all his titles to honor that he had never gratified his envy or his passion in the exercise of his vast power, nor treated any one of his foes as a foe incurable” (*Pericles* 39.1; Perrin, LCL). Plutarch also refers to the belief that the temple of Clementia (Clemency; Ἐπιεικείας) “was decreed (ψηφίσασθαι) as a thank-offering (χαριστέριον) in view of his mildness (πραύτητι).”<sup>18</sup> Josephus tells of King Agrippa’s forgiving one Simon, who had criticized him in a speech to Jerusalem Jews. Agrippa forgave because he esteemed “mildness (πραύτητα) a more royal trait than passion, and was convinced that considerate behavior (ἐπιεικείαν) is more becoming in the great than wrath” (*Ant.* 19.34; Feldman, LCL). One or both words occur elsewhere in similar contexts, referring to how persons of authority exercise it with magnanimity and generosity, giving, in Frederick Danker’s words, “priority to human interests over legal privilege.”<sup>19</sup> Philo uses the same pair in describing the ninth seven-year stage of a man’s life as that stage in which “forbearance and gentleness (ἐπιεικεία καὶ

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chaps. is that he governs the church too weakly, the view that this study supports, along with the thesis that Paul’s rivals are or behave as Christian sophists, the view developed most fully with regard to 1 Corinthians by Bruce W. Winter in *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*.

<sup>18</sup> cited in Danker, *II Corinthians*, 149. Danker also cites Augustus’s *Res Gestae*, in which Augustus expresses pride that the Roman people gave him a gold shield that “defined him as a man of ‘forbearance’ (*clementia*, rendered *epieikeia* in the Greek version . . .)”; and the second-century BCE commander of Lysias’s guard, Opramoas, who led “with a sense of equity: desirous of meeting the needs of the people, he did not put the letter of the law above its spirit (*Benefactor*, pp. 351–52).”

<sup>19</sup> Danker, 148.

πραύτης) emerge, owing to the more complete taming of the passions” (*Creation*, 103; Whitaker, LCL).<sup>20</sup>

Ragnar Leivestad has traced these terms in Jewish and Christian biblical contexts in which they are not connected to the generosity of the powerful. In the NT, πραύτης “denotes the humble and gentle attitude which expresses itself in particular in a patient submissiveness to offence, free from malice and desire for revenge.”<sup>21</sup> In the LXX, ἐπιεικής expresses the notion of God and of kings as mild and forbearing,<sup>22</sup> a use similar to that of Plutarch’s. But Leivestad cites one “remarkable exception” to these regular uses, namely, Wisdom 2.19.<sup>23</sup> There ἐπιεικής applies not to an authority but to “the righteous,” ὁ δίκαιος, whose tormentors test whether his ἐπιείκεια can stand up under ill-treatment and even death.<sup>24</sup> They mockingly refer to his calling himself a son of God (2.13, 16, 18).<sup>25</sup> In Wisdom 2.19 ἐπιείκεια carries a sense quite similar to ἀνεξικακία, “which means the ability to endure pain and evil with patience.” Ἐπιείκεια here “has no connexion with the indulgence of a ruler.” Instead it signifies “a humble, patient steadfastness, which is able to submit to injustice, disgrace and maltreatment without hatred and malice, trusting God in spite of it all.”<sup>26</sup> In the NT, the seven occurrences of the ἐπιείκεια word-group express the central idea of gentleness: two involving the gentleness of non-Christian authorities (Acts 24.4; 1 Pet 2.18); two referring to it as a required virtue of church leaders (1 Tim 3.3; Titus 3.2); another two to gentleness as a virtue of Christians generally (Phil 4.5; Jas 3:17); and then the present text, 2 Corinthians 10.1, where it is joined with πραύτης. Leivestad suggests that in the NT ἐπιείκεια

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<sup>20</sup> BAGD<sup>2</sup> lists two other sources containing the pair of terms within the same sentence: Sertor. 25, 6; Appian, Basil. 1 §5.

<sup>21</sup> e.g., 1 Cor 4.21; Gal 5.23; 6.1; Eph 4.2; Col 3.12; 2 Tim 2.25; Titus 3.2; Jas 1.21; 3.13; 1 Pet 3.16, cited in Ragnar Leivestad, “The Meekness and Gentleness of Christ’ II Cor. X.1,” *NTS* 13 (1966) 159.

<sup>22</sup> of God, e.g., (LXX) 1 Regn 12.22; Ps. 85.5; Sap 12.18; Dan 3.42; 4.27; 2 Macc 2.22; 10.4; of kings, Esth 3.13b; 2 Macc 9.27; 3 Macc 3.15; 7.6

<sup>23</sup> Leivestad, 157

<sup>24</sup> ὕβρει καὶ βασάνῳ ἐτάσωμεν αὐτόν ἵνα γινώμεν τὴν ἐπιείκειαν αὐτοῦ καὶ δοκιμάσωμεν τὴν ἀνεξικακίαν αὐτοῦ (Let us test him with insult and torture, so that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. NRSV)

<sup>25</sup> Leivestad notes a parallel in Matt 27.40–43. But see Deirdre J. Good’s argument that the sense of a Hellenistic king’s magnanimous exercise of power—his “disciplined benevolence”—is expressed in the Gospel of Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus: *Jesus the Meek King* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1999). I became aware of the significance of Good’s study, which focuses on Matthew, too late to incorporate her evidence and arguments fully into this discussion, although the present rhetorical approach acknowledges that early hearers of the present discourse may have heard the pertinent phrase in 2 Cor 10.1 as expressing both senses. Leivestad insists, however, that Paul intended only the sense of patient steadfastness in the face of injustice.

<sup>26</sup> Leivestad, 158.

is closely associated with *πραύτης* and that in 2 Corinthians 10.1 the two form a hendiadys in which the sense of the pair is “qualified by the more usual and familiar of the two terms.” In this case, *πραύτης*, by far the more common of the two, helps define *ἐπιείκεια*; and the resulting sense is that of “a gentle, humble and modest attitude as a general Christian ideal, not the magnanimity and generosity to be exercised by authorities.”<sup>27</sup>

This survey indicates two ways the early hearers of this discourse may have taken Paul’s invoking of these virtues. Some may have applied the Greek tradition and understood Christ to be the magnanimous and generous man of authority, similar to Pericles and King Agrippa. These would have heard Paul’s appeal as his effort to be identified as one who is conscious of his authority and whose authority others acknowledge as well, but who exercises his authority with restraint. Others could have heard a connotation from within the developing Christian tradition for this pair of virtues. These would have heard an accent not on the authority and power of Christ, at least not in conventional terms. Instead, they would have heard Christ invoked as one who, like the righteous one of Wisdom 2.19, bore up under insult, rejection, and mockery with a steadfast patience and gentleness that did not seek revenge against his tormentors. In this hearing, Paul would be tempering his authority-expressing emphatic opening—“I, myself, Paul”—by invoking these virtues of the Christ who is strong in the seeming weakness of one who is steadfastly meek and gentle. In light of the remainder of the discourse, both senses are plausible. Paul wishes the Corinthians to see him as Christ, bearing insult with gentleness that does not seek revenge. But he also wants believers to know that he has authority and will exercise it as he has to, all the while hoping not to have to exercise it severely (10.8 with 13.10).

#### 10.1c-d Repeating of criticism, either in acceptance or in sarcasm

What may the immediate context of the discourse suggest is the sense Paul would want his hearers to accept? Immediately after invoking the pair of virtues, 10.1 interrupts the appeal. Rhetoricians identified this kind of interruption as the rhetorical scheme *aposiopesis*, or *reticentia*, or *interruptio*. Speakers used it for various purposes, among which Quintilian cites these: to give an impression of anxiety; to digress briefly; and to “indicate passion or anger.” (*Institutio*, 9.2.54–55; Butler, LCL). Passion, but not necessarily anger, fits 10.1, in

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<sup>27</sup> Leivestad, 160. This sense is clearly expressed in the occurrence of this pair of terms in later Christian texts, such as 1 Clem 21.7; 30.8; and Epistle to Diogenetus 7.4, in which occurs the same hendiadys as in 2 Cor 10.1.

which, in its opening sentence, the discourse has repeated one of the charges against Paul. From this rhetorical perspective, the first verse expresses a tension of emotions—an appeal constrained by the meekness and gentleness of Christ interrupted by his repeating a charge against him, expressing passion (if not sarcasm or anger). This beginning is not simple emotionally or rhetorically but complex, as is the remainder of the discourse.

Most interpreters agree that in 10.1c-d Paul repeats a criticism leveled against him, and the criticism centers on the charge that he is ταπεινός.<sup>28</sup> With this term, as with the pair of virtues, its majority use in pagan Hellenism differs from its majority use in Jewish and Christian writings. In the preponderance of uses in secular Greek, ταπεινός refers to “a person who is base, ignoble, of low birth, working at a humble occupation, [or] held in low esteem,” or who has a low self-estimate.<sup>29</sup> Yet ταπεινότης “was also considered a virtue even by pagans, namely the virtue of modesty or moderation,” associated with other virtues, including πραύτης.<sup>30</sup> Jewish and Christian biblical traditions combine these two senses of ταπεινός—the more or less objective naming of one’s social location combined with a positive, not a negative, evaluation. In the biblical tradition, ταπεινός still refers to one who is lowly, but God reveals salvation to “those of low degree,” not to the mighty (Luke 1.52 RSV). Matthew’s Jesus calls the “weary and burdened” to come to him for rest, and he assures them that πραύς εἰμι καὶ ταπεινός τῇ καρδίᾳ, that is, “I am humble (= meek and lowly)<sup>31</sup> in heart.” Τοὺς ταπεινοὺς are the downcast in 2 Cor 7.6, whom God comforts. And believers are urged not to despise but to associate with τοῖς ταπεινοῖς, “people of low position” (Rom 12.15 NIV) and, in this way, to resist the world’s negative evaluation of the lowly and to embrace God’s (Rom 12.2–3).

Paul’s critics used the term in a negative sense, and identifying this much about the use of ταπεινός in 10.1 suggests the sense in which Paul wanted his hearers to understand the “meekness and gentleness of Christ.” The sense of Christ’s bearing with insult and rejection without seeking vengeance from his tormentors parallels Paul’s situation: As the critics’

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<sup>28</sup> H. D. Betz departs from the majority with his view that ταπεινός and θαρρῶ in v. 1c-d are terms Paul himself chooses in restating in v. 1 the accusation quoted in 10.10. Paul, Betz argues, initiates his defense in v. 1 by this restatement using these key terms from the longstanding conflict between philosophers (whose role Paul assumes) and sophists (who are Paul’s rivals): *Der Apostel Paulus*, 44–57, 67–68.

<sup>29</sup> Ceslas Spicq, ταπεινός, ταπεινώ, ταπεινότης, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (James D. Ernest, trans. and ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 369.

<sup>30</sup> Spicq, 370

negative use of ταπεινός shows (along with other texts throughout the discourse), they have attacked Paul in seeking to deny him a continuing place as an apostle of Christ to the Corinthians. Yet Paul seeks to respond to such attacks in a measured way that helps the Corinthian believers embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ more faithfully, even as it also disarms the attacks. Paul wants the addressees to understand the “meekness and gentleness of Christ” in this way.

Keeping in mind that this discourse would have been read aloud to a gathering of believers in its first performances, we can ask if the hearers might have first associated the ταπεινός of 10.1 with Christ before they heard the completion of v. 1 and knew that ταπεινός referred to Paul, as Peterson suggests. Ταπεινός in 10.1 is introduced by a relative clause begun by ὅς, and the clause may refer either to “I, myself, Paul” or to “of Christ,” creating what Peterson terms a “purposeful ambiguity.” By the end of v. 1 hearers would know that the clause refers to Paul, but with this ambiguous construction, Paul may have begun “subtly . . . mov[ing] the Corinthian to see his point,” which he develops later in the discourse: namely, that his lowliness and weakness qualify him to be “the true apostle of Christ, who also came as ταπεινός.”<sup>32</sup>

Whether or not any would hear v. 1b in this way initially, it is worth considering what Paul’s critics might have meant when they disparaged him as ταπεινός. Lexical senses of ταπεινός such as those cited above establish at least generally that the critics found Paul to be unqualified to be an apostle. This criticism takes more specific shape in 10.10 and 11.6, in which Paul responds to criticisms of his speaking abilities and to the contrast between his speech and his writing. This study treats these verses more fully below, but their criticisms point to a plausible sense for ταπεινός in 10.1.

Winter’s study of sophistic culture in Corinth during Paul’s time suggests that ταπεινός in 10.1 may refer to Paul’s abject failure to meet the standards of sophistic eloquence that his rivals and at least some influential members of the Corinthian congregation thought essential for a leader of the church. “They claimed that he was ‘unpresentable’ in appearance as a public speaker (ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενῆς [10.10]), . . . that by contemporary canons of speaking he was ‘inarticulate’ (ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος, 10.10), . . . [and that] [h]e

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<sup>31</sup> Ragnar Leivestad, “Ταπεινός—ταπεινόφρων,” *Novum Testamentum* 8 (1966) 44–46.

<sup>32</sup> Peterson, *Eloquence*, 80.

was only a layman in oratory (ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, 11.6).”<sup>33</sup> This failure to speak acceptably according to contemporary sophistic standards meant to critics not only that Paul lacked a technical skill important to his performance as a leader within Corinthian culture. It also meant that Paul lacked overall social standing and was truly lowly in their eyes. How these critics viewed Paul may be expressed in Philo’s critique of the sophistic culture he knew in the east of the empire. In “The Worse Attacks the Better,”<sup>34</sup> Philo contrasts Abel (the better) and Cain (the worse) in an allegorical critique of contemporary sophistry. Philo identifies sophistry with Cain and self-love and says it boxes and wrestles persons of virtue, identified with Abel and love of God (#32). After Philo’s sophists have praised their lives of social privilege and bodily pleasure (#33), they disparage their opponents: “The so-called lovers of virtue are almost without exception obscure people (ἄδοξοι), looked down upon (εὐκαταφρόνητοι), of mean estate (ταπεινοί), destitute of the necessities of life, not enjoying the privileges of subject peoples or even of slaves, filthy, sallow, reduced to skeletons, with a hungry look from want of food, the prey of disease, in training for dying” (*Worse*; Whitaker, LCL)<sup>35</sup> While this sophistic put-down of opponents goes further than simply glossing ταπεινός, two observations merit mention: (1) This critique captures the demeaning, shaming attitude communicated through ταπεινός as an attack on Paul; (2) and its terms compare closely with Paul’s description of the low status and marginal existence of apostles in 1 Corinthians 4.9–13 and, in diction and syntax less similar but still conceptually comparable, in 2 Corinthians 6.4–10. By calling Paul ταπεινός, then, critics attack not only his performance as a speaker but also his person as socio-culturally unfit to be an apostle to Corinthian Christians.

The interruption of v. 1c-d concludes with a contrast that critics have forged into an attack—Paul is inconsistent: timid and lowly in person, but confident and bold when away.<sup>36</sup>

This criticism could have expressed a judgment about Paul’s character, that he easily changes

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<sup>33</sup> *Philo and Paul*, 204.

<sup>34</sup> *Quod Deterius Potiori insidari solet*; hereafter *Worse*.

<sup>35</sup> cited by Winter, 108

<sup>36</sup> The attack on his alleged inconsistency appears also in 1.15–17 and 10.2, where Paul responds both times to the charge that he behaves κατὰ σάρκα. Cf. H. D. Betz, who finds in 1 Thess. 2.1–12 Paul’s contrasting his motivation and practice of ministry from that of “religious charlatans,” whom Betz finds to fit the type of the “false friend,” whose stock in trade is flattery, taking the cue of 1 Thess. 2.5, which mentions λόγῳ κολακείας, flattering speech. The words of such “originate in ‘error, impurity, and deceit’ (πλάνη, ἀκαθαρσία, δόλος)” (v. 3) and are motivated by

his manner of presentation depending on the circumstances. From this perspective, his opponents may have labeled him a flatterer (κόλαξ), a stock character type of antiquity, known and detested widely. In Theophrastus’s *Characters*, the flatterer is to be mistrusted because of his insincerity and self-seeking (42–47; Edmonds, LCL). In his essay “How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend,” Plutarch criticizes the flatterer for his chameleon-like qualities, “having no abiding place of character to dwell in” (52b; Babbitt, LCL). In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle contrasts the flatterer with the magnanimous man (4.3.29; Cooke, LCL). Flatterers are slavish, he says, because they always live at the will of another and are always servile. Especially significant for this discussion of 10.1 is Aristotle’s next comment: “humble people (οἱ ταπεινοὶ) [are] flatterers (κόλακες).”

But the inconsistency attacked may be more specific and rhetorical in nature. Even as the sense of ταπεινός in 10.1 is clarified by a related, rhetorical expression in 10.10 (and 11.6), so also is a pertinent sense of θαρρῶ clarified by a corresponding rhetorical expression in 10.10: αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ μὲν, φησί, βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραὶ. Paul is bold while absent through his letters, which, according to the criticism, are impressive and strong, unlike his presence and speech. The pair of adjectives and the possible rhetorical significance of the contrast between Paul’s speaking and letter-writing performances are discussed more fully below.

10.2a Resumptive plea for Corinthians to help Paul (avert confrontation)

10.2b Threat of bold confrontation when present

10.2c Identification of object of threatened confrontation (τινας τοὺς λογιζομένους) and restatement (or repeating of additional) criticism (ἡμᾶς ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας)

Verse 2 resumes the appeal begun in v. 1 but interrupted. Rhetorically, these items are significant: (1) By resuming the appeal (begun in v. 1) with δέομαι in v. 2, Paul involves the recipients of the discourse in the discourse itself and the events related to it more deeply. While this v. does not specify what the responsive Corinthians should do in order to spare Paul’s having to dare to be bold, Paul’s request signifies that he considers them able to act. (2) His use of θαρρῆσαι plays on θαρρῶ in v. 1, an equivocation without the negative connotation of deceit. He has been charged with being bold from a distance, and he threatens to do that of which he has been accused, only this time when in person. (3) The plea refutes

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greed (v. 5; ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας) and (v. 6) the desire for glory from the people (ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν). “The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology According to the Apostle Paul,” n. 34, p. 22.

the criticism that Paul is bold only when absent by asserting with intensity (τολμῆσαι) that he will confront his opponents.<sup>37</sup> (4) The plea of v. 2 completes the appeal begun in v. 1 by naming its object—that the Corinthians would act in such a way that Paul would not have to show his boldness in person toward his accusers.<sup>38</sup> (4) Of great importance for this analysis, a comparison of 10.2 with the end of this discourse reveals that the purpose for the discourse is expressed in 10.1–2.<sup>39</sup> In 13.10 Paul states his purpose for this discourse in language roughly synonymous with 10.2a: ἵνα παρῶν μὴ ἀποτόμως χρήσωμαι κατὰ τὴν ἐξουσίαν. 10.2 asks that Paul not have to be bold; 13.10 expresses his desire not to exert his authority severely. It concludes with a clause nearly repeating a clause in 10.8 expressing the purpose of Paul’s divinely given authority: to build up the Corinthians.<sup>40</sup>

- 10.3a Concession (ἐν σαρκὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦντες) followed by  
 10.3b Apparently broken parallelism (οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατευόμεθα) initiating a threat in a claim (στρατευόμεθα)

The final phrase of v. 2, κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας, expresses another accusation, which v. 3 concedes partly—ἐν σαρκὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦντες and then denies, with a surprising turn that expresses an argumentative claim supported in the following vv. The form of the concessive clause (v. 3a) leads one to expect that the next clause (v. 3b) would flatly deny the accusation—οὐ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας. But Paul writes not περιπατοῦντας, or some form of it, but στρατευόμεθα. The two do not seem semantically close, as if he chose a synonymous term simply to vary the diction and avoid three occurrences of περιπατοῦντας within a dozen words. Such an apparent break in coherence invites the query: What accounts for the apparently unprepared-for introduction of the language of war? Answers may lie in a few considerations: (1) This break in an expected pattern of expression evidences the enmity between Paul and his opponents and the Corinthians sympathetic to them. Some interpreters suggest that the military language was already being used in the conflict.<sup>41</sup> (2) The term of war does in fact cohere with v. 2a: στρατευόμεθα may be read as cohering with and further

<sup>37</sup> Vv. 2-6 and 8-11 continue this refutation as well; cf. discussion of these vv. below.

<sup>38</sup> action previewed in vv. 4c-6a.

<sup>39</sup> and expressed more fully with vv. 3–11.

<sup>40</sup> 10.8 includes ὑμῶν to specify the Corinthians as recipients of up-building but not of tearing down, but 13.10 omits this pronoun, leaving the trace of a warning that Paul will have to exert his authority severely if the Corinthians do not complete their obedience (10.6), or improve (13.9).

<sup>41</sup> E.g., Malherbe, “Antisthenes,” 112



specifying the content of θαρρήσαι τῇ πεποιθήσει ἢ λογίζομαι τολμήσαι. (3) From this perspective, στρατευόμεθα parallels περιπατοῦντας conceptually, because “living by the standards of this world” (v. 2) and “wag[ing] war in a worldly way” (v. 3b) both allege how Paul conducts his ministry, both of which Paul denies. (4) In this way, v. 3b does deny the accusation in v. 2, and this denial-claim is supported by vv. 4–6, making it, in form, a rhetorical argument.

#### 10.4 Claim to support preceding claim

10.5–6a Amplification of purpose phrase (πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων) of preceding claim, v. 4

10.6b Implied demand for obedience (restating plea, v. 2)

Support for the claim in v. 3b follows γὰρ (v. 4): Paul’s team fights with divinely empowered weapons or weapons powerful for God.<sup>42</sup> The argument intended to produce conviction runs this way: If we fight with weapons powerful by or for God, we cannot be fighting in a worldly, or anti-God, way. Conviction requires, of course, the hearers to believe that Paul is fighting with such spiritual, not fleshly or worldly, weapons, and it remains to be seen if or how he induces this belief. These weapons accomplish one main objective, the “destruction of fortresses,” and this objective is divided into and amplified by four kinds of action expressed in participles in vv. 4-6. But this support for the claim expressed in v. 3b amounts finally to another claim, a claim about what Paul’s team does, an assertion that one would not expect the opposing Corinthians to agree to. The argument is therefore truncated at this point in the discourse because it is not developed in a way that would exert rational force on Paul’s addressees. The assertion offered as support for the claim begs the question: Granting that Paul’s team wars with divine, not worldly weapons, would compel one to conclude, by standards of rhetorical argumentation, that Paul’s team does not wage war on

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<sup>42</sup> What kind of dative occurs in δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ, v. 4? “Divinely empowered weapons” renders the dative as a Semitism expressing a Hebrew intensive (so Philip Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 351 n. 6; BDF § 192; and Charles F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 184); “powerful in the eyes of God” expresses the dative of subjective judgment (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 457, although he prefers the final option); and “powerful for God” expresses the dative of advantage (so *Jerusalem Bible*, “in God’s cause”; BDF § 188.2; also Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 457; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 305; Charles Kingsley Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Harper’s New Testament Commentary; New York: Harper & Row; London: A. & C. Black, 1973), 251). Because of this study’s reading of these vv., with Paul’s waging war understood as his fulfilling his apostolic ministry on his terms, the third rendering of the dative fits the context best: Paul’s “weak” leadership in the meekness and gentleness of Christ is powerful for God and God’s purposes among the Corinthians.

worldly terms. But this argument does not offer evidence that Paul's weapons are divine; it only asserts the claim with emotionally forceful images. Does the discourse complete this argument more satisfactorily with persuasive support for its claim, or does the discourse here perhaps perform an act other than argument?

The militaristic language produces a tone for this passage. The language of war portrays Paul as a military commander threatening to besiege a city—or to liberate one under siege, and it escalates the level of conflict expressed so far. This escalation, occurring at the beginning of the discourse, evinces the conflict that both elicits these chapters and is expressed throughout them. Such language here goes beyond simply denying the accusation in v. 2 to advancing the offensive expressed first through the threat of bold action in the same v.<sup>43</sup> The language of war expresses an aggressiveness that strains against the virtues invoked in v. 1. Were both the appeal qualified by virtues (v. 1) and the fighting (v. 3) directed to the “you” of v. 1, any reading would have to struggle to find coherence among these speech acts. But the recipients of the appeal differ from those of the war. Paul appeals to the Corinthians as a whole, but he wars with the “some,” a distinction one may discern among vv. 1-3 and by means of the quasi-causal distinction of v. 6: Paul (with his team—“we”) is ready to punish the disobedience (of some) when the Corinthians-as-a-whole have fully obeyed. Paul in no way minimizes his threat; but he does qualify it: He does not threaten with these actions the Corinthians these chapters address. They are aimed instead at unnamed opponents, the “some” of v. 2.

Paul does not name or otherwise directly describe his weapons, nor does he define the time in which his team uses them. “Being ready to punish,” the final participial construction of vv. 4–6, refers to action in the future, “when your obedience is complete.” But the participial actions of vv. 4-5 do not have to refer only or primarily to the future and may instead have the force of ongoing action without reference to a specific time. The discourse does not identify the weapons. Should we assume that recipients would know what they

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<sup>43</sup> "Offensive" in a military sense fits the language of vv. 3-6, as Moffat's translation demonstrates: "I do live in the flesh, but I do not make war as the flesh does; the weapons of my warfare are not weapons of the flesh, but divinely strong to demolish fortresses--I demolish theories and any rampart thrown up to resist the knowledge of God, I take every project prisoner to make it obey Christ, I am prepared to court-martial anyone who remains insubordinate, once your submission is complete." James Moffat, *A New Translation of the Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments* (revised edition; New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

were?<sup>44</sup> Unlike the identity of the targets of Paul’s divine warfare (which we may presume the recipients knew to be Paul’s rivals), recipients probably did not know what the weapons were, and there are good rhetorical reasons for their identity not to be emphasized at this point in the discourse: First, vv. 3–6 emphasize Paul’s readiness to wage this war and, through the implied interaction with his recipients, the reasons for it—expressed through naming the targets, λογισμοὺς, πᾶν ὑψωμα, etc. Second, not identifying the weapons does not allow hearers to assess their efficacy. Because the manner of Paul’s ministry is itself the object of criticism, including the alleged contradiction between his powerful letter-writing and weak personal presence and speech,<sup>45</sup> mentioning his ministry or its “weak” manner would encourage hearers to dismiss Paul’s threat and warning. Moreover, not identifying these weapons leaves them not only unknown but also perhaps mysterious, and that quality may enhance the effect of these vv. With the weapons unidentified, hearers attend to the effect these vv. seek: namely, threat and warning.

One potential dimension of the weapons should be identified here, even if it would not have been so identified by early recipients. As this study will show, this discourse—and the Fool’s Speech especially—aims to destroy arguments and take captive thoughts that disparage Paul’s apostleship. The discourse seeks to transform hearers so that they prepare for Paul’s upcoming visit (10.2 with 13.1, 5, 9–11) and, in preparing, view Paul’s weak ministry among them differently and properly, as ministry communicating the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

### *Rhetorical Style*

These features of style significant to the rhetorical effect of this unit have been noted above: emphasis on Paul in v. 1; the initial ambiguity of the reference of ὃς—whether to Christ or to Paul—in the clause that ultimately states a criticism of Paul, in v. 1; the wordplay of Παρῶν θαρρησαι in v. 2 on ἀπὼν δὲ θαρρῶ in v. 1; the military images and amplification in vv. 3–6. To these, we add another structure of emphasis that brings back to the Corinthians the insistence the discourse delivers that they act. The final clauses of this unit move from the offensive against

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<sup>44</sup> In Malherbe’s view, the Corinthians would have recognized the Stoic provenance of Paul’s description of the fortress of reasoning and the Cynic provenance of Paul’s reference to his weapons (“Paul obviously assumed that his method of argumentation would be intelligible to his Corinthian readers,” “Antisthenes,” 119), although he does not speculate on the effect of such language on them and on how it would serve the purpose of the discourse.

Paul's rivals apparently to discipline among the Corinthians, and placing ὅταν πληρωθῆ ὑμῶν ἡ ὑπακοή at the end endows it with emphasis, allowing Paul to call for them to obey with the slight obliqueness of a noun phrase ("when your obedience is complete") that does not highlight the agent and is therefore less demanding in its expression than "when you have fully obeyed." Yet the position of the noun phrase at the end of the divine warfare sub-unit and of the sentence emphasizes it.

### Implications

Crucial implications from this unit include these:

1. Rhetorical distance yawns between Paul and his addressees, who are divided into at least two groups: those Paul appeals to, to reconcile with and obey him; those who have judged Paul to have lived κατὰ σάρκα. It is not as clear now as it will be later in the discourse that this second group divides into two: members of the Corinthian church critical of Paul and rivals ministering at Corinth whom Paul will characterize as false apostles.
2. The discourse seeks to close the distance between at least Paul and those amenable to reconciliation, and it proceeds on the assumption that such reconciliation is possible.
3. Paul's citing of the meekness and gentleness of Christ implies the Corinthians' familiarity with this characterization of Christ, because Paul does not argue for this attribution but merely states it and then uses it throughout the rest of the discourse as the moral touchstone for the manner of his ministry.
4. The lack of rational argumentation in this section and the presence of strong language in a range of tones—from appeal constrained by meekness and gentleness to threats of aggressive action—imply that Paul's persona is one of either desperation or confidence. One desperate may unleash any rhetorical tactics without a discernibly coherent strategy because one fears the worst and believes oneself to have nothing to lose. A critic might see Paul's combining in these six vv. the moderating appeal with the aggressive threat as such an act. Only the pattern revealed in the rest of the discourse can confirm or disconfirm this hypothesis. This study will show that the discourse confirms Paul's persona of confidence. Paul will immediately begin to argue in a religious-rational way, but he deploys both some restraint and great force in these opening vv. out of confidence that he is fully authorized to act with the strength

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<sup>45</sup> 10.10–11, discussed below

necessary to respond to the challenges eliciting these chaps. This confidence appears in the emphatic self-reference beginning the discourse, in the announcement of the virtues that qualify his appeal, and in the forceful threat and warning that follows. Despite the enmity that exists between him and some of the Corinthians and the deterioration of relations it expresses, the Paul inscribed in this discourse is confident that his response is legitimate, that he will visit Corinth again, and that the conflict will resolve decisively, if not before his visit because of this letter, then during his visit (13.10).

### *Rhetorical Effects*

How would this unit likely affect its recipients? The emphatic self-reference would elicit serious attention; the invoking of the virtues of Christ would likely elicit the two kinds of attitudes identified in the earlier discussion: the sense that Paul is asserting authority with a kind of magnanimity, then also the different sense that Paul is consciously not lashing back at those who have put him down with the accusation expressed in 10.1c-d. The renewed appeal (v. 2) would invite those not set in their opposition to Paul to side with him and spare themselves his aggressive response, while the following announcement of divine warfare (vv. 3–5) would alert hearers to Paul’s seriousness in responding to the inroads of the rivals. It would test their confidence in their judgment of Paul: namely, that he blusters from a distance but poses no threat in person.<sup>46</sup> If they sense Paul’s confidence, the threat will impress them as credible. We of course cannot know how the actual Corinthians received the threat of vv. 3–5, but we can say that the discourse implies that they would receive it seriously. From reading the whole discourse, I believe that the discourse portrays Paul as neither desperate nor powerless (as if he has to beg to be taken seriously) but as confident; therefore, I suggest that it is reasonable to believe that a significant number of the Corinthian recipients would respond to the threat as credible. These would further feel assured by v. 6: their obedience removes them from Paul’s list of warfare targets. The final effect of this unit is the choice recipients will begin to discern: cooperation with Paul will experience meekness and gentleness, while continued attack and resistance will risk devastating force.

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<sup>46</sup> After all, they might reason, he has already backed down from an open confrontation (cf. 2 Cor. 1.23–2.11). The accusation of this duplicitous action occurs in 10.10.

### Recapitulation of Rhetorical Performance

Verses 1–6 open this discourse by appealing to the Corinthians to submit to Paul so that he will not have to carry out threats against unnamed accusers when he next visits Corinth. The appeal is the most emphatic in Paul’s letters, strengthened also by a resumptive plea (v. 2) and qualified by virtues exemplified by Christ. Although Paul asserts these virtues only once, they express his view of his manner of apostolic leadership that critics have judged to be weak. This reading will argue that Paul submits to this judgment by performing meekness through this discourse, especially in the Fool’s Speech, even as he seeks to overturn it. Further, he constrains the exercise of his authority with efforts to persuade—a form of gentleness comparable to that of Pericles, as praise by Plutarch. But alongside these constraining virtues, the discourse threatens Paul’s rival-opponents (vv. 3–6). As a result, the tone of these vv. contrasts, with meekness and gentleness directed toward the believers but threat toward his opponents. These vv. spare the Corinthians the threat,<sup>47</sup> yet they emphasize twice (vv. 2, 6) that the Corinthians need to submit to, or obey, Paul. These vv. also assert indirectly that the compliance of the Corinthians will defeat the efforts of the accusers or, at the least, weaken them. The vv. thus challenge the Corinthians to act by presuming that they are able to act effectively. This beginning is thus forceful, and it would elicit the sober attention of its first hearers. While Malherbe views the relation between this unit and the rest of this discourse as “difficult to determine,”<sup>48</sup> this reading will show the rhetorical logic in this unit’s forcefulness and in its introducing important topics that are developed in the remainder of the discourse. These topics include the chief purpose of the discourse—prompting the Corinthians to prepare for Paul’s visit; God’s (and Christ’s) approval of Paul’s ministry; and Paul’s intent to continue to express his apostolic authority in the manner some have criticized as weak, along with his readiness to express his authority with severity toward opponents and critics, if he must.

These vv. do not argue, even though vv. 2–4 display the form of rhetorical argument. But instead of arguing, these vv. assert forcefully and depend on Paul’s credibility for their immediate effectiveness. But more than forceful assertion is needed, not only because 10.1–6 is only introductory, but also because Paul’s credibility itself has been questioned. The following units exist in response to this need.

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<sup>47</sup> except perhaps unchanged critics of Paul

<sup>48</sup> “Antisthenes” 112

The actions of these vv. point out that this discourse, from the outset, aims at eliciting specific present and future behavior from the Corinthians and does not aim primarily at defending Paul's past and present actions. This discourse aim indicates that 2 Corinthians 10–13 evinces primarily deliberative rhetoric, not judicial rhetoric as George Kennedy and others have argued, although it includes defense, refutation, and accusation, all elements of judicial, or forensic, oratory.<sup>49</sup> Regarding the function of only these vv., do the actions they perform fit Greco-Roman descriptions of an *exordium* (or προοίμιον)? Discussions of the *exordium* in Greco-Roman handbooks differ in details but agree on these aims, here expressed by Quintilian, whose instruction usually synthesizes the main stream of rhetorical pedagogy and practice preceding him:<sup>50</sup>

The sole purpose of the *exordium* is to prepare our audience in such a way that they will be disposed to lend a ready ear to the rest of our speech. The majority of authors agree that this is best effected in three ways, by making the audience well disposed, attentive, and ready to receive instruction. (*Institutio*, 4.1.5; Butler, LCL)

This statement of aim emphasizes the effect of the *exordium* on hearers, and Quintilian's discussion of the *exordium* details how to produce these effects in various situations (4.1.6–79; as do the discussions in other handbooks). The preceding discussion in this study of the speech acts 10.1–6 perform, with their likely effects, shows that this unit would elicit sober attention, but its assertions of authority, whether constrained by meekness and gentleness or amplified in threatened severity, would not likely render hearers voluntarily well disposed and ready for the rest of the discourse. Except for those who would dismiss the force and gravity of these vv. as so much bluster from Paul-at-a-distance, hearers would attend to the discourse because of the threat it has expressed, but such attention would be chiefly involuntary and would not indicate that an audience is similarly well disposed and ready for instruction.

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<sup>49</sup> E.g., George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 86–96; Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 328. Jerry W. McCant says 2 Cor “conforms to the species of judicial rhetoric” but exhibits mixed rhetorical genres and is, finally, “a defense that does not defend,” because “rhetorical goals subvert the judicial functions to promote Paul’s pastoral and epideictic goals”; *2 Corinthians* (Readings; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 13. This study agrees with McCant on this topic.

<sup>50</sup> Other discussions of the *exordium* include Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.14.1–12; *Ad Her.* 1.4.6–1.7.11; Cicero, *De Inv.*, 1.15.20–1.17.25. While not rejecting the three-fold aim of the *exordium* common to *Ad Her.*, Cicero, and Quintilian, Aristotle states its aim more concisely: “So then the most essential and special function of the *exordium* is to make clear what is the end or purpose of the speech; wherefore it should not be employed, if the subject is quite clear or unimportant. All the other forms of *exordia* in use are only remedies [to the inattention, unfavorable disposition, hostility, etc., of hearers], and are common to all three branches of Rhetoric” (3.14.6–7; Freese, LCL).

Among the speech situations these handbooks treat, the situation of this discourse corresponds most closely to that of an orator facing an audience already won over by previous speakers. Aristotle does not specify an *exordium* for an audience already convinced, but he acknowledges the need to excite or remove prejudice and moves beyond the *exordium* proper in discussing arguments to accomplish either end (*Rhet.*, 3.14.11–3.15.10). *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* urges this use of the subtle approach (which Cicero terms insinuation) when opponents have already won over the audience:

The point which our adversaries have regarded as their strongest support we shall promise to discuss first; we shall begin with a statement made by the opponent, and particularly with that which he has made last; and we shall use Indecision, along with an exclamation of astonishment: “What had I best say?” or “To what point shall I first reply?” (1.6.10; Caplan, LCL; similarly Cicero, *De Inv.*, 1.15.20; Hubbell, LCL)

In addition Cicero urges the speaker in such a situation to evince confidence:

For when the audience see that he whom they think is shaken by the opponent’s speech is ready to speak in reply with confidence and assurance, they generally think that they have assented too readily rather than that he is confident without good cause. (1.17.25)

Quintilian considers it “pre-eminently desirable” that an *exordium*, particularly for a courtroom speech, shows the speech to express “some serious moral consideration” and “even more necessary” to show that an orator’s clients have been forced to act “by some weighty and honourable reason or even necessity” (*Institutio*, 4.1.7–8). He also considers it “important to avoid giving the impression that [speakers] are abusive, malignant, proud, or slanderous toward any individual or body of men” (4.1.10). When considering how to influence specifically judges who are prejudiced against one’s case or client, Quintilian even advises that sometimes it may be necessary to frighten them, for which he mentions two options: threatening them with the displeasure of the Roman people or the inclusion of others of lower class on the juries; or threatening them with prosecution for bribery. Quintilian also discusses “certain tricks for acquiring good-will” through an *exordium*, among which he suggests “rhetorical expressions of wishing, detestation, entreaty, or anxiety” (4.1.33), because these may “keep the judge’s attention on the alert” because they may signal important qualities in the unfolding case. If the judge has already been convinced by one’s opponent, Quintilian agrees “that we should cut down, depreciate, and deride some of our opponent’s arguments with a view to lessening the attention shown him by the judge” (4.1.38).



These citations from the handbooks pertain to 2 Corinthians 10.1–6 when those aimed at judicial oratory are transposed into the setting of an intra-church dispute, about which none of the handbook authors could know. These vv. attack the arguments of opponents (v. 4); contain entreaty (vv. 1, 2); threaten in ways that might frighten (vv. 2–6); respond to a serious attack on Paul’s integrity as an apostle (v. 2); evince confidence in response to attack; incorporate the criticisms of opponents—if not their fuller arguments (vv. 1–3); and, by invoking the virtues of Christ (v. 1), may be judged to avoid abusing or expressing pride. In these ways, these vv. do function as an exordium. Yet they differ in a significant way from the rhetorical situations that the handbooks presume. The handbooks presume that orators seek the assent of their hearers, whoever they may be in the variety of rhetorical settings, from courtroom to assembly to declamation hall, through the art of persuasion; that orators do not have the authority, apart from the authority that the act of persuasion creates, to compel a specific response. Judges, juries, crowds seeking entertainment, and, in earlier times, members of the city ἐκκλησία were free to respond to the orator’s efforts as they would choose. Orators were accountable to their judgment. But this reading of this discourse argues that Paul’s view and practice of apostleship values persuasion less and the exertion of divinely given authority more. Some of Paul’s speech acts are efforts to persuade, but these are set within a substratum of assertions of his authority among and over the Corinthians. Should they not respond to the courtesy of requests and reasoning, Paul will nevertheless exert his authority: He is coming for another visit and will be severe in using his authority if he has to (13.10).

This different relationship between Paul and Corinthians believers, on one hand, and between orators and their various kinds of judges (differing according to rhetorical situation and species) as envisioned by the rhetorical handbooks, on the other hand, accounts for the relative lack of concern in 10.1–6 for eliciting the good will of the addressees. The appeal to the virtues of Christ (10.1) can be read as such an eliciting of good will, but if so, that appeal is the only instance in these vv. But if, as this reading suggests, the appeal to the virtues functions as much, if not more, to warrant the manner of Paul’s ministry that has been attacked as weak, then the whole of the *exordium* is filled with Paul’s asserting his authority, not with efforts to ingratiate himself with his hearers or to persuade them otherwise. It is in this way that this study explores the possibility that Paul is fundamentally out of step with the premises and practice of the Greco-Roman art of rhetoric. Throughout this discourse, does Paul diverge from the primacy of persuasion over

authority, as the art of rhetoric presupposes, even while he uses rhetoric subordinate to authority? And might this divergence play out the rejection of rhetoric as a means of gospel proclamation, which 1 Corinthians 1–4 expresses and which this study summarized in the previous chapter? If these questions are answered in the affirmative, another arises about the character of the authority Paul valorizes over persuasion: Does it, by apparently subordinating the human freedom presupposed by the art of persuasion, dictate and oppress? An affirmative answer faces the contrary response of Paul’s Corinthian critics who faulted his exercise of authority in leadership for being weak.

### PAUL STATES A CRITERION AND KEY CLAIMS (10.7–11; a *Propositio*)

#### *Text*

7 Τὰ κατὰ πρόσωπον βλέπετε.<sup>51</sup> εἴ τις<sup>52</sup> πέποιθεν ἑαυτῷ <sup>53</sup>Χριστοῦ εἶναι, τοῦτο λογιζέσθω πάλιν ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ, ὅτι καθὼς αὐτὸς Χριστοῦ, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς. 8 ἐάν [τε]<sup>54</sup> γὰρ περισσώτερόν τι καυχῶμαι περὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας ἡμῶν ἢς ἔδωκεν ὁ κύριος εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς

<sup>51</sup> βλέπετε is, in form, either a present indicative or a present imperative. English versions translate it more often as an indicative, for example, JBmg, KJ, NASB, NIV, NKJ, NEBmg, NLT, TEV. The JB, NEB, RSV and NRSV are notable exceptions. Among significant commentators, more read it as an imperative (so Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 255; Danker, *II Corinthians*, 153; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 465) than as an indicative (Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of Paul* [ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915], *loc. cit.*) or interrogative (G. Godet and F. Fenton, cited incompletely by Jean Héring, *The Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. by A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock; London: Epworth, 1967), 71. This study interprets βλέπετε as an imperative because that mood fits better into the pattern of Paul’s arguing—and challenging the Corinthians to evaluate him—on the basis of what they have witnessed firsthand (12.6; see discussion in chap. three). It is best read as an imperative in other Pauline occurrences as well: 1 Cor. 8.9; 10.18; 16.10; Gal. 5.15; Phil. 3.2; also Eph. 5.15; Col. 2.8; 4.17. If one reads βλέπετε as an indicative—“You are looking [only] at the face [of things]”—the call to look at the evidence is lost, but the other claims of this study are not weakened. The verb in the indicative would imply a call to look more deeply than on the surface, and the implied call, should hearers perceive it, could exert nearly the same effect as an explicit imperative.

<sup>52</sup> The form is singular, which Barrett takes as referring to a real individual (*Second Epistle*, 256), but the majority of commentators see the singular as standing for a group of critics referred to in vv. 2, 12 (Barnett refers to this “notional,” as opposed to real, singular, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 470; for Martin, the group is here “personalized as a single number,” *2 Corinthians*, 307; also Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 190; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 466.) The translation keeps the singular whenever it occurs throughout this section, leaving open the question of whether or not it refers to a group.

<sup>53</sup> The Western text (D\* G Ambrosiaster) reads δοῦλος here, an expansion probably to clarify the referent of the infinitive phrase. Barrett notes its secondary status but also that it “gives the right sense” (*Second Epistle* 254).

<sup>54</sup> Nestle-Aland<sup>26</sup> brackets τε, found in ⋈ C D ψ m, but omitted in p<sup>46</sup> B F G H et al. Here it does not perform its usual copulative role but instead intensifies εαν. Moulton, *Greek New Testament Grammar*, iii.339, calls it a “superfluous affectation,” but other authorities would justify its inclusion in the text: Bultmann, *zweite Brief*, 190; Windisch, *zweite Korintherbrief*, 303 n. 1; BDG § 443(3); Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament*, 96ff., who quotes Aristotle, *Politics* 1318b33.

καθαίρεισιν ὑμῶν, οὐκ αἰσχυνηθήσομαι, 9 ἵνα μὴ δόξω ὡς ἂν ἐκφοβεῖν ὑμᾶς διὰ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν· 10 ὅτι, Αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ μὲν, φησὶν, βαρεῖλαι καὶ ἰσχυραί, ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενής καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος. 11 τοῦτο λογιζέσθω ὁ τοιοῦτος, ὅτι οἱοί ἐσμεν τῷ λόγῳ δι’ ἐπιστολῶν ἀπόντες, τοιοῦτοι καὶ παρόντες τῷ ἔργῳ.

### ***Translation***

(7) Look at what is right before you. If anyone is convinced that he is Christ’s, let him consider again within himself that just as [in whatever way] he is Christ’s, so also are we. (8) For even if I should boast [about being Christ’s and,]<sup>55</sup> even more so, about our authority—which the Lord gave to build you up and not to tear you down—I will not be discredited. (9) In order that I would not seem to frighten you with the letters (10) (for he says, “His letters are impressive and forceful, but his personal presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.”), (11) let such a person understand that what we are in word through letters while absent we will be, when present, in deed.

### ***Analysis***

#### *Speech Acts*

- 10.7a Call to look at the evidence
  - b-e Claim 1 – Paul belongs to Christ [or is a true apostle of Christ] as much as anyone
- 10.8a Concession about boasting regarding authority
  - b Clarification of the purpose of authority
  - c Claim 2 – Paul will not be discredited in his claims to belong to Christ [or be a true apostle of Christ] and to possess [apostolic] authority
- 10.9 Denial of intent to frighten with letters
- 10.10 Reason for denial: expanded restatement of the criticism in 10.1
- 10.11 Emphatic rebuttal to the criticism: Claim 3 – Paul does in person what he says by letter

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<sup>55</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 309, following Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 258, finds v. 8 to refer to two topics of boasting. In this reading, the comparative adverb *περισσότερόν* does not express the extent to which Paul boasts (so rendered, e.g., as “a little too much” RSV, NRSV, or “somewhat freely” NIV) but instead marks a second topic about which Paul boasts, as expressed in the translation.

### Coherence

1. This unit as a whole coheres with the preceding unit through the common topic of accusations against Paul. These are expressed in 10.1, 2 and then responded to especially by the call of v. 7 and then the three claims distributed through the present unit, each of which is treated below.
2. The call of v. 7 coheres with v. 1 by diction: v. 7 repeats and plays on κατὰ πρόσωπον (v. 1): Opponents have criticized Paul's in-person performance (κατα πρόσωπον, v. 1), but the Corinthian believers need to look at what is really in front of them (κατα πρόσωπον, v. 7) rather than at the allegations against Paul. It coheres with vv. 1–2 by sharing with them the quality of appeal. Appeal is the primary act of vv. 1–2, while in v. 7 the primary act is that of calling the Corinthians to look, but each act expresses one or more qualities as well. The call of v. 7 seems to resume in spirit the appeal begun in v. 1: “Please, look at what is right in front of you.” It is by examining the evidence Paul presents that members will be strengthened in their resolve to heed Paul's appeals in vv. 1–2.
3. The sentence of v. 7b-e coheres with v. 2 in diction and in thought: In diction, it repeats a key term from the criticism of Paul in v. 2: namely, that some λογιζομένους his team has conducted its ministry in a worldly, unspiritual way. In the present sentence, with τοῦτο λογιζέσθω, Paul answers this “some,” using their own language, even as he threatened war against λογισμοί in v. 4.<sup>56</sup> In thought, this sentence coheres again and primarily with v. 2 because it relies on v. 2 to make its sense, as discussed in the previous paragraph. This sentence clarifies or amplifies the charge against Paul in v. 2. His not being “of Christ” in the way the opponents assert that they are relates in some way with the charge in v. 2, but that relation is not expressed at this point in the discourse.

One instance of coherence between the two sentences of v. 7 is notable. Τὰ κατὰ πρόσωπον βλέπετε calls for hearers to attend to external evidence, presumably including the very existence of the Corinthian church, while τοῦτο λογιζέσθω πάλιν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ may challenge critics<sup>57</sup> of v. 2 to attend to evidence within, perhaps, as Paul Barnett suggests, to

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<sup>56</sup> So Peterson, *Eloquence*, 89; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 188; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 466; Martin, *Second Corinthians*, 308.

<sup>57</sup> See the note on τις above regarding its singular or plural referent.

“the reality of the Spirit’s presence,” which Paul would imply would testify to the authenticity of his own claim to be “of Christ.”<sup>58</sup>

4. The concession of v. 8a may also cohere with v. 3 if the boasting v. 8a refers to is part of the allegedly fleshly, or worldly, behavior criticized there. Verse 8 also coheres in thought and diction with preceding vv. It coheres with v. 7 by evoking the major claim that Paul is “of Christ.” The present translation of v. 8 expresses a prepositional phrase—“about being Christ’s”—(implied in Greek) that connects it to v. 7.<sup>59</sup> Verse 8 coheres with vv. 4–6 in thought by naming in a single word—ἐξουσίας—what the warfare of those vv. expresses. Further, v. 8 coheres with v. 4 specifically by the repetition of καθάρεισιν. Finally, the claim of the main and final clause of v. 8 coheres in thought especially with vv. 4–6 by expressing Paul’s determination to prosecute and succeed in the war those vv. describe.
5. Verse 9 coheres with v. 8 by expressing the chief medium through which Paul has boasted of his authority—letters. Verses 9 and 10 cohere with vv. 1–2 by touching on the ταπεινός/present—θαρρῶ/away contrast, which is amplified and specified concretely in v. 10. The direct quotation in v. 10 expresses in the language of the critics (according to Paul) the criticism expressed more generally in v. 1, ὃς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινός ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀπὸν δὲ θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς. Verses 9 and 11 cohere also with the threat-boast of vv. 3–6 because, in addition to earlier letters to which vv. 9–10 may refer, vv. 3–6 within the present letter could frighten some of the Corinthians.
6. τοῦτο λογιζέσθω in v. 11 coheres in diction with the same phrase in v. 7 and with occurrences of the participial and nominal forms of λογίζομαι in vv. 2 and 4. In the two earlier occurrences, the word expresses the judgment of critics or rivals against Paul, while the occurrences in vv. 7 and 11 express Paul’s response.

#### Pertinent Background—Terms and Concepts

1. Χριστοῦ εἶναι, v. 7: This simplicity of this phrase belies the range of interpretations it has generated within Corinthian studies. Martin summarizes the leading views:<sup>60</sup> (1) that being or

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<sup>58</sup> *Second Epistle*, 471. Barrett suggests the translation “let him have another look at himself” without comment (*Second Epistle*, 256). Peterson cites Chrysostom’s interpretation: let him understand now, by himself, before Paul comes personally (*Eloquence*, 90). This interpretation takes λογίζέσθω as a warning.

<sup>59</sup> Following R. P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 309–310

<sup>60</sup> *2 Corinthians*, 308.

belonging to Christ refers simply to being a Christian;<sup>61</sup> (2) that it refers to members at Corinth or rivals of Paul who claimed to be disciples of the earthly Jesus<sup>62</sup> and who claimed to have planted the church at Corinth;<sup>63</sup> (3) that Χριστοῦ εἶναι refers to the “special rank of the apostle as commissioned by the Lord to serve in the congregations.”<sup>64</sup> Adopting this view, Betz joins Dieter Georgi in understanding this phrase to refer to the question of who possesses genuine apostolic authority and gives proof of it. (4) Finally, Walther Schmithals urged that the phrase referred to a gnostic-mythical relation with Christ that the pneumatic rivals of Paul claimed and gave evidence of by the mighty works they performed.<sup>65</sup>

This reading finds interpretation (3) to be the view most supported by the discourse, without denying that some early hearers might interpret the phrase variously. Paul responds throughout this discourse to the charge that he leads weakly, and this context for understanding Χριστοῦ εἶναι points to Paul’s critics’ denying that he is a (or the) legitimate apostle of Christ to Corinth.<sup>66</sup> In this unit (10.7–11), Paul states key claims that two large following sections will prove rhetorically. The question of who is Χριστοῦ is raised both here, before the first section of proof, 10.12–11.21a, and then in the beginning of the second section, 11.21b–12.10, at 11.23, in similar language: διάκονοι Χριστοῦ εἰσιν; παραφρονῶν λαλῶ, ὑπὲρ ἐγώ. This reading urges that both occurrences, 10.7b and 11.23, express the same idea, that διάκονοι Χριστοῦ εἰσιν of 11.23 is truncated to Χριστοῦ εἶναι in 10.7 and that underlying the whole discourse is this question: Who is the true (or the better) servant, or apostle, of Christ?<sup>67</sup>

<sup>61</sup> as it does in 1 Cor 3.23; 15.23; adopted by Derk William Oostendorp, *Another Jesus: A Gospel of Jewish-Christian Superiority in 2 Corinthians* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1967), 18–19. Ernst Käsemann takes the slightly different view that Χριστοῦ εἶναι refers to Paul’s Christian existence, *Die Legitimität des Apostels. Eine Untersuchung zu II Korinther 10–13* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956; repr. from *ZNW* 41 [1942] 33–71), 11–12.

<sup>62</sup> so Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ* (trans. E. Zeller; London: Williams & Norgate, 1876), 274, 276.

<sup>63</sup> Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 46

<sup>64</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *Der Apostel*, 133–134, who discerns a link between the call to look at the facts, 10.7, and the issue of proof in 13.1–3 (56); Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986; English translation by several under Georgi’s supervision of *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief: Studien zur Religiösen Propaganda in der Spätantike* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964]), 235, 286, n. 39.

<sup>65</sup> *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 197–199. I find no support for Schmithals’ gnostic thesis in recent scholarship on 2 Cor 10–13.

<sup>66</sup> Barrett goes too far in stressing the more basic question of Paul’s identity as a Christian: “Pressed to the limit, the question raised here is whether Paul is or is not a Christian,” *Second Epistle*, 257.

<sup>67</sup> The reason for the dispute is, in terms of this discourse, the criticism by critical members and rival ministers that Paul is not a true, or qualified, apostle of Christ because he does not perform in ways an apostle must. This study

2. Terms in v. 10 express senses important to ancient rhetoric generally and to sophistic rhetoric specifically. As discussed in chap. one of this study and as will be further confirmed in this reading of 2 Cor 10–13, Paul’s Corinthian opponents performed Christian ministry according to sophistic tastes and criteria.<sup>68</sup> As Bruce W. Winter has argued, when Paul first came to Corinth, he proclaimed Christ in a consciously anti-sophistic manner so that the faith of new believers “might not rest in the [sophistic] wisdom of men but in the power of God.”<sup>69</sup> Either during Paul’s initial ministry<sup>70</sup> among the Corinthians or shortly thereafter, perhaps because some Corinthians became “puffed up” because Paul did not return as he said he would,<sup>71</sup> the Corinthians invited Apollos to return. Upon his refusal to do so,<sup>72</sup> they then welcomed other itinerant Christian ministers who were rhetorically eloquent. As the following vv. in these chapters of 2 Cor show, these Christian sophists have secured standing as leaders within the Corinthian church, in part by criticizing Paul by their sophistic standards.<sup>73</sup> In the present v., opponents use rhetorical vocabulary to criticize Paul in two ways: one, on the grounds of his poor in-person performance as a speaker; two, on the inconsistency of his critiquing rhetoric while simultaneously practicing it effectively but selectively, in letters but not in speech. Rivals seize the difference in quality of his rhetoric depending on the medium to charge that his critique of rhetoric is not principled but only self-protective: His critique simply covers the fact that he actually accepts the importance of rhetoric for Christian leadership, and he practices it well in letter-writing. But, they charge, he knows that his lack of skill in speaking is grounds for disqualifying his leadership in the Corinthian church, so he critiques rhetoric broadly to justify his lack of qualifications to remain the leader of the church. The rhetorical terms discussed here are these from v. 10: βαρεῖλαι καὶ ἰσχυραὶ, and παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενῆς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθηνημένος.

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claims that this criticism of Paul’s failure to perform satisfactorily is expressed most briefly in the charge that he is weak and that the weakness alleged consists mainly of Paul’s weak governance of the church, including his weak speaking.

<sup>68</sup> *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*, Cambridge University Press, UK: 1997, Monograph Series: Society for New Testament Studies: 96.

<sup>69</sup> 1 Cor. 2.5; *Philo and Paul*, 147–169.

<sup>70</sup> Perhaps through the ministry of Apollos, whom Acts describes as rhetorically eloquent (ἄνθρωπος λόγιος; 18.24) and whom some Corinthians chose as their favorite church leader to the point of divisiveness, from Paul’s perspective (1 Cor. 3.1–9, 21–22), even to the point of asking Apollos to return, presumably as the chief minister to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16.12).

<sup>71</sup> 1 Cor. 4.18–19; 2 Cor. 1.15—2.3

<sup>72</sup> 1 Cor. 16.12

<sup>73</sup> Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 219, and as shown throughout this study.

Interpreters agree largely on “impressive” as one sense for βαρεῖαι here.<sup>74</sup> Winter cites Lucian, *The Dialogue of the Dead*, who notes the direction to the rhetorician to throw away various rhetorical techniques, such as loquacity, antithesis, balanced clauses, periods and “everything else that makes speech βαρύς.”<sup>75</sup> βαρύς here refers then not to any particular rhetorical technique but to the effect produced by an effective combination of several such techniques. Marshall, citing Dionysius of Halicarnassus, suggests that ισχυρός in 2 Cor 10.10 describes stylistic qualities of “forcefulness, strength and vigour.”<sup>76</sup> Together, these two adjectives in 10.10b praise Paul’s letters as rhetorically effective.

As much as those adjectives praise Paul’s letter-writing, the next pair of evaluative terms, an adjective and an adjectival participle, censure his speaking. The criticism of Paul that ἡ . . . παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενῆς means, according to canons of sophistic rhetoric, that Paul’s physical appearance denied him success as an orator. As Winter says, Paul “elicited no murmur of approval when audiences first saw him,” unlike the sophist whom Philostratus, the biographer of early sophists, admired:<sup>77</sup> (in Winter’s words) “The Athenians thought [that sophist’s] appearance and clothes so exquisite that before he spoke a word ‘a low buzz of approval went around as a tribute to his perfect elegance.’”<sup>78</sup>

However accurate may be the traditional description of Paul from the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*—“Paul was a man little of stature, bald-headed, with crooked legs, well-born, with eye-brows meeting and a long nose”<sup>79</sup>—10.10 expresses that Paul fell short of his opponents’ rhetorical standards not only in appearance but also in speech: καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος. The perfect passive participle may suggest that the problem could not be corrected. But what was it about Paul’s speech that attracted such scorn? Surely the content itself is not the target, since one would expect that inadequate content would plague his letter-writing also, which the praise of the previous clause in 10.10 shows not to be the case. Instead, Paul’s delivery (ὑπόκρισις) fell seriously short.

<sup>74</sup> So Martin, “impressive and forceful” (2 *Corinthians* 311); Betz, “pretentious and impressive” (with impressive referring to the claims within the letters; *Der Apostel Paulus* 44); Marshall, “impressive” (*Enmity at Corinth* 385–386); but Plummer, “tyrannical and violent” (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 282).

<sup>75</sup> 373, cited by Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 207.

<sup>76</sup> *Enmity at Corinth*, 386, with reference to Dionysius’s *Thucydides*, 54; cited by Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 207.

<sup>77</sup> Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 211; Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists*, 572.

<sup>78</sup> Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 211; Philostratus, *Lives*, 571–572; cf. 581.

<sup>79</sup> in *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, I, 237; cited by Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 211.



According to Philodemus, the 1<sup>st</sup>-century BCE Epicurean author of *On Rhetoric* and important source for our knowledge of rhetorical matters from antiquity, delivery was important to the ancients. For Athenaeus it was the most important part of rhetoric. Isocrates' inability to deliver speeches effectively kept him from public speaking, and his many written orations were criticized for being "hard to deliver in public." Demosthenes said delivery was the first, second, and third priority in oratory, although he was criticized for being too loud and too shrill and "too theatrical and not simple and noble in his delivery."<sup>80</sup> F. Solmsen notes the considerable attention the ancients gave to delivery.<sup>81</sup> Theophrastus first theorized on it, and Aristotle suggested that good delivery required attention to voice and its modulation.

Interestingly, Philodemus, looking back, thinks most ancient sophists delivered poorly. He notes that delivery has improved in his day because it is taught in classrooms. But he criticizes the recent sophistic claim that sophists alone formed the art of delivery. Philodemus points out that poets and prose writers also have such a theory, even if not codified.<sup>82</sup> Sophists do not monopolize delivery, because people naturally express emotions in speech, but sophists magnify the importance of delivery excessively, even claiming its superiority over philosophy. This excessive valuing of delivery, Winter argues, "remained a hallmark of rhetoric" in the first century CE. Philodemus' own position is that good delivery involves natural endowment and other features in dignity and proportion, and Winter believes that Philodemus' discussion accurately identifies the criteria by which public speakers would have been evaluated, both in his era and in Paul's time. The most important of these criteria?—delivery.

Among first-century writers, Quintilian, a near contemporary of Paul, devotes the final section of his *Institute's* Book 11 to delivery.<sup>83</sup> Quintilian summarizes Cicero's discussion of delivery approvingly throughout and follows him in examining both the speaker's voice and the speaker's physical appearance as important elements of delivery: "physical uncouthness

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<sup>80</sup> "On Delivery" in *On Rhetoric*, I.193, XI–XVIII, 300–1; I.197, XVI; I.200, XVIII; cf. H. M. Hubbell, "The Rhetorica of Philodemus," *The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 23 (1920); pp. 300–1; cited by Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 208–209.

<sup>81</sup> F. Solmsen, "The Aristotelian Tradition in Ancient Rhetoric," *AJP* 62 (1941): 45–46; cited by Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 209.

<sup>82</sup> Philodemus, *On Rhetoric*, I.198, XVII; Hubbell, "Rhetorica," 301; in Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 209.

<sup>83</sup> *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian* (hereafter *Institutes*; Butler, LCL), vol. IV, consisting of some 50 pp. of Latin text, with facing pages in English.

may be such that no art can remedy it, while a weak voice is incompatible with first-rate excellence in delivery.”<sup>84</sup> Quintilian also discusses gestures and dress as part of effective delivery,<sup>85</sup> and he agrees with the priority Demosthenes gives to delivery: It “has an extraordinarily powerful effect in oratory”,<sup>86</sup> and Quintilian “would not hesitate to assert that a mediocre speech supported by all the power of delivery will be more impressive than the best speech unaccompanied by such power.”<sup>87</sup> One example of that power is the effectiveness of Quintus Hortensius, who came to be thought of as second only to Cicero as an orator, but whose “writings fall so far short” of that reputation. “His speaking must clearly have possessed some charm which we fail to find when we read him.”<sup>88</sup> For Paul, of course, the situation, as his critics see it, is reversed. He writes effectively, but his delivery is contemptible, by their standards. “In the light of the *apologia* concerning his coming (1 Cor. 2.3[–5])<sup>89</sup> his enemies could argue that his activity<sup>90</sup> was governed not by theological considerations but by his own deficiencies as a public speaker,”<sup>91</sup> deficiencies that, in their view, properly disqualified him from the office of church leader or apostle.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>84</sup> *Institutes*, XI.3.12–13; in Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 210.

<sup>85</sup> *Institutes*, XI.3.1, 6, 7, 12, 13, 65–149; in Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 210.

<sup>86</sup> *Institutes*, XI.2.2

<sup>87</sup> *Institutes*, XI.2.5.

<sup>88</sup> *Institutes*, XI.3.8.

<sup>89</sup> i.e., his coming to Corinth to preach Christ without sophistic eloquence: *κἀγὼ ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ καὶ ἐν φόβῳ καὶ ἐν τρόμῳ πολλῶ ἐγενόμην πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν πειθοί[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις] ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως, ἵνα ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν μὴ ᾖ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ’ ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ.* See the extensive discussion in chap. one of this study.

<sup>90</sup> i.e., his critique of sophistic rhetoric and refusal to conform his evangelistic communication to sophistic standards

<sup>91</sup> Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 211.

<sup>92</sup> The rationale would seem to have been the same as that that gave rhetoric and rhetorical studies pride of place in Greco-Roman education: namely, that leaders must be men of deeds and words, i.e., rhetorical proficiency. More specifically, in the 1<sup>st</sup>-century CE setting of Corinth, “a city highly conscious of rhetorical prowess,” where “the secular ἐκκλησία demanded of speakers a facility in oratory, then the ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ in the same city should flourish with teachers of no less ability. Paul clearly lacked the necessary prowess” (Winter 204, 221).

The contrast between written and spoken rhetoric occupied sophists of both the first and second sophistic movements, as this summary of Winter’s treatment of the topic shows (205–206). Sophists from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE debated the superiority of written versus extempore oratory [cf. Philodemus, *On Rhetoric*, 208–10: Some eminent writers cannot speak well, and some tried to improve their speaking.]. For example, Alcidas debated Isocrates through several exchanges. Alcidas asserts that many clever writers cannot speak extempore well [*On the Writers of Written Discourse or On the Sophists*, #9, 16, 22, 27–28], that written discourses should not be called speeches, and that extempore speakers’ spontaneity influenced audiences more than speakers reading a speech. Both written and extempore speeches were allowed in Greek courts [according to Alcidas and Aristotle (1180b–81a); cf. Wilcox, “Isocrates’ Fellow Rhetoricians” *AJP* 66 (1945) 171–186], but Alcidas claimed that only the extempore orators could do both well. He opposed forensic *λογογράφοι*, of which Isocrates was one. Isocrates admits that he is unable to speak in public, and he advocated written speeches that attained the qualities of good oratory: “fitness for the occasion, propriety of style, and originality of treatment” [*Against the Sophists* (391 BCE) 9–10, 13]. He attacked sophists because they promised to make speakers of any [paying] student, regardless of ability and experience,

### Intertextuality

1. Verse 8 expresses thought similar to Jeremiah 1:10, in which the Lord appoints Jeremiah to “pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant,” and 24.6, in which God promises captives of Judah to “build them up, and not tear them down; [to] plant them, and not uproot them” (RSV). Although 2 Corinthians 10.8 does not repeat diction from LXX Jeremiah, the notions of building and destroying or tearing down do occur in both and merit observation, especially since Paul repeats the building up–tearing down language in 13.10 and because he quotes LXX Jeremiah in 10.18 as an authoritative warrant.
2. The criticism reported in v. 10 refers to a letter or letters other than the present letter, most likely to the severe letter mentioned in 2.2–4. That letter refers to Paul’s painful visit to Corinth,<sup>93</sup> during which apparently one individual, perhaps not a part of the Corinthian church, opposed Paul before the church<sup>94</sup> The church apparently did not rally to Paul’s aid, and he wrote the severe letter, as he says, “to make you know the love which I have in great measure for you” (2.4) and “to see if you would pass the test and be obedient in everything” (2.9).<sup>95</sup>
3. The same criticism in v. 10 evokes other topically related portions of 1 Corinthians. Bultmann identified the parallel between the criticism of Paul’s ἀσθενής in 2 Corinthians 10.10 and God’s choice of τὰ ἐξουθενημένα . . . τὰ μὴ ὄντα in 1 Corinthians 1.28;<sup>96</sup> and Winter points out how 2 Corinthians 10.10 “carefully exploit[s]” the ἰσχυρός-ἀσθενής

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although some sophists (e.g., Gorgias) made a central part of their style the antithetical style for which Isocrates is known. His *Antidosis* from years later expresses this debate between extempore and written speeches.

The 1<sup>st</sup>-century CE emphasis on declamation strengthened the primacy of extempore speech, a preference that concurs with the criticism of Paul in 2 Cor. 10.10. Dio Chrysostom reiterates: “he who utters his thoughts aloud is more nearly in the mood of a man addressing an audience than one who writes. . . . It contributes more to your habit of readiness” (“On Training for Public Speaking,” *Or.* 11.18; Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists*, 583; Plutarch, *Lives, Demosthenes*, VIII). Cf. on Isocrates, *LCL* II; on Alcidas, L. Radermacher, ET “Alcidas versus Isocrates: The Spoken Versus the Written Word,” *CW* 12 (1918): 91–94. Discussion of the debate among sophists: G. A. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, (Princeton, 1963) 176–77; A. Hardie, *Statius and the Silvae: Poets, Patrons and Epideixis in the Graeco-Roman World* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1983) 78–81.

<sup>93</sup> 1 Cor. 15.5ff. indicates that Paul planned to visit Corinth on his return from Macedonia to Ephesus. 2 Cor. 1.15 indicates that he changed his route and intended instead a two-part second visit: one while on his way to Macedonia, another on his return from Macedonia. He visited on his way to Macedonia, but the visit was troubled, and he apparently cancelled the return visit, hence the criticism to which 2 Cor. 1.17, 23; 2.3 respond (and perhaps 10.1–2) and the letter referred to by 2.3–4 and again at 10.10.

<sup>94</sup> Martin (*2 Corinthians* 31–33) and Furnish (*II Corinthians* 54–55, 141–145) detail similar reconstructions of Paul’s visits and the sorrowful visit and its effects on the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians.

<sup>95</sup> Martin’s translations (*2 Corinthians* 30).

language contrasting the Corinthians over against apostles in 1 Corinthians 4.10.,<sup>97</sup> language used similarly in 1 Corinthians 1.26 to contrast secular and Christian status.<sup>98</sup> Expressions similar to these in Paul’s critique of sophism in 1 Corinthians are “now used against Paul [in 2 Cor. 10.10] in order to contrast his deficiencies as a public orator with his obvious writing ability as a rhetorician.”<sup>99</sup> Thus these few vv. express and imply contrasts between the ways that Paul and his rivals and the Corinthians under their influence view Christian ministers and ministry, and they evoke and may allude to related passages from 1 Corinthians.

### Rhetorical Structure and Development

#### 10.7a Call to look at the evidence

βλέπετε shifts from appeal and threat (vv. 1–6) and, with vv. 7–11, introduces the proof the discourse offers to support its key claims, which are stated within this unit. The method of proof is evidence<sup>100</sup> from the Corinthians’ own experience and observation, and the discourse provides it beginning with 10.14. Critics disparaged Paul κατὰ πρόσωπον, but if the Corinthians will look κατὰ πρόσωπον, even in Paul’s absence, they will see the Corinthian congregation itself as evidence of Paul’s effective performance as an apostle among them, as Danker and Barnett suggest.<sup>101</sup> Furnish takes the call of v. 7 to be a warning to the Corinthians about the danger facing them and translates βλέπετε consistent with its rendering elsewhere (1 Cor 8:9; Gal 5:15; and Phil 3:2, where it clearly has the sense of a warning). If Paul’s delegate performed this discourse as a warning, then v. 7 would cohere in a different way with vv. 4–6, which threaten Paul’s opponents and require the obedience of the Corinthians.

Whether v. 7a calls the Corinthians to look at the evidence before them or warns of near danger, it calls on the Corinthians to respond based on their own experience and observation. Exactly what they are to look for is expressed in the remainder of this section, through v. 11. This valuing of firsthand experience is expressed again later in the discourse, when Paul states a

<sup>96</sup> *Second Letter*, 190, 193; cf. 108; cited by Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 219.

<sup>97</sup> ἡμεῖς μωροὶ διὰ Χριστόν, ὑμεῖς δὲ φρόνιμοι ἐν Χριστῷ· ἡμεῖς ἀσθενεῖς, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἰσχυροί· ὑμεῖς ἔνδοξοι, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἄτιμοι; *Philo and Paul*, 219.

<sup>98</sup> οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, οὐ πολλοὶ δυνατοί, οὐ πολλοὶ εὐγενεῖς. . . .

<sup>99</sup> Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 219.

<sup>100</sup> H. D. Betz calls the referent of this clause the “problem of evidence” (*Evidenzproblem*), *Der Apostel*, 132–137.

<sup>101</sup> Danker, *II Corinthians*, 153; Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 470. Barnett’s other suggestion (which he rejects, 470)—that the Corinthians are to look at the church problems before them and their causes—seems unlikely to me to be the intent of the imperative.

criterion by which he wants others to think of him: on the basis of what they hear and see of him (12.6). See below for discussion of the rhetorical significance of the appeal to evidence in this conflict with sophistic rivals.

10.7b-e Claim 1 – Paul belongs to Christ [or is a true apostle of Christ] as much as anyone

Verse 7b-e expresses, in part, why the Corinthians are to look at what is right before them. Rivals have claimed that they are legitimate servants of Christ and that Paul is not (or that they are superior to Paul in commission and service). This claim of rivals occurs in v. 7b; then follows the first part of Paul's response, v. 7c: τοῦτο λογίζεσθω πάλιν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ. The play on λόγιζομαι is noted above; Paul counters τοὺς λογιζομένους (v. 2), who are the plural equivalent of the representative one cited in v. 7b, τις. Λογίζεσθω πάλιν refers immediately to τις and its restrictive modifying clause, but it refers as well to the earlier antecedent of v. 2, τοὺς λογιζομένους. Those who considered Paul to behave in a fleshly, or worldly, way also are confident of their special relation to Christ; and these Paul urges to think again about their claim to superiority over him. Barnett suggests that ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ calls the critic to look not only at what is in front of him but also within him, where his existence as a Christian, in the case of a critic who is also a member of the church, owes something to Paul's ministry.<sup>102</sup> Peterson notes Chrysostom's rendering of v. 7c as a warning: "let him understand now, by himself, before Paul comes personally."<sup>103</sup> The comparative, ὅτι καθὼς αὐτὸς Χριστοῦ (v. 7d), is followed by the final and emphatic clause that contains the key assertion of the verse: οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς (v. 7e). This claim foreshadows Paul's second similarly emphatic claim not of parity with his rivals but of superiority over them (11.23).

The argument built on the claim of v. 7e proceeds somewhat loosely and informally. The supporting evidence for the claim comes from Paul's recounting what he has done and how his ministry has differed from and been superior to the activities of his opponents. It occurs in two main sections: immediately, in 10.13–11.21a; and in the FS, from Paul's statement in 11.23 that he is a better servant of Christ than they through the end of the FS (11.23–12.10). The argument throughout is comparative, and comparison, or σύγκρισις, weaves through most of this discourse— comparison, more properly contrast, between Paul and his rivals. The extent of comparison has not often been acknowledged by interpreters, and neither has its loose form,

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<sup>102</sup> *Second Epistle*, 471–472

which does not exhibit the balanced, textbook structure of σύγκρισις taught by the rhetoricians.<sup>104</sup>

- 10.8a Concession about boasting regarding authority
- b Clarification of the purpose of authority
- c Claim 2 – Paul will not be discredited in his claims to belong to Christ [or be a true apostle of Christ] and to possess [apostolic] authority

Although γὰρ often marks a reason that supports a claim, in v. 10a γὰρ helps it to cohere with the preceding sentences without logically supporting an immediately preceding claim. It does not offer evidence that Paul is “of Christ.” Instead, it amplifies that claim<sup>105</sup> and looks forward to the performance of such boasting in this discourse, both immediately (vv. 14–18) and more remotely (the FS). The concession that he boasts (in the protasis; 10.8a)<sup>106</sup> requires an apodosis that supplies the “then” component of this syntactical structure (10.8c). As if he must overcome the disbelief of critics, who find his boasting empty or excessive, Paul asserts in v. 8c, again emphatically, as in v. 7, but without evidence, that events will justify his boasts, that his results will match his boast. Embedded within this second of three key claims in this unit is the clarification, in v. 8b, of the purpose for Paul’s authority. It occurs as an interruption or a parenthetical, tightly joined to its antecedent, τῆς ἐξουσίας ἡμῶν.

The verse evidences the fundamental charge that Paul is a weak leader in two different ways: (1) It concedes that he claims authority in the face of a presumed charge that he boasts of authority without performing it (v. 8a, c), that is that he leads weakly; (2) it initiates a kind of apology for his allegedly weak leadership: His authority comes from the Lord, and it is for building up, not for the tearing down that, from his view, his rivals’ “strong” leadership accomplishes (v. 8b). That v. 8 accomplishes these acts is evident only from reading further into the discourse, and on an initial hearing of 10.1–8, hearers may not associate v. 8 with these results or purposes.

As observed above, v. 8 echoes language from Jeremiah, leading one to ask if Paul includes it as he does for multiple purposes, among which may be clearly associating his ministry and its

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<sup>103</sup> *Eloquence*, 90

<sup>104</sup> See discussion of σύγκρισις in this study’s treatment of the Fool’s Speech, chap. three.

<sup>105</sup> As if to say, “Not only am I ‘of Christ,’ but I am so confident of my status that I will boast of it and demonstrate it in word and deed.”

<sup>106</sup> V. 8 is a third-class condition sentence that, from the context, fits the classical category of “more probable future” or “likely to occur in the future.” The FS demonstrates that Paul will boast, so this v. does not fit the categories of

authority from God with that of a revered prophet. One reason to think that he may intend such an association is that Paul’s statement explicitly identifies ὁ κύριος as the source of his authority, as do the similar citations in LXX Jeremiah. At the least, such an echo endows the discourse with an authoritative warrant. Paul does not argue here and fully exert all the force that a scripture allusion might produce. Instead his allusion aligns him in this situation with the prophet through a compact antithetical statement. It frames his own acts in the discourse with a source credible and acceptable to his hearers.

- 10.9 Denial of intent to frighten with letters
- 10.10 Reason for denial: expanded restatement of the criticism in 10.1
- 10.11 Emphatic rebuttal to the criticism: Claim 3 – Paul does in person what he says by letter

Verses 9–11 link to v. 8 through the topic of responses to Paul’s asserting his authority. Verse 8 expresses Paul’s confidence that his acts will not result in his being discredited, in response to the charge that he is too weak to accomplish what an apostle should. Verses 9–11 respond to the charge that Paul is weak, for a different reason. He is weak in the sense that he is he lacks solid character and requisite speaking ability.<sup>107</sup> Paul threatens boldly through his letters, but he is the opposite in person. To render these vv. coherently, this reading makes v. 10 parenthetical, letting the subordinate clause of v. 9 depend on the independent clause of v. 11.<sup>108</sup> In this reading, then, v. 9 responds preemptively, in terms of this discourse, to the objection of v. 10. It does not forestall the criticism as much as it introduces it with the aim, ultimately, in v. 11, of denying it emphatically. Then follows in v. 10 one critic’s criticism, which we may take as representative of Paul’s rivals. It is composed of (a) direct discourse, expressing the criticism of Paul, (b) formed into in a compound main clause, which (c) functions as a parenthetical support

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“hypothetical” or “possible to occur.” Cf. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 696.

<sup>107</sup> See discussion of ταπεινός and κόλαξι related to 10.1 above.

<sup>108</sup> The ἵνα clause at the beginning of v. 9 is notoriously difficult to connect syntactically with preceding clauses. As it stands, the beginning of v. 9 does not connect with any potential antecedent in v. 8 smoothly and sensibly. Barrett follows Lietzmann in supposing that Paul, in a state of emotional stress, left out a key clause that would join vv. 8 and 9, such as “I will therefore not bring this authority into play” (*Second Epistle* 259). With this emendation, v. 9 flows well from v. 8, and the inserted clause coheres not only with the preceding v. but also with the topic of Paul’s authority. As a second option, Moule takes ἵνα as an imperatival particle, with the sentence only loosely connected to v. 8: “Let me not seem to frighten you!” (*Idiom Book* 145). A third option, suggested by Martin and expressed in this translation, has v. 10 function as a parenthetical, with the sense of v. 9 completed in v. 11. and has v. 9 related logically to v. 11. I believe the subject of Paul’s authority remains important throughout this whole section, but I prefer to translate the text with as little emendation as possible and so have followed this third option for handling a difficult text.

of the claim in v. 9. Although it occurs at the end of these vv., v. 11 is their grammatical center, with its imperative main clause, *τοῦτο λογιζέσθω ὁ τοιοῦτος*, ending in an emphatic noun clause, *ὅτι οἰοί ἐσμεν τῷ λόγῳ δι' ἐπιστολῶν ἀπόντες, τοιοῦτοι καὶ παρόντες τῷ ἔργῳ*. Together, vv. 9 and 11 deny strongly the criticism expressed in v. 10.

It is rhetorically sound for this unit to begin with the denial of v. 9, because the denial acknowledges the audience Paul is seeking to persuade—the Corinthians. Verse 11 responds indirectly, through the Corinthians, to the critics, whom, among the outsider rivals, Paul is not attempting to persuade. The sequence of vv. 9-11 begins with what most concerns the Corinthians—the fright his letters may arouse in them, and it assures them before quoting the criticism (to which v. 1 also responds) and then rebutting it.

These vv. express clearly how important rhetoric is in the breach between Paul and his critics. Critics, as represented by Paul, grant that he writes effectively but despise his personal presence and oral delivery in strong terms and connect his rhetorical failure with his lack of integrity. In their view, Paul has rejected rhetoric for Christian ministry inconsistently (because he practices epistolary rhetoric well) and only to excuse his weakness as a speaker and leader. That weakness alone diminishes his effectiveness, but he adds to it the flaw in character of a *κόλαξ* who is two-faced—bold, even frightening, at a distance, but disappointingly and unacceptably *ταπεινός* in person, with speaking abilities that are contemptible. Paul's responses here are twofold: He denies that he has intended his letters to frighten the Corinthians, and he asserts emphatically in the third key claim of the discourse that what he says and does are the same.

### *Rhetorical Style*

1. The final two clauses of v. 7—*ὅτι καθὼς αὐτὸς Χριστοῦ, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς*—express emphasis. Paul did not need to write the first of these two clauses to convey information; that aim is accomplished in the opening clauses of the sentence. But the creation of two final, balanced clauses, including the repetition of *Χριστοῦ* from v. 7b, allows one to perform the sentence with great stress on these two clauses and, of them, the final clause, with its word-order and syntactical emphasis on *καὶ ἡμεῖς*. This tactic of emphasis coincides with the expression in these two clauses of the major claim of the sentence. The result is not mere ornamentation, but a strong expression in its performance.



2. Danker notes of v. 8 that “the quiet conditional form of the statement is part of the dramatic buildup for the inevitable rhetorical barrage that will shortly follow.”<sup>109</sup> But beyond building up for forceful expression later in the discourse, both the embedded parenthetical clause and the final clause are crafted to express emphasis. The parenthetical clause concerning the purpose of Paul’s authority occurs in the middle of the sentence, joined restrictively to an antecedent in the subordinate protasis, where it would ordinarily receive the least stress. But four features gain it emphasis nevertheless: (1) identifying “the Lord” as the direct source of the authority; (2) expressing the contrasting actions of building up and tearing down, strengthened further for those who would hear in it an echo of the vivid language of contrasts in LXX Jeremiah 1.10 and 24.6; (3) repeating the language of tearing down already used in v. 4; (4) personalizing the content of the clause to the Corinthians in a way that clarifies that Paul will exercise his authority only to build them up, not to tear them down. The final clause of the sentence gains emphasis by its position, by its grammatical identity as the main clause of the sentence, and by the forceful performance its thought invites: “I shall not be discredited!”
3. Barrett notes Paul’s use of the intensive ἐκφοβεῖν in v. 9, when he might otherwise have used φοβεῖν, which dramatizes the fright that critics have presumably criticized.<sup>110</sup> Verse 10 consists of direct discourse, its first occurrence in this discourse. Direct discourse evinces dramatic qualities that indirect or discursive discourse do not, and this property of direct discourse causes it to exert rhetorical force. Beyond this form of discourse, the sequence of assertions within this sentence and the diction constituting them creates emphasis. The first assertion predicates a pair of adjectives in a positive evaluation of Paul’s letter writing. The coordinate adjectives create rhetorical weight by homoioteleuton, which occurs also with three other words in the clause—Αἱ ἐπιστολαί μέν . . . βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραί. But greater emphasis arises from end-stress, and this natural form of emphasis coincides with the final clause, which critics want emphasized: ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενῆς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθινημένος. Of the two predicate nominatives—ἀσθενῆς and ἐξουθινημένος—the latter receives end-stress, and it is the more sharply condemning of the two, especially with the rendering “contemptible.”

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<sup>109</sup> *II Corinthians*, 154.

<sup>110</sup> *Second Epistle*, 259.

4. Verse 11 continues the pattern in this unit of expressing rhetorical emphasis through two antithetically parallel clauses (the latter elliptical). They form a chiasm:

a) τῷ λόγῳ δι' ἐπιστολῶν	b') παρόντες
	c) τοιοῦτοι καὶ
b) ἀπόντες,	a') τῷ ἔργῳ

If, as some interpreters believe, the chiasm emphasizes not only the natural stress positions at the beginning and the end (i.e., *a* and *a'*) but also the member that fills the cross-point of the chiasm, then scansion of the emphasis of this verse yields this result, from lesser to greater emphasis:

a) what we are in word . . . c) the same indeed . . . a') **[we are] in deed.**

Whether or not readings of Hellenistic texts confirm this theory of the function of chiasms, v. 11 emphasizes the last member (*a'*) in a forceful assertion of Paul's third key claim of this unit—that regardless of his disliked presence and speech, he is not a vacillating κόλαξ but a person of integrity.

### *Implications*

1. If v. 7 warns of danger, it implies only that Paul and the Corinthians agree that danger is to be avoided and that it is good to warn one of danger. In this interpretation, the discourse does not presume that Paul and the Corinthians agree that danger is imminent, although they would likely agree that Paul's threatened action would be dangerous. The imminence of danger has yet to be established rhetorically. If, however, this clause is performed as a call to look at the evidence, it then implies that Paul and the Corinthians agree on the basic belief that some kind of public evidence matters. This study will argue that this call announces an important characteristic of Paul's appeal throughout the discourse: namely, that the Corinthians should evaluate both Paul's and his opponents' claims on the basis of what they themselves have witnessed firsthand (10.14; 11.1, 7, 9; 12.6, 12). This sentence implies that Paul, the opponents, and the Corinthian congregation regard being "of Christ" as very important and that the opponents have claimed that relationship for themselves and denied that Paul has the same relationship. It further implies that the hearers would agree with Paul's challenge that the critics' "consider again within themselves" the matter of his relation to

Christ. This with the previous sentence of v. 7 implies that evidence is important, both external and internal. The supporting evidence has not yet appeared in the discourse, but it begins to be offered in the next unit, 10.12–18, and continues to be offered in the main sections of proof through the end of the FS, 12.10.

2. Paul and the Corinthians agree (v. 8) that authority given by the Lord is legitimate and good. Critics and rivals question only whether Paul can claim divine authority legitimately, and their reason is their belief that Paul's behavior fails to conform to the behavior they believe that one having such authority would manifest. Paul and the Corinthians further agree that being built up is better than being torn down. And they would agree that being discredited, or put to shame, is not good and to be avoided.
3. Paul accepts the ethical evaluations that follow from the criticism (vv. 9–11): If he were one thing by letter and another in person or if he were trying to frighten through his letters, he would lack integrity, on the one hand, and be acting shamefully, on the other. Paul does not question or deny this evaluation, and it appears from his not trying to convince the Corinthians otherwise that they too accept this ethical evaluation. Paul responds to the ethical implications in these vv. (especially v. 9 and v. 11), not the question of whether or not he fails rhetorically. He emphasizes that he is a person of integrity through both media of action—letters and in-person speech (v. 11), not that he is a capable rhetor in either or both media.<sup>111</sup> While Paul denies that he is duplicitous or seriously inconsistent, he does not, in these vv., repudiate or attack the commitments to a specific rhetorical style that prompt the criticisms from his opponents.<sup>112</sup>

### *Rhetorical Effects*

1. The direction to look at the evidence (v. 7), given with the quality of an appeal, keeps this discourse of authority open to the involvement of the Corinthians. It signals that Paul seeks not their passive acceptance of his judgment but their active evaluation of the pertinent evidence so that they may judge properly. In this way, it adds to Paul's credibility as a leader worthy of trust, and this appeal for their participation in evaluating his and his opponents'

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<sup>111</sup> an issue to which he responds in 11.6.

<sup>112</sup> 1 Cor. 1.17–2.5 expresses Paul's earlier rejection of sophistic rhetoric as a medium for kerygma. See chap. one of this study for the discussion of this proposed background to the situation in 2 Cor., in which Paul responds to late-

claims coheres with one dimension of the tone of the discourse, that of Paul's appeal through the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The direction to look at what is before them respects them and their judgment and does not ride roughshod over them, as one with authority might do if the exercise of such authority were not constrained by such virtues. If the call is taken as a warning, it still elicits the Corinthians' personal involvement but also heightens the urgency of the matter, because of the danger at hand. In either performance of this clause, Paul calls the Corinthians to responsible action that will proceed from discerning whether or not the criticisms of Paul are true.

The chief likely effect of v. 7 is that hearers would receive clearly its major claim and, alongside it, the challenge or warning to Paul's opponents. From the first sentence of the v., some would relate Paul's emphatic assertion of his being "of Christ" to evidence they see right before them, namely, the existence of the church as a result of Paul's work. That evidence is developed explicitly in the coming vv. Hearers would hear with the claim of v. 7 a strong assertion of Paul's authority, arising especially from the intentional emphasis on and within the final two clauses of the v.

2. It is likely that hearers would experience the parenthetical clause ἣς ἔδωκεν ὁ κύριος εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν ὑμῶν as emphatic (v. 8). They would receive with seriousness the claim that the Lord gave Paul his authority and the prophet-like language announcing the contrasting outcomes of building up or tearing down, and receive with relief and assurance Paul's intent only to build them up. One strategy of Paul's rhetoric is again visible here as it was in v. 6. Attack on opponents or warning to them is accompanied by assurance to the Corinthian congregation, provided that they submit to Paul's authority. Thus this clause bearing assurance softens, for the Corinthians, the force of the boast-threats of vv. 3-6. Finally, hearers would likely receive the main clause of the v., οὐκ αἰσχυθήσομαι, as emphatic and respond to it according to their opinion of Paul at that moment. Some might sense its foreshadowing other speech acts to come in the discourse, although none would likely predict the serious, yet foolish, boasting Paul will perform in the FS as the major offensive of the war threatened in vv. 3-6 that is performed in this discourse.

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coming sophistic opponents who are critiquing alleged inconsistencies of or deceptions by Paul in his rejection of sophistic rhetoric.

3. *Emphasis in each verse* (vv. 9–11): This discourse has already demonstrated Paul’s willingness to interrupt the completion of his thought (10.1) or to defer it for valuable information with rhetorical impact (10.8). One potential beneficial effect of presenting these vv. with a parenthetical statement in the middle position is the possibility of emphasizing each verse. Verse 9, with its message of assurance (Paul is not trying to frighten people), gains emphasis by its opening position and by its direct relevance to the Corinthians. The final clause of v. 11 emphasizes by end-stress the final phrase of the final clause “the same we are, being present, *in deed*,” which is the main point to which both grammar (v. 11 as the main clause on which v. 9 depends) and arrangement point. And the parenthetical v. 10, also gains emphasis. Typically the middle position of a construction receives the least emphasis, but the use here of direct discourse to amplify the criticism that first appeared in v. 1 endows it with presence. As a result, each element, or v., in the construction gains emphasis, and hearers would feel it as each v. is delivered.

*Assurance amid threat*: By continuing the pattern of distinguishing the addressees and Paul’s opponents, assuring the Corinthians of Paul’s desire for their well being, while threatening decisive action against the opponents. Paul expresses the denial that hearers would experience as reassuring (v. 9) before dealing emphatically with the criticism itself (v. 11). The response of v. 11 claims forcefully Paul’s integrity in word and deed, but the declarative statement implies and would have the effect of a stern warning and threat, cohering with the warning-threat implied in the declarative request of v. 2 and then amplified in the description of spiritual war in vv. 4–6.

#### *Recapitulation of Rhetorical Performance*

While 10.1–6 appeals and threatens, with some assurance, 10.7–11 challenges and stakes out the three key claims Paul attempts to prove rhetorically in the rest of this discourse. Verse 7a challenges the Corinthians to look at the evidence before them. While this call coheres with vv. 1–6 and encourages the Corinthians to take seriously the preceding appeals and threats, it applies primarily to the claims expressed emphatically in vv. 7–11: (1) “We belong to Christ (as legitimate apostles) as much as anyone else does”,<sup>113</sup> (2) “In my claims to be of Christ and to

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<sup>113</sup> v. 7, supported in 11.1–5; Peterson, *Eloquence*, 93.

possess authority from Him, I will not be discredited”;<sup>114</sup> and (3) “Whatever I am in word through letter while absent, when present I do.”<sup>115</sup> The emphatic expression of these claims signals that they point to express key criticisms of Paul: namely, Paul’s inept, weak performance as a leader shows that he is not a legitimate apostle of Christ to the Corinthians; that he discredits his claim to being an apostle and to possessing an apostle’s authority; and that his powerful letters contrasted with his weak personal presence and despicable speech show that he does not meet the requirements of apostleship, because he lacks integrity of character and essential skills of public leadership. This study argues that these distinct but related criticisms merge into the general criticism that Paul is too weak to lead and that this more general, subsuming criticism prompts Paul’s use of the term and concept of weakness throughout the discourse, especially from 11.21a forward.

The call to look at the evidence directs the Corinthians to accept a key criterion for assessing properly these criticisms of Paul, his response to them, and the claims of his critics and rivals. This criterion can exert great persuasive force, because it empowers the Corinthians to judge based on their first-hand experiences and observations. Using it, they are not vulnerable to being deceived by either Paul or his opponents. Paul gains ethical proof through endorsing it, and he will gain logical proof<sup>116</sup> as they apply it when he recounts events of his ministry among them for their review and when he expresses and implies the several contrasts between his ministry and that of his opponents.

#### *Relation to Ancient Rhetoric*

1. *The sophistic preference for arguments from probability over arguments from reality:* Paul’s valuing direct observation (10.7; 11.6) expresses the rhetorical topic of the real and actual versus the merely probable. Sophistic rhetoric from earliest times included a tradition that valued arguments from probability over arguments from direct evidence. Reasons range from epistemological skepticism about knowledge and truth to less profound delight in what we today term sophistries. From the perspective of rhetoric as an art, arguments from probability called on the ancient orator to invent material by means of the art of rhetoric (hence

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<sup>114</sup> v. 9, supported in 11.16—12.13; Peterson, 93.

<sup>115</sup> v. 11, supported in 12.14—18; Peterson, 93.

<sup>116</sup> though largely “inartistic” proof; that is, proof from facts not invented through the art of rhetoric, although rhetorical choices shape which facts are included and how they are expressed.

considered ἔντεχνον, or artistic, proof) and allowed him fuller opportunity to display his rhetorical prowess. Arguments from the actual, or the real, on the other hand, limited the orator's creativity and opportunity to display his abilities to working with existing proof not produced by the art of rhetoric (hence called inartistic, or ἄτεχνον, proof). Argument from probability is valued highly in sophistic and technical, handbook, traditions of rhetoric, not only in ceremonial and deliberative, but also in forensic, rhetoric. Socrates in the *Phaedrus* refers to this kind of rhetoric:

In courts of justice no attention whatever is paid to the truth about such topics [e.g., the truth about what is right or good]; all that matters is plausibility. Plausibility is simply another name for probability, and probability is the thing to concentrate on if you would be a scientific speaker. There are even some occasions when both prosecution and defence should positively suppress the facts in favour of probability, if the facts are improbable. Never mind the truth — pursue probability through thick and thin in every kind of speech; the whole secret of the art of speaking lies in consistent adherence to this principle. (272; Hamilton, Penguin)<sup>117</sup>

Kennedy observes that “later orators usually prefer to construct a complex fabric of argumentation in which probable conclusions are drawn on the basis of more or less hard evidence.”<sup>118</sup> But sophistic rhetoric contemporary with Paul delighted in display and entertainment, for which vivid description, arguments from probability, and other techniques of artistic invention were better suited than limiting oneself to truth resting on firsthand knowledge and other forms of inartistic invention.

2. Do this unit's acts of challenge and of asserting key claims conform it to the oration part known as the *propositio*?<sup>119</sup> Aristotle's discussion is brief: “The necessary parts [of a speech], then, are *prothesis* [statement of proposition] and *pistis* [proof of the statement]. These are, therefore, the parts that really belong [in every speech]; and at the most prooemium, *prothesis*, *pistis*, epilogue” (*On Rhetoric*, 3.13.4; Kennedy). Cicero expands the discussion to refer to two kinds of partitions. One expresses agreements and disagreements among disputants so that speakers and listeners may attend to the “definite problem” remaining (*De Inv.*, 1.22.31). The other states “the matters which we intend to discuss . . .

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<sup>117</sup> Socrates' defense argues that it is improbable that he would intentionally influence his own city toward evil, although he does not emphasize arguments from probability (*Apology*; 25d–26a, cited by Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 43). On Socrates' argument from probability: *ibid.*, 43. Antiphon's *Tetralogies* exemplify the sophistic favor toward probabilities; see Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 26–28.

<sup>118</sup> *Classical Rhetoric*, 21

briefly . . . in a methodical way,” so that listeners can follow the progress of the speech. Quintilian advocates an effective *narratio*, or statement of facts, which may render a *propositio* unnecessary because the *narratio* has sufficiently clarified the cause to be decided (*Institutes*, 4.4.1–2). Yet he recommends stating the propositions a speech will prove in the order they will be addressed and calls this kind of *propositio* a *partitio*, because it signals how the speech will be partitioned (*Institutes*, 4.5.1–12).

Peterson notes that vv. 7–11 name major topics, the three claims, developed in the rest of the discourse;<sup>120</sup> moreover, he argues that these claims are proven in the order in which they are first stated.<sup>121</sup> This reading agrees with Peterson’s initial observation but is less confident that the discourse deals with each of the claims distinctly and in the order in which they are stated. Regardless of whether or not the discourse proves rhetorically each claim in the order they occur in vv. 7–11, the claims themselves do signal what is to be proven in the rest of the discourse, and because they function in this way, vv. 7–11 may be considered to be the *Propositio* of the discourse.

#### **PAUL CANNOT COMPARE HIS MINISTRY AMONG THE CORINTHIANS WITH THE ACTIVITIES OF HIS OPPONENTS (10.12—11.21a; a *Probatio*, Part I)**

Having begun forcefully in an *Exordium* and having expressed in a *Propositio* three key claims to be proven throughout the discourse, the discourse begins proving the claims in the section identified here as *Proof, Part I* (10.12–11.21a), and continues the proof in *Part II* (11.21b–12.10), which contains the Fool’s Speech. These two sections of proof (which constitute the classical oration part *probatio*) not only prove the key claims stated in the *Propositio* but also develop the claim that opens the present section: namely, that Paul dare not and indeed cannot compare his ministry with the activities of his opponents. In an ongoing, informal σύγκρισις, *Proof, Part I* supports this claim straightforwardly, contrasting the past acts of Paul and of his rivals; and *Part II* supports it ironically by yielding to the demand that Paul commend himself

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<sup>119</sup> The *propositio* is discussed in *Rhet.* 3.13 (as πρόθεσις); *Ad Her.* 1.10.17 (as *divisio*); *De Inv.* 1.22.31–1.23.33 (as *partitio*); *Institutes* 4.4.1–4.5.28.

<sup>120</sup> specifically in the *probatio*, which Peterson identifies as 11.1–12.18. I identified the three claims of vv. 7–11 as theses for much, if not the whole, of the discourse independently and found confirmation in Peterson’s analysis.

<sup>121</sup> Peterson links claims with proof as follows: claim in v. 7 supported in 11.1–5; claim in v. 9 supported in 11.16–12.13; claim in v. 11 supported in 12.14–18; *Eloquence*, 93.



through his résumé of apostolic service. His self-commendation is both ironic and straightforward, and it further distinguishes his ministry from that of his rivals. This understanding of the rhetorical arrangement of the proof is unique to this study.

This reading does not find a *Narratio* in this discourse, contrary to other analysis.<sup>122</sup> Instead it discerns in the present section (10.12–11.21a) five brief units: 10.12–18; 11.1–6; 11.7–11; 11.12–15; and 11.16–21a. Each contains a past fact used to contrast the ministry of Paul from the activity of his rivals. This ongoing contrast is a form of σύγκρισις. While most scholarly attention to σύγκρισις in this discourse goes to 10.12 first, where Paul uses the infinitive, and second to the Fool’s Speech, this study notes that from 10.12 onward, Paul contrasts himself over against his rivals, although not in the terms by which they have already contrasted themselves against Paul in a way most unfavorable to Paul (expressed in the criticisms in 10.1, 10). In 10.12 when Paul denies that he classifies or compares his team with the self-commenders, he is already contrasting himself from them. When he emphasizes that he boasts neither beyond the proper limit nor in the work of another (10.13, 16), he again contrasts his manner of ministry from that of his opponents, whose manner of ministry is, in these vv., implied, not expressed (although it is expressed at 11.12). This running, explicit contrast continues through 11.19–21, and it unifies the section of 10.12—11.21. The contrasts arise from events the Corinthians have witnessed by experiencing them directly. Each therefore provides the evidence (as interpreted by Paul) to which Paul called them to look (10.7), giving them the basis to decide whose claims, Paul’s or the opponents’, are true. By including past facts used as proof, this section may be viewed as incorporating the key function of a *Narratio* into its primary function, as a *Probatio*, of proof.

### **Paul Cannot Compare His Ministry with that of the Opponents (1) Because He, not They, Brought the Gospel to the Corinthians (10.12–18)**

#### *Text*

12 Οὐ γὰρ τολμῶμεν ἐγκρίναι ἢ συγκρίναι ἑαυτοὺς τισιν τῶν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστανόντων, ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοὺς μετροῦντες καὶ συγκρίνοντες ἑαυτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς οὐ<sup>123</sup> συνιᾶσιν. 13

<sup>122</sup> See discussion under the heading “Relation to Ancient Rhetoric” in the treatment of 10.12–18 below.

<sup>123</sup> οὐ συνιᾶσιν ἡμεῖς δε is omitted by the Western text (D\*, F, G, etc.), leading to a reading in which Paul asserts, in Bultmann’s words, that “we measure ourselves by, and compare ourselves (only) with ourselves,” *Second Letter*, 191. Interpreters such as Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 309; Lietzmann, *An Die Korinther*, 143; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 191–193 adopt this reading. But Bruce Metzger (et al) finds the omission to be “doubtless the result

ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος οὗ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρον, ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν. **14** οὐ γὰρ ὡς μὴ ἐφικνούμενοι εἰς ὑμᾶς ὑπερεκτείνομεν ἑαυτούς, ἄχρι γὰρ καὶ ὑμῶν ἐφθάσαμεν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, **15** οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχώμενοι ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις κόποις, ἐλπίδα δὲ ἔχοντες αὐξανομένης τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν ἐν ὑμῖν μεγαλυθῆναι κατὰ τὸν κανόνα ἡμῶν εἰς περισσεῖαν **16** εἰς τὰ ὑπερέκεινα ὑμῶν εὐαγγελίσασθαι, οὐκ ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα καυχῆσασθαι. **17** Ὁ δὲ καυχώμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω· **18** οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἑαυτὸν συνιστάνων, ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν δόκιμος, ἀλλὰ ὃν ὁ κύριος συνίστησιν.

### ***Translation***

(12) For we do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they lack understanding. (13) But we will not boast beyond proper limit but will keep within the measure of the field that God has apportioned to us as our measure, to reach even to you. (14) For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach even to you. For we reached you first with the gospel of Christ. (15) For we do not go beyond the limit by boasting in the toils of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our field among you will be enlarged greatly, (16) to evangelize beyond you, [and] not boast in an already prepared field belonging to another. (17) But “He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord.” (18) For it is not the one who recommends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord recommends.

### ***Analysis***

#### *Speech Acts*

- 10.12a Denial that Paul classes or compares himself with self-commenders  
 b-c Claim that self-commenders lack understanding

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of an accident in transcription, when the eye of a copyist passed from οὐ to οὐκ and omitted the intervening words,” *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Second edition; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/German Bible Society, 1994), 514. The longer reading followed in this study is adopted also by Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 470; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 263–264 (suggesting that the shorter reading resulted from a Latin translator’s error); Hughes, *Second Epistle*, 365, n. 22; Betz, *Der Apostel*, 119, n. 558; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 315; Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 114. Apart from the sense it makes for the longer reading to supply δὲ to mark the contrast between vv.

- 10.13 Argument: Paul boasts only within his divine assignment
- 10.14 Evidence that Paul’s team brought the gospel to the Corinthians first.
- 10.15a Restatement, amplification of claim in v. 13: Paul’s team does not boast in others’ labors
- b A wish: the Corinthians’ faith would increase
- c Results desired: (1) Paul’s ministry among them prospers and
- 10.16 (2) Paul pursues mission beyond them, again not in another’s work
- 10.17 Imperative from Scripture: boast in the Lord [not in one’s accomplishments]
- 10.18 Reason for imperative: the Lord approves only those he commends

### Coherence

1. This unit coheres with the preceding units generally. Its discussion of those who commend themselves coheres with Paul’s descriptions of them in vv. 1–11: They consider Paul to conduct his ministry in an unspiritual way (v. 3); they consider themselves to have a special relationship with—probably a special commission from—Christ (v. 7); and they have criticized Paul’s inconsistent rejection of rhetoric as a vehicle for ministry, accusing him of only rationalizing his abysmal speaking abilities and, worse, behaving like a spineless flatterer (vv. 10, 1). The present unit adds to Paul’s representation of these, his rivals: They are self-praisers who should not expect their favorable commendation of themselves to merit the Lord’s commendation (vv. 12, 17–18); and they have violated God’s assigning Corinth, among other areas, for Paul to evangelize with the gospel and have claimed credit for results of his own work (vv. 13–16).<sup>124</sup>
2. Verse 12 coheres with the preceding vv. on the basis of a shared topic: namely, Paul’s and his rivals’ in-person oral performance and here, particularly, the rivals’ practice of commending themselves. The opponents criticized Paul’s personal presence and oral delivery (10.10, 1); now Paul launches from this topic, handled in vv. 9–11, to the denial in v. 12 that prolongs the topic<sup>125</sup> but also opens another, related, topic that lasts through 11.21a—ways

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12 and 13, the longer reading is easier to explain as original than is the insertion of the four Greek words to somehow improve the text.

<sup>124</sup> See fuller discussion of the issue of God’s apportioning an area of ministry to Paul and his jurisdiction over it under the heading “Pertinent Background—Terms and Concepts” below.

<sup>125</sup> that is, Paul will not try to persuade hearers that he in fact has a stronger personal presence and oral delivery; in fact, he will concede this part of the critique (11.6).

other than rhetorical presentation that his ministry differs from their activities. For Paul, the contrasts between his rhetoric and that of his rivals matters far less than the weightier matter of his divine authorization for his mission to Corinth that, he insists, his rivals do not have and have actually violated.

Τολμῶμεν, v. 12, coheres with τολμῆσαι, v. 2, in wordplay. In v. 2 Paul pleads that the Corinthians will so act that he will not have to be bold or daring in confronting his critics and rivals. The use of τολμῆσαι appears to be straightforward, but τολμῶμεν is used ironically in v. 12, in Martin’s words, in a stance of “mock humility: I really cannot rise to the level of these people so that I can rightly join myself to them (εἰς ἁμαρτίαν) or compare myself with them (σὺν ἁμαρτίαν).”<sup>126</sup>

3. The mention of boasting in vv. 13, 15–18 coheres with its first mention in v. 8, elaborating the topic of proper boasting. The mention of God’s apportioning a sphere of ministry to Paul (10.13) and of being first to bring the gospel of Christ to the Corinthians (10.14) cohere with the question about Paul’s being “of Christ” in v. 7.
4. Numerous expressions cause vv. 12–18 to cohere with itself. Paul’s “not boasting beyond limit” (vv. 13, 15) coheres with the contrasting practices Paul rejects in v. 12: rivals’ measuring themselves by one another and comparing themselves with one another. Expressions about Paul’s team reaching the Corinthians causes v. 13 (“to reach even to you”) to cohere with v. 14 (“as though we did not reach you . . . the first to come all the way to you”). Expressions about not boasting in others’ labors cause vv. 15 and 16 to cohere. References to boasting in vv. 13, 15, 16, and 17 cause those vv. to cohere, and they relate similarly to expressions concerning boasting within or beyond the limit and not boasting in others’ work. The expressions listed in the previous sentence connect with the topics of the final vv. of this section: boasting in/about the Lord, being commended not by oneself but by the Lord. Finally, the double occurrences of commending (συνιστάνων . . . συνίστησιν, v. 18) cohere with the opening occurrence in v. 12 (συνιστανόντων), signaling that v. 12 not only initiates contrasts between Paul and the opponents that extend through 11.21a but that it also coheres closely with the immediately following vv. 13–18.

### Intertextuality

Verse 17 cites LXX Jeremiah 9.23: ἀλλ' ἢ ἐν τούτῳ καυχάσθω ὁ καυχώμενος, “But in this let the boaster boast.” In v. 17 the ἐν τούτῳ of Jeremiah becomes ἐν κυρίῳ, and the opposition expressed in Jeremiah 9.22–23 is transformed to Paul’s situation. In Jeremiah the wise, the strong, and the rich are told not to boast in, respectively, their wisdom, their strength, and their wealth, while they are told to boast in one thing: that they know and understand the Lord. Those hearers of 2 Corinthians 10 familiar with the Septuagint would pick up the allusion to clauses in Jeremiah 9.22–23. They would recall the distinction in that passage between the two kinds of boasting with their contemporary situation in mind. Paul identifies his own ministry with boasting in the Lord by citing this verse from Jeremiah approvingly and at this point in the discourse. The likely effects of this citation in this rhetorical setting are discussed below.

### Pertinent Background—Terms and Concepts

1. Συγκρίναι, v. 12, is the infinitive of σύγκρισις, which is an important term of rhetoric, only touched on here and fully discussed in chapter three of this study, in connection with the FS. Hellenistic rhetorical education proper began with a student’s completion of grammar schools, through a curriculum known as the *progymnasmata*, which prepared students for higher-level rhetorical studies in the *gymnasium*.<sup>127</sup> Students were taught purposes, rules, and techniques for comparing persons both historical and mythological, cities, and events in speeches, in ways similar to how many high-school and college students learn to compose a comparison-contrast essay today. A σύγκρισις was sometimes described as a double *encomium*, which would result in mild contrast between the good and the better in a pair, or as a speech of praise joined to a speech of censure, which would sharply contrast the two members of a pair and strongly stress the superiority of one over the other. Hermogenes’ important third-century CE *Progymnasmata* treats the σύγκρισις as an advanced exercise,

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<sup>126</sup> 2 *Corinthians*, 318. It occurs also twice in 11.21. Betz documents its use by philosophers in their polemics against sophists, expressing audacity, even effrontery (as Martin translates it in v. 12) in a pejorative sense; *Der Apostel*, 67–69, 119–120.

<sup>127</sup> The term occurs first in the fourth century BCE *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* (143a25). George Kennedy (and others) insist that “ancient education was so conservative that the exercises go back at least to [pre-1<sup>st</sup> cent. CE] Hellenistic times,” *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Pr., 1963) 270.

taking up into itself the commonplace (which amplifies misdeeds) and the *encomium* (which amplifies good deeds).<sup>128</sup> from the, The form shapes Plutarch’s famous comparative *Lives*.

In the present unit, σύγκρισις appears because Paul represents his rivals as commending themselves (ἑαυτοῦς συνλιστανόντων), apparently through discourses, probably oral, of self-praise.<sup>129</sup> Not only did they commend themselves, perhaps using the form of the speech form *encomium*,<sup>130</sup> but they also, according to Paul, praised themselves through comparing themselves, apparently in a kind of sophistic contest for superiority. While the precise setting for such performances is unclear and may include letters of commendation,<sup>131</sup> the FS most likely closely follows such a discourse of self-commendation (at least in part) and gives us the best evidence for the form this discourse took in the Corinthian church. This topic in v. 12 is important evidence that Paul’s rivals were rhetorically proficient and evaluated Paul’s ministry at least in part through rhetorical criteria.

2. Μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος, v. 13, figures prominently in the dispute between Paul and his rivals concerning jurisdiction, then authority, among the Corinthians. Martin, following Bultmann, emphasizes this point, worth quoting at length:

One might have expected “God gave us (ε[δωκεν) our service,” but *merivzein*, “to allot, apportion,” is evidently chosen to denote the assignment or a sphere of ministry (*Missionsgebiet*; Bultmann, 196)<sup>132</sup> according to God’s purpose (cf. 1 Cor 7:17; Rom 12:3); hence the tautological and seemingly unnecessary piling up of a [metra ... mevtron ... ejmevrisen ... mevtrou to emphasize strongly the single point that Paul has not transgressed his allocated area of service which has been apportioned to him by God. Hence he can “boast,” since the object of his *kauca`sqai*—his “missionary field”—is not what he has chosen for himself, but rather it is what God has assigned to him (hence v 17).

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<sup>128</sup> Charles S. Baldwin, “The *Progymnasmata* of Hermogenes,” in *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400) Interpreted from Representative Works* (New York: Macmillan, 1928) 23–38; here 23.

<sup>129</sup> *Periautologia*, “self-praise,” is not used in this discourse, but it is the term common to rhetoricians, who instruct on praising oneself effectively. De Lacy and Einarson (*Plutarch’s Moralia*, VII, 114; LCL) suggest that the term originates with Demosthenes, who uses it in the expression “to speak about myself” in the oration *On the Crown* (4, 321) which was then taken up by rhetoricians (see Alexander in Spengel, *Rhet. Graec.*, iii, p. 4.9). Plutarch considers the ethics of self-praise, and envisions the statesman needing to praise himself in various situations (“On Praising Oneself Inoffensively,” *Moralia* 539B–547F). Chapter three of this study assesses Paul’s boasting in the FS, using Plutarch’s essay as a Hellenistic touchstone of propriety.

<sup>130</sup> The typical *encomium* covered these topics: race (including nationality, native city, ancestors, parents); education and training; the nature of the subject’s soul [excellence in virtues] and body [beauty, stature, agility, might]; pursuits and achievements (divided into those of the soul, of the body, and of fortune); external resources [kin, friends, possessions, household, fortune]; length of life, manner of death, and praiseworthy results of the deceased’s life. So Hermogenes on *encomium*; C. S. Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic*, 30–32.

<sup>131</sup> cf. 2 Cor. 3.1; also

<sup>132</sup> Bultmann, (ET) *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 194–195

The link-idea is the verb *metrei`n* in v 12: his competitors have a measuring rod (*mevtron*), which they have used wrongly, since it has served only to inflate their pride and bolster their self-praise. They have failed to use the proper *mevtron*; for Paul the function of such a measure is to define and delimit one's *kanwvn*, "specific sphere," definitely marked out (Plummer, 287) and opened (Schweizer, *Church Order*, 203, 24k, n. 779). . . . *kanwvn*—as in the sense of "canon"—betokens a measured length and denotes distance in a linear way (e.g., length of the radius from a circle's center, or a race track; Hughes, 366, who also finds an athletic metaphor in v 12, with *ejgkrivnein* = "compete"). But it also tends to include what is the area thus measured: hence it means territory as well as boundary limit (see, however, Judge, art. cit. [316] for meaning of *kanwvn* as "assessment"). The English "line" has the same overlap of meanings (cf. Gal 6:16): a straight line, and a person's "line," e.g., line of business, interest, etc.<sup>133</sup>

### *Rhetorical Structure and Development*

With this unit the discourse develops rhetorical traction, as it were, adding to a forceful *Exordium* and the strongly stated claims of a *Propositio* speech acts including argument that develop the rationale for the strong rhetoric that has led up to this unit. The discussion here covers the primary discourse mode and the arguments of this unit. It reserves the broader synthesis to the following section "Recapitulation of Rhetorical Performance."

- 10.12a Denial that Paul classes or compares himself with self-commenders  
 b-c Claim that self-commenders lack understanding

Verse 12 makes explicit the dominant mode of the whole discourse: It is a running comparison, a *σύγκρισις* between Paul and his opponents. In 10.1–11, comparison occasions the discourse, but it is not clear there whether that comparison is between Paul's performance and a standard that the Corinthians and rivals would share in evaluating Paul or whether the comparison is between the performances of Paul and of other persons. But in v. 12 the comparison is clarified and, importantly, in this discourse, launched explicitly. From 10.13 to 11.21a, the discourse accomplishes multiple purposes but throughout them is the ongoing comparison—a contrast, strictly—between Paul and the opponents. In some cases, the contrast is

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<sup>133</sup> *2 Corinthians*, 320. Martin also notes "that Paul is slightly unfair in this use of terms, since he denies to his opponents' *mevtron tou` kanovno*" the very aspect he wishes to insist on for himself, namely, that he has legitimacy to move out to new territorial regions (v 16). But he could have justified this view on the ground that any 'mission to the Hellenes' (Gal 2:7, 8) must include an ever-expanding domain." Is it the case that Paul, according to this discourse, denies the rivals any field (*κανών*) for mission among Hellenes or denies them, in principle, only incursion into those fields where another is working? The latter idea—where another has labored—occurs twice, vv. 15, 16, and seems to be the second reason, after the first reason of God's having apportioned area (v. 13), for Paul's

implied, in others clearly expressed. Its beginning in v. 12 is ironic, because Paul denies emphatically that he would dare to compare himself with his rivals. He does not compare himself with them as one in the same league, because they, whatever their sophistic proficiency, major in fruitless self-comparison. But he does begin contrasting himself from them, and that ongoing contrasting is at the same time an ongoing comparison.

Verse 12 performs a double entendre: Mock humility notwithstanding, Paul will concede that he is not eloquent (11.6); therefore, he dare not compare or classify himself among eloquent rivals, a view with which they would agree and, if this were all Paul were to say, receive as his concession of their superiority (11.5). But Paul's own assertion in v. 12 is that his acts of ministry are not comparable to their activities. The discourse develops this assertion through ongoing contrast from v. 13 through 11.21a.<sup>134</sup>

Verses 13–18 express the first such contrast, and it is a properly foundational contrast. Its topic is how Paul boasts properly, κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος of God's commission and assignment. Paul's mission to Corinth and the founding of the church there fulfills not merely Paul's wish but a divine assignment. The contrast with his critics is implied but clear: They boast beyond limit (v. 13); they overextend themselves because they did not reach the Corinthians first (v. 14); they therefore boast in others' labors (vv. 15, 17) and do not boast in the Lord (v. 17); and they are not the ones whom the Lord commends (v. 18).

10.13 Argument: Paul boasts only within his divine assignment

10.14 Evidence that Paul's team brought the gospel to the Corinthians first

Apart from the contrast it performs, this unit develops in two distinct, closely related, short arguments. The first claims that Paul's boasting is not beyond the limit: ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα (v. 13a). This claim has this support:

- (1) Another assertion, compressed into the restrictive clause οὐδ' ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρον (v. 13b), that God apportioned the measure, or limit, of the area including reaching the Corinthians: ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν (v. 13c);

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rebuffing his rivals' claim to jurisdiction among the Corinthians. Yet Paul would deny these rivals any field because they, he claims, import another Jesus, spirit, and gospel, and are, finally, false apostles (11.4, 13).

<sup>134</sup> Bultmann is one of the few interpreters to highlight this ongoing comparison. He titles the section spanning 10.12 to 12.18 "Paul's τὸλμα, or a comparison with his opponents" (*Second Letter*, 191). By examining this discourse rhetorically, I discerned the ongoing contrast throughout not only the FS (11.21b–21.10) but also through the present section (10.12–11.21a) independently, before consulting his concise, insightful commentary.



(2) Then comes a second supporting assertion. It restates in a negative form—οὐ γὰρ . . . ὑπερεκτείνομεν ἑαυτούς (v. 14b)—the initial claim in v. 13, but now modified by a clause, negated, ὡς μὴ ἐφικνούμενοι εἰς ὑμᾶς (v. 14a), that corresponds in diction to the final clause of v. 13, stated affirmatively. This immediate repetition in a positive-negative sequence emphasizes the assertion, signaling its importance to the discourse.

(3) Finally, these assertions receive support from evidence that the Corinthians witnessed firsthand (fulfilling 10.7a): ἄχρι γὰρ καὶ ὑμῶν ἐφθάσαμεν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ (10.14c).

Paul’s reminder that he did not overextend himself in his mission to the Corinthians implies that the rivals did, an implication strengthened by implications in vv. 15–16 that Paul’s rivals have claimed credit for his own work. Ernest B. Allo finds the image implied in v. 14 comical:

With all their letters of recommendation, their self-praise, their intrigues designed to capture the minds of the Corinthians . . . they look like little men who are standing on their toes and stretching their arms as high as they can, in order to touch the desired object, which is still too high for them.<sup>135</sup>

While the image may be overdrawn from one implication, it nevertheless testifies to the comic effect parts of this unit may exert on readers and hearers and is worth noting because other features of this discourse indicate that they may be performed comically as well.

- 10.15a Restatement, amplification of claim in v. 13: Paul’s team does not boast in others’ labors
- b A wish: the Corinthians’ faith would increase
- c Results desired: (1) Paul’s ministry among them prospers and
- 10.16 (2) Paul pursues mission beyond them, again not in another’s work

Verses 15–16 extend what was proven rhetorically in vv. 13–14 into a benefit for the Corinthians that results from their embracing the argument in vv. 13–14. Verse 15 begins with a clause nearly identical to the denial clause in v. 13:

v. 15: οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχώμενοι

v. 13: ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχήσομεθα

This repetition emphasizes Paul’s denial and likewise signals its importance for his goals.<sup>136</sup> But the difference in the two, with the verb in v. 13 in the future tense and the present participle in v.

<sup>135</sup> *Saint Paul. Second épître aux Corinthiens* (Paris: Gabalda, 1956), cited in English translation by C. K. Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 266.

<sup>136</sup> And it evinces a tacit warrant that he and his hearers share about justice or propriety—that boasting within the limit is superior to boasting beyond the limit.

15 inviting a contemporaneous rendering, points to a different function for the clause in v. 15. The clause in v. 15 proceeds from the supported argument in v. 13, which Paul presumes to be convincing. Thus οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχώμενοι repeats the now-proven claim (v. 13) and adds to it an explanatory phrase, ἐν ἄλλοτρίοις κόποις (v. 15). That phrase states, at least in part, what it means to boast beyond measure, which Paul has now shown (through proof in v. 14) that he does not do.

The benefit for the Corinthians follows the wish, the expression of hope in vv. 15–16. The discourse here moves from the strength of the presumed-convincing argument (vv. 13–14) to envision a mutually beneficial future relationship between Paul and the Corinthians. The hope expresses optimism about that relationship and the opportunity for the Corinthians to participate in Paul’s further mission.<sup>137</sup> It also envisions Paul as self-consistent: Even as he reached the Corinthians before anyone else did, so does he desire to reach others beyond them. His past performance would qualify this desire as both sincere and able to be fulfilled. It would also give weight to his claim to integrity in v. 11<sup>138</sup> Some Corinthians would infer from Paul’s attested past performance and his emphatic<sup>139</sup> desire for a future similar performance some evidence in favor of the claim that Paul is not the duplicitous person the critics have alleged (vv. 1, 10).

10.17 Imperative from Scripture: boast in the Lord [not in one’s accomplishments]

10.18 Reason for imperative: the Lord approves only those he commends

The second argument occurs in vv. 17–18, following proof in vv. 13–16 that Paul does not boast beyond the limit, that he does not commend himself using the subjective standard described in v. 12. The argument now shifts from an argument centered on Paul’s observable performance to an argument grounded in authoritative Scripture. Verses 17–18 argue the issue expressed first in v. 12: that self-commendation does not receive the Lord’s approval or commendation. The argument, reconstructed, runs thus:

*Compound major premise:*

The Lord commends those whom he approves (v. 18), and

The Lord approves those who boast in the Lord (v. 17), and

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<sup>137</sup> Later, it becomes apparent that some of the Corinthians wished, through their financial gift, to enter a partnership with Paul on those, their terms (11.7-9; 12.13-15), which Paul rejects in part on the basis of viewing himself as their parent who rightly gives without expecting a reciprocal return.

<sup>138</sup> Bultmann notes the connection between Paul’s assertion of his jurisdiction and his claim to integrity, v. 11: “Verse 13b . . . gives the basis for verse 11—I will appear among you with power, because you are my field of labor, because you fall under my jurisdiction,” *Second Letter*, 193–194.

Those who boast in the Lord are those who boast within the limits of what God has apportioned to them (v. 13).

*Minor premise:*

The self-commenders boast beyond the limit of God's apportionment (vv. 13–16);

*Conclusion:*

Therefore, they do not boast in the Lord and are neither approved nor commended by the Lord (v. 18)

Sketched in this way, it is apparent that the crucial and disputable assertion is the final member of the major premise and the minor premise. How does one demonstrate that one has boasted within the limits of God's apportionment? The immediate context provides the observable evidence of Paul's initial mission to the Corinthians; but this act does not entail, logically, the crucial qualification of proof of boasting only within God's apportionment. Thus this rhetorical argumentation is bolstered at this point not by irrefutable evidence or reasoning but by emphatic assertion, as Martin observes above, through a "piling up of [terms based on *merivzein*] to emphasize strongly the single point that Paul has not transgressed his allocated area of service." For the moment, the crucial claim is treated as either self-evident (needing only vigorous assertion) or as incapable of being further proven (thus relying rhetorically on the credibility of the asserter). Perhaps both apply here: Paul is utterly convinced that God called him and assigned him the mission to Gentiles and that the church at Corinth is one result of that commission;<sup>140</sup> and the church must acknowledge Paul's unique role in their coming to faith in Christ: What more can be—or need be—proven? (Yet it is precisely Paul's unique role that the next unit recounts, 11.2.) The argument seems to rest on the tacit warrant that the results of Paul's mission show, or prove, its divine authorization, including Paul's understanding of his unique, exclusive authorization. Of this conjectured warrant, the former assertion is shared by Paul and the Corinthians, but the latter remains disputed.

The discourse adds to the emphasis in v. 13 an appeal to a sense of justice. Twice Paul asserts that his mission has and will target areas where he will not work in the field or labor of others (vv. 15, 16). The Corinthians are witnesses that this describes Paul's mission among them,<sup>141</sup> and their witness contributes to the presumption that Paul's future missions will be on the same

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<sup>139</sup> emphasis by repetition: the basic idea of not working in another's field occurs three times in vv. 15–16.

<sup>140</sup> 1 Cor. 1.1; 2 Cor. 1.1; Gal. 1.1, 11–16; 2.7–8.

terms. Although not related, most strictly, to the crucial claim of the present argument, this evidence (from the past) and presumption (for the future), adds to Paul's credibility, which, in this context, may be transferred to the crucial claim of his having been commissioned by God for the mission to Corinth. It also works against the credibility of the rivals, whom the Corinthians must acknowledge have inserted themselves into work begun by Paul and thus distinguish the terms of their work from his.

The implied conclusion of vv. 12–18 is that Paul's boasting about his ministry has been a boasting in the Lord, while that of his opponents has not. Whether or not hearers would immediately grant that Paul's team boasts in the Lord, the assertion that one can boast in the Lord would prompt the questions, "Who boasts in the Lord?" and "Who is commended by the Lord?" By citing this verse from Jeremiah immediately after the final clause of v. 16, Paul expresses his interpretation that boasting in the Lord would not include "boasting of work already done in another's field" and, by citing this Scripture in this context, the force of the citation would tend to favor Paul over his opponents.<sup>142</sup> Verse 18 offers in form a supporting reason for the direction to boast in the Lord. It aligns the notions of boasting within the divinely assigned limit with boasting "in the Lord" and with receiving the Lord's commendation. This reason for boasting in the Lord is at the same time a criterion for evaluating one's work in the gospel ministry—whether or not the Lord commends it—and it implies that only Paul and his team meet this criterion. Paul's best proof that the Lord commends him awaits a strategic, later point in the discourse,<sup>143</sup> but the statement of this criterion at this point evokes within the minds of listeners the question, Whom does the Lord commend?

### *Rhetorical Style*

Several stylistic choices in this unit, especially various kinds of repetition, generate emphasis, which is a major means of communicating a message effectively. Most of these items are discussed above and are mentioned here to summarize that discussion in preparation for the synthesis that concludes discussion of this unit.

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<sup>141</sup> 1 Cor. 3.10, Paul the σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων of the church at Corinth

<sup>142</sup> which is not to say that, upon the delivery of this discourse, the opponents and their sympathizers could not invent an interpretation that would favor them.

<sup>143</sup> 2 Cor. 12.9

1. Ἐγκρῖναι ἢ συγκρῖναι, v. 12, are a rhyming pair whose effect may be approximated by the English pair “to pair . . . or compare.” It emphasizes modestly through the repetition of sound in semantically related words.
2. The occurrence of forms of ἑαυτοῦς six times in v. 12 could be performed with a light comic, mocking touch, a plausible suggestion because of the “mock humility” with which the first sentence of v. 12 could itself be performed. Further, Peterson and Danker note that, after Paul has been criticized for his poor (oral) rhetoric, v. 12 displays notable rhetorical skill (along with other vv.): Danker discusses the balance of early and later phrases in the v., as represented here:

Οὐ γὰρ τολμῶμεν  
 ἐγκρῖναι ἢ συγκρῖναι ἑαυτοῦς  
 τισιν τῶν ἑαυτοῦς συνιστανότων,  
 ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοῦς μετροῦντες  
 καὶ συγκρίνοντες ἑαυτοῦς ἑαυτοῖς  
 οὐ συνιάσιν.

He comments: “At the center comes the full weight of indictment: there are those who commend themselves and measure themselves by one another.”<sup>144</sup> Varying slightly from where Danker finds the greatest emphasis, Peterson’s analysis of the chiasmic center of the v. emphasizes the measuring and comparing of the rivals among themselves:

ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς  
   ἑαυτοῦς  
   μετροῦντες  
   καὶ  
   συγκρίνοντες  
   ἑαυτοῦς  
   ἑαυτοῖς  
 οὐ συνιάσιν.

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<sup>144</sup> 2 Corinthians, 158

Both analyses merit note, and both, even with their differences, agree that the sentence displays rhetorical design and emphasizes the intramural commendations and comparisons among Paul’s rivals.<sup>145</sup>

3. The piling up of six occurrences of terms derived from *μερίζειν* in vv. 12–15, with four of these in v. 13, emphasizes the idea of “limit” and “measure” over which Paul distinguishes himself from his overreaching rivals.

4. Repetition of diction and clauses in vv. 13, 15, 16 emphasizes the denial each performs:

*οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα* (v. 13)

*οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχώμενοι ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις κόποις* (v. 15)

*οὐκ ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα καυχήσασθαι* (v. 16)

5. Antithetical parallelism emphasizes commendation and distinguishes the result of self-commendation from commendation by the Lord, v. 18:

*οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἑαυτὸν συνιστάνων,*

*ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν δόκιμος,*

*ἀλλὰ ὃν ὁ κύριος συνίστησιν.*

### Implications

First, among the significant shared beliefs that this unit expresses or implies are these:

1. The Corinthians’ firsthand observation would produce agreement between them and Paul that (1) Paul’s critics commend themselves and evaluate themselves among themselves (v. 12); (2) Paul’s team reached them with the gospel first, not his rivals (v. 14), and therefore that (3) he had not worked among them in someone else’s prior work in the gospel; (4) Paul had carried the gospel to regions and cities Paul had asserted from his earliest relations with them that his was a divine mission to them (cf. 1 Cor. 1.1; 3.10; 2.1); (4) Paul .
2. Paul and the Corinthians agree that God’s assignment and apportioning of area is authoritative; the dispute is over who has that commission for leadership at Corinth, how that commission may be discerned, how such commissioned leadership would act. In this dispute, characterizations of Paul as weak undermine his claim of divine commission.

<sup>145</sup> Other interpreters have noted instead grammatical and syntactical clumsiness: Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 317, who also quotes Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 313; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 261.

3. They likewise share an important rhetorical premise, or warrant, that being the first to do something is better than being second or later. Applied specifically in this discourse, that general warrant becomes this: whoever first reaches a group with the gospel merits greater consideration than those who follow.<sup>146</sup> We may call this warrant “the prerogatives of the pioneer” and compare it with other such warrants, including the “prerogatives of the founder-father,” which 11.2–3 expresses.
4. From that warrant comes a corollary: that boasting in others’ work is less commendable than boasting in one’s own work. Paul’s stating the idea and moving on without arguing for it suggests that he expects the Corinthians to evaluate these contrasting actions in the same way.

A final important implication from this unit pertains not to beliefs shared by Paul and the Corinthians but to what this unit proves rhetorically by implication. “By implication” is important because much of what the various units of the discourse prove, they prove without expressing through metadiscourse that they are in fact proving this or that claim. This unit supports all three of the claims expressed in 10.7–11 in this implicative, or lightly marked, way. Those claims are (1) that Paul belongs to Christ; (2) that Paul can boast of belonging to Christ and of his authority without being discredited, or shamed; (3) that Paul will act with consistency when he arrives in Corinth. Peterson concurs in identifying these as key claims of the whole discourse, and he further specifies that specific units of the discourse support each claim and do so in the order in which they occur in 10.7–11.<sup>147</sup> This latter claim may exceed the evidence of the discourse itself and presume that the discourse conforms more closely than it does to an ideal Greco-Roman oration that treats topics in the order in which the *Partitio* expresses them. Peterson suggests that the first of the three claims is proven (only) in 11.1–15, then the second in 11.16–12.13, and the third in 12.14–18. This reading agrees that these claims are supported in the units that Peterson lists, but it disagrees that each of these claims functions as the controlling thesis in the units Peterson has specified and that, instead, the claims are supported at various points throughout the remainder of the discourse.

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<sup>146</sup> Note the possible ironic affirmation of this cultural warrant in Paul’s recounting his descent from the Damascus wall: He boasts ironically of being the first down the wall, an example of his weakness and playing the fool (11.32–33).

<sup>147</sup> *Eloquence*, 93

Is the claim that Paul belongs to Christ supported only in 11.1–15; or does that portion of the discourse name that claim as its thesis or otherwise express that it has a special relationship with that claim? This reading cannot answer affirmatively to either question. Instead, this reading finds this first claim to be supported by implication in the present unit, 10.12–18. If Paul has been apportioned Corinth by God and thereby given unique jurisdiction over the church, and if he has brought the gospel to them before anyone else has worked in the gospel in that area, do not these actions evince his belonging to Christ and, specifically, his apostolic commission to Corinth? Peterson agrees that this unit claims that Paul “was the first to bring the gospel to them, and that he did so is evidence that Corinth is within the *καὶνὼν* which God has appointed to him as apostle.” He continues: “These newcomers [Paul’s rivals] can make no such claim.”<sup>148</sup> But perhaps because Peterson wants to assign 10.12–18 to the *Narratio* he does not note that God’s appointing Paul as apostle supports Paul’s claim to belong to Christ. Additionally, the other two of the three claims also receive support in the present unit. The claim that Paul will boast without being discredited seems clearly supported in this unit by Paul’s expression of care not to boast “beyond proper limit but” to keep “within the measure of the field that God has apportioned to us as our measure” because his team was not “overextending” themselves and “did not go beyond the limit by boasting in the toils of others” (10.13–14). Further Paul clarifies that the Lord’s recommendation is the standard by which boasting will be judged (10.17–18). The third claim, that Paul will act with consistency, also receives perhaps lighter support, but support nonetheless. By recounting his pioneering ministry, to which the Corinthians are firsthand witnesses, Paul shows that he has been a man of integrity, with words matching deeds; and this record may give confidence that he will carry out his intention to use Corinth as a base for a further pioneering mission elsewhere, if the Corinthians will cooperate with him.

Apart from the present unit, where one might say that beginning the proof of each claim is a function of a *Narratio*, claims receive support in portions of the discourse where they should not, according to Peterson’s analysis. The second claim, that Paul will not be discredited by his boasting, would seem to be quite directly supported in the discussion of Paul’s humbling himself as he gives the gospel freely (11.7–13). Paul even calls his policy of not accepting support from those to whom he is giving the gospel “this boast of mine,” and he invokes an oath to strengthen his resolve to broadcast this, his gospel policy (11.10). The following v. offers splendid support

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<sup>148</sup> *Eloquence*, 101–102



for the third claim, which by Peterson’s analysis is proven much later, in 12.14–18. But 11.12 follows Paul’s declaration of resolve in v. 10 and asserts with continuing resolve that “what I do I will continue to do,” which again recalls Paul’s conduct witnessed firsthand by the Corinthians and from it states a present and future intention that asserts integrity of word and deed.

Other examples appear throughout the discourse. Peterson seems to have imposed on this discourse features from ideal Greco-Roman orations that it finally does not possess. The claims he has identified are asserted by the discourse, and the discourse does support them through rhetorical proof, but it does not do it, at least clearly and exclusively, in the neat sequence Peterson has proposed. Paul’s rhetoric, in this regard, falls short of that prescribed in handbooks or exemplified by virtuoso orators.

### *Rhetorical Effects*

This unit would likely exert strong emphasis through several of its expressions, both individually and cumulatively. Because the unit contains so many of these, it is hard to avoid concluding that Paul sought such continued forcefulness in this unit. These structures of emphasis include the following, which have also been discussed above: in v. 12, the six-fold repetition of ἑαυτοῦ; in v. 13, the four-fold use of terms derived from μερίζειν; repetition of diction within clauses expressing denial in vv. 13, 15, 16; and in v. 18, antithetical parallelism. Along with these structures of emphasis throughout the unit, a few items invite playful performance, some tongue in cheek, some with a comic touch, in all cases with the potential of enhancing the force of the expressions through the lighter touch of irony and humor. Such items include these:

1. The double entendre of v. 12 as a whole: Paul combines a straightforward denial of comparability with rivals because he does not speak eloquently with a denial in mock humility that he would dare “pair and compare” himself with rivals, a denial that expresses a serious claim that his ministry, grounded in God’s directive, cannot compare with rivals who transgress that directive.
2. Within v. 12, the rhyming pair ἐγκρίναι ἢ συγκρίναι, “pair and compare,” and the six-fold use of ἑαυτοῦ, which dramatizes the subjective basis of the rivals’ commending, measuring, and comparing. As Allo suggests with regard to rivals’ overextending themselves in v. 14,

the emphasis in v. 12 on “themselves” may envision the comic scene of a society of mutual admirers without a basis for their admiration.

The evidence Paul cites in v. 14 that he reached the Corinthians with the gospel exerts the effect of a fact that they would affirm. They could not be witnesses to the act of God’s apportioning their region to Paul’s mission, but they did witness his reaching them first; and this fact is the strongest basis for Paul’s claim to jurisdiction over them. Closely allied to this argument from an observable fact is the ethical argument derived from sequence: Paul’s reaching the Corinthians first gives him a special claim to leadership among them that rivals cannot match; and when Paul describes himself as one who does not boast in the labor of others (v. 15, 16), he takes the moral high ground in the dispute with rivals. This line of argument would exert significant convincing force.

The portrayal of a future, beneficial relationship with Paul (v. 15) extends the ethical force of this unit. Through Paul’s projecting a future mission with Corinthian help, again going where he will not work in another’s field, the Corinthians see Paul’s integrity: What he has done (in coming to them before others), he wants to keep on doing. His desire for them to be a part of this mission envisions an honorable ongoing relationship and shows that he does not view Corinth as a personal fiefdom from which to harvest personal gain but instead as a base for launching future missions. This kind of wish for the future would enhance Paul’s credibility, especially with its power to use the fact of what he has already done as the basis for believing that he will do what he says he will. Such language pertains as well to the criticism Paul rebutted earlier, in vv. 10–11. While the specific terms applicable in this case (vv. 15–16) differ from those in the earlier case, they follow the same structure—“what I have done I will do.” Because the latter instance is warranted by Paul’s past performance that the Corinthians have witnessed, it is forceful in its own right, and it will also tend to enhance Paul’s credibility in the earlier claim expressed within the same structure (vv. 10–11). And those Corinthians who believe that the gospel of Christ should be spread will find appealing the opportunity Paul expresses for them to partner with him in his future missions.

Finally, Paul’s citing Scripture and interpreting it (vv. 17–18) with an emphatic antithetical final clause would influence those Corinthians implied in the discourse who are familiar with the longer passage in LXX Jeremiah 9.22–23. In this present use, Paul distinguishes strongly between his ministry and his rivals’ activities, and any of the Corinthians familiar with the longer passage

in Jeremiah 9.22–23 would feel the force of the logic of that text pulling them to view Paul’s opponents as contemporary counterparts to those who, in Jeremiah 9, boasted in their wisdom, strength, and wealth. Recognizing the pull of Paul’s use of this text to view his opponents this way does not guarantee that any of the Corinthians would in fact accept this evaluation of the opponents but simply that their feeling pulled to view the opponents in this way indicates the persuasive force at work in the discourse. To the extent that any hearers related this Jeremiah text in this way to the situation 2 Corinthians is responding to, regardless of whether or not any surrendered to its force, Paul’s position would have been strengthened.

The lightly revised citation from Jeremiah in v. 17, with its allusion to the longer text, strengthens Paul’s position because in this context it asserts that Paul’s within-the-limits boasting is boasting in the Lord. Hearers would be disposed to agree with this assertion, in part because it immediately follows three other assertions (discussed above) that they would have to agree with: namely, (1) that Paul’s team did reach them first with the gospel (v. 14); (2) that Paul’s claim to desire to work from Corinth in order to pioneer other areas with the gospel is likely true (vv. 15–16); and (3) that when he boasts of his work among them, he is not boasting in the work of others (v. 16). Immediately after these assertions that the Corinthians would agree with, v. 17 cites the verse from Jeremiah, which interprets the actions of Paul expressed in vv. 13–16 as being acts of boasting in the Lord. The sequence of three quick agreements would, by itself, dispose the hearer to agree with the next assertion, simply out of the tendency to continue a pattern being established. But the proverbial character of this short citation from Jeremiah further pulls the hearer to agree with the interpretation Paul desires. Proverbs, or maxims, by their nature elide fuller argumentation and communicate swiftly a perspective widely believed to be true that members of a specific culture tend to agree with immediately.<sup>149</sup> Hearers would tend to agree with v. 17 first because it is Scripture and second because its proverbial form encourages immediate agreement. This pull to agree then serves Paul’s purposes because it predisposes a hearer to embrace the specific interpretation Paul elicits from this citation.

#### *Recapitulation of the Rhetorical Performance*

The section beginning with the present unit, 10.12–18, follows a forceful *Exordium* (10.1–6) that offers leniency through the meekness and gentleness of Christ while threatening divine

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<sup>149</sup>Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.15.14; 2.21.11–16

warfare against sophistic opponents and a *Propositio* (10.7–11) that emphasizes three claims that rebut criticism that Paul is too weak to lead the Corinthian church. These claims begin to be supported in the present unit, which brims with emphatic constructions. Its chief act is to argue with emphasis, appealing both to public evidence and to shared notions of justice, for Paul’s jurisdiction over the Corinthians because God apportioned the region of Corinth to him, not to his rivals, and because he, not they, reached it first with the gospel. While this argument may still allow one to question if God apportioned Corinth to Paul only (excluding all other ministers of whom Paul disapproves), all the Corinthians are firsthand witnesses to Paul’s having reached them first with the gospel. Being the pioneer-founder, who opened this field without the benefit of others’ work, confers on Paul unique prerogatives in jurisdiction and authority, the discourse presumes. This argument is thus truly foundational for distinguishing the relationship and ministry of Paul among the Corinthians from that claimed by his rivals, whom he chides, by implication, for being latecomers that claim credit for work he has already done. It provides rationale for his having exerted his authority so strongly from the beginning of the discourse: He has the rights of jurisdiction on his side, like a judge presiding in a regional court, which the rivals do not; thus he does not need to commend himself or win a hearing with the Corinthians, as would an orator before a judge and jury or before city officials. Moreover, his defense in the face of criticisms is, again, like a judge accounting for his ruling more than like a defendant pleading to win acquittal, with power in the hands of judge and jury. With Paul’s declaration of jurisdiction in this unit, he displays a coherent rhetorical stance for the whole discourse and its various elements, including defense against various charges. In the commonest sense of the term, he is not defending himself as much as prosecuting a case against his rivals and the Corinthians sympathetic with them or merely apathetic toward Paul while he is attacked. The meekness and gentleness of Christ constrains Paul’s response to critics who not only attack him but, as the discourse shows immediately, threaten the pure devotion of believers to the Jesus Paul preached. These virtues constrain Paul to offer a defense that aims at exonerating himself much less than it aims at helping the undecided or deceived Corinthians return to right judgment in these matters. In this major way, the pattern of the Socratic apology Betz has proposed as archetypal for Paul’s present apology is ambiguous.<sup>150</sup> Betz emphasizes how Plato’s *Apology* and later interpreters, such as Maximus of Tyre, portray Socrates as not defending himself as a rhetorician would but

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<sup>150</sup> Betz, *Der Apostel*, 14–20; idem, “Paul ‘s Apology,” 2–3

instead dialoging with Plato’s readers as a philosopher. Yet Socrates does submit to the trial procedure, judgment, and sentence, while Paul submits only to the request, or demand, that he join in the boasting contest, and, apart from the important approach to his boasting (10.1–11.21a), Paul responds more or less in kind to his rivals’ boasting. To this, Socrates’ apology does not correspond. Paul submits to the judgment that he is weak in the redemptive effort of showing that such weakness originates in the crucified and risen Christ; but he does not recognize the jurisdiction of the Corinthians or the rivals over him, nor does he submit to their judgment to replace him with his rivals. God has apportioned jurisdiction over the church at Corinth to him directly, and they have no jurisdiction or power to enforce their judgment on him. To the contrary, the discourse will show that Paul threatens, from the *Exordium* to the final units of the discourse, to enforce his judgment through severe authority if he must because they reject his final offer of leniency through this discourse.<sup>151</sup> Paul’s efforts to persuade are thus subordinate to his assertion of authority; he does not persuade in order to mold their authority to his benefit; he persuades so they may experience the benefits of his continued governance “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” and be spared his severe use of authority.

With the assertion of his jurisdiction in this unit, Paul has thus begun proving the claim that his relationship to Christ as apostle matches, even exceeds, what his rivals claim for themselves (10.7). By projecting a future pioneer mission beyond Corinth on the basis of his past and current mission to Corinth, he demonstrates his integrity by being one whose words and actions cohere, thereby supporting that claim in 10.11. Verse 12, the beginning of the present unit, signals the primary mode of discourse that will be the medium of all the speech acts that occur throughout the sections of proof. Paul, who will not dare to “pair or compare” himself with his rivals, consistently contrasts his ministry from the activities of his rivals from here through the end of the FS, giving the Corinthians many reasons to abandon their loyalty to the rivals and to redirect it back to Paul.

But at the end of the present unit, any Corinthians that have allied themselves with Paul’s rivals would likely not yet be persuaded to abandon the rivals in favor of Paul. Paul’s forcefulness may have magnified their fear of consequences if they do not abandon them, but Paul has not yet proven rhetorically as fully as he can and will that believers cannot embrace

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<sup>151</sup> Thus Elizabeth Castelli and Sandra Hack Polaski would rightly consider this discourse also to be part of Paul’s discourse of power. But this discourse performs leniency, “the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” which their

both his rivals and him. So far, his rhetorical proof has been strongest emotionally (*pathos* proof), from his forceful approach in the discourse to this point and from especially his threat to prosecute a divine warfare and to discipline the remaining disobedient. That threat's power depends also upon Paul's credibility, which, in Aristotle's scheme of rhetorical proof, is a form of ethical proof (*ethos* proof). This unit has begun to develop logical proof with its argument resting on the evidence of Paul's pioneering mission to the Corinthians (*logos* proof), but more is needed to prove his case fully, that is drawing upon all three kinds of proof in a way suited to this particular audience.<sup>152</sup> With all that such Corinthians would agree with, one issue that could continue to divide Paul and his hearers within this immediate context is exclusivity: Why cannot both Paul and the late-coming rivals be on divine assignment to the Corinthians? Perhaps Paul was appointed to pioneer the gospel in Corinth, and now other leaders are appointed to continue that work.<sup>153</sup> Why must Paul's team and the later-coming leaders and the work of each oppose and exclude the other?

To this point in the discourse, Paul has not yet contrasted his team from his rivals in such a way that the Corinthians *must* ally with one or the other. Although he has begun establishing that his relationship with the Corinthians differs from the relationship the rivals have with them, he has not established his unique relationship sufficiently to compel the Corinthians to strengthen their loyalty to him. Nor has he established as fully as the discourse will that he and his team are in fact commended by the Lord and that his rivals are neither sent by the Lord to the Corinthians nor commended by him. The next units of the discourse show these acts in progress.

### Relation to Ancient Rhetoric

If 10.1–6 functions as an *Exordium* and 10.7–11 as a *Propositio*, then one would expect a *Narratio* to follow (or to precede a *Propositio*), summarizing the facts of the case at hand.<sup>154</sup>

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readings of Paul do not acknowledge or mark.

<sup>152</sup> While this study claims that Paul, taking his divine authority seriously, does not feel constrained to persuade the Corinthians in the same way that a sophist is expected to delight an audience to agreement (when persuasion and not merely entertainment is their goal), it also claims that Paul nevertheless feels an obligation to help the Corinthians see the error of following his rivals. Within that obligation, which itself arises from his love for the Corinthians and his desire to relate to them through the meekness and gentleness of Christ, he seeks to persuade them.

<sup>153</sup> This line of reasoning could be a sophistic interpretation of Paul's own words in 1 Cor. 3.5–9—to which, he has already replied in 1 Cor. 3.10–15. In the terms of this passage, Paul denies that his rivals are building properly on the foundation he has laid.

<sup>154</sup> Quintilian devotes chapter 2 of Book 4 to the "*narratio* or statement of facts." Other treatments of the *narratio* include Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.13.3–5; 3.16.1–11; *Ad Her.* 1.8.12–1.9.16; Cicero, *De Inv.* 1.19.27–1.31.30.

Peterson labels 10.12–18 as *Narratio* and has the *Probatio* begin with 11.1, where, by his reading, the discourse answers the first of the questions listed in the *Propositio*: namely, “who belongs to Christ?”<sup>155</sup> As pleasing as it would be to follow this analysis of rhetorical arrangement, other features have to be accounted for before assigning vv. 12–18 and only these vv. to a *Narratio*. According to Quintilian, the *narratio* consists of “the persuasive exposition of that which either has been done, or is supposed to have been done, or . . . a speech instructing the audience as to the nature of the case in dispute.”<sup>156</sup> The preceding parts of this discourse, 10.1–11, recall criticisms of Paul (vv. 1, 2, 7, 10) and emphasize what Paul says he is doing or will do. For example, Paul will show boldness if he has to (10.2); he prosecutes a spiritual warfare (10.3–6); he will not be discredited (10.8); he will do in deed what he is in word (10.11). Beginning with 10.12, however, and continuing through 11.21, Paul recounts what he has done (and may continue to do) with or to the Corinthians: reaching them first with the gospel (10.14); betrothing them to Christ (11.2); preaching the gospel at no cost (and not burdening anyone at Corinth [11.7]); having been, ironically, too weak to abuse them (11.21). From 11.22 through 12.10, the Fool’s Speech recites many past events in Paul’s ministry, but none of these is related specifically to his service among only the Corinthians; and if the FS constituted part of the *Narratio*, there would be, by comparison, almost no portion of the discourse functioning only as a *Probatio*. This study argues, therefore, that the FS constitutes a major portion of the rhetorical proof of the discourse.

So how does this section, 10.12—11.21a, function and to what part(s) of the classic speech form does it correspond? Peterson’s assignment of only 10.12–18 to the *Narratio* allows it to contain only one fact from Paul’s past—that he reached them first. That fact is important, but the following vv. offer other facts that could likewise fit into a *Narratio*, and they end at a clearly discernable point (11.21a), after which the discourse expresses the boasting that has been signaled earlier (11.1, 16–18) and then announced (11.21b). So if this discourse contains a true *Narratio*, it could comprise 10.12—11.21. Perhaps the function of a *Narratio* is fulfilled without having its exact form correspond closely to the ideal form described in the rhetorical handbooks. Peterson has the *Probatio* beginning at 11.1, but it is hard to see how 11.1–5 proves more and narrates less than does 10.12–18. Each centers on a single (but different) fact from Paul’s

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<sup>155</sup> *Eloquence*, 93

<sup>156</sup> Quintilian, *Institutes*, 4.2.31.

ministry among them and elicits from that fact an argumentative claim: Paul, not the rivals, reached the Corinthians, demonstrating his divinely granted jurisdiction and removing him from comparison with them (10.14); Paul betrothed them to Christ, but they are in danger of being led astray by the opponents' influence (11.2–3). Moreover, the claim of Corinth's being divinely apportioned to Paul (10.13) helps prove directly at least the initial key claim of the unit 10.7–11: namely, that Paul belongs to Christ<sup>157</sup> as much as his rivals claim to (v. 7).

This study suggests instead that 10.12—11.21a functions as a *Probatio* that incorporates features of a *Narratio*, without having a *Narratio* separate from a *Probatio*.<sup>158</sup> Each unit of this section communicates one or more facts from the past pertinent to the major issues of the discourse, setting the stage for proof, the functions of a *Narratio*; and within each unit, Paul uses each past fact to support a claim about the uniqueness of his ministry with the Corinthians.

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<sup>157</sup> i.e., is a “servant of Christ”; Peterson says that proof of this claim waits until 11.1–5, but this study suggests that it has begun already in 12.13–18, as discussed above (*Eloquence*, 93).

<sup>158</sup> Quintilian shows how closely related the *narratio* and the *probatio* are: “[W]hat difference is there between a *proof* and a *statement of facts* save that the latter is a *proof* put forward in continuous form, while a *proof* is a verification of the facts as put forward in the *statement*?” *Institutes*, 4.2.79.



## CHAPTER III

### THE “FOOL’S SPEECH”: A SELECTIVE RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF 2 CORINTHIANS 11.1–12.10

This chapter of the study continues analysis of the first of two major sections of proof extending from 10.12 to 11.21a, and then it analyzes the second section, the Fool’s Speech proper. This study asserts that 11.1–11.21a continue to contrast Paul’s ministry from the activities of his rivals straightforwardly. It is debatable whether appending analysis of this portion of the first section of proof to the previous chapter of this study is preferable to having it in the same chapter with analysis of the Fool’s Speech. One must decide which of multiple concurrent structures throughout the discourse to use to divide material into units for presentation. All of 10.12–12.10 exerts proof for key claims of the discourse. The shift from straightforward proof in which Paul’s own composition shapes the discourse (10.12–11.21a) to proof in which Paul boasts ironically, following closely the structure of his rivals’ discourse (11.21b–12.10), marks a clear break in the discourse, even as the same aim of proof continues from one section to the other. Working back from this break at 11.21b, the interpreter notes that the boasting that begins at 11.21b is looked forward to at 11.16 and 11.1, although this study argues that the boasting proper does not begin until 11.21b. Following these surface markings in the discourse, this study begins the present chapter of analysis with 11.1, but only while emphasizing that the proof begun in the preceding unit, 10.12–18, continues after passing the signpost about boasting at 11.1. That signpost is itself artfully used as to return to proof through contrasting Paul’s ministry from his rivals’ activities.

#### **Paul Cannot Compare His Ministry with That of His Opponents (2) Because He, Not They, Betrothed the Corinthians to Christ and Guards Their Devotion to Him (11.1–6)**

##### *Text*

1 Ὁφελον<sup>1</sup> ἀνείχεσθέ μου μικρόν τι ἀφροσύνης· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνέχεσθέ<sup>2</sup> μου. 2 ζηλωτῶ γὰρ ὑμᾶς θεοῦ ζηλωτῶ, ἡρμοσάμην<sup>3</sup> γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ παρθένον ἀγνήν παραστήσαι τῷ Χριστῷ·

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<sup>1</sup> So read <sup>p46</sup> ⲛ B and other cursives; D<sup>3</sup> F G K L Ψ read ὄφελον, which, according to BDF §359, is a classical Greek usage, but with εἶθε and following an infinitive; so Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 327. Zerwick says of the opening three

3 φοβοῦμαι δὲ μή πως, ὡς ὁ ὄφεις ἐξηπάτησεν Εὐάν ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτοῦ, φθαρῆ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπλότητος καὶ τῆς ἀγνότητος<sup>4</sup> τῆς εἰς τὸν Χριστόν. 4 εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν, ἢ πνεῦμα ἕτερον λαμβάνετε ὃ οὐκ ἐλάβετε, ἢ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον ὃ οὐκ ἐδέξασθε, καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε.<sup>5</sup> 5 λογίζομαι γὰρ μηδὲν ὑστερηκέναι τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων· 6 εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, ἀλλ' οὐ τῇ γνώσει, ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ φανερώσαντες ἐν πᾶσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς.

### **Translation**

(1) How I wish that you would put up with me in a little foolishness! Do put up with me. (2) For I am jealous for you with God's own jealousy, because I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. (3) But I fear, however, that as the snake deceived Eve with his craftiness, so your minds may be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (4) For if the one who comes to you proclaims another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit than what you received or a different gospel that you have not accepted, you put up with him very well. (5) I think that I am not in any way inferior to these

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words of 2 Cor. 11.1 that “a wish which is regarded as no longer capable of fulfillment is Hellenistically rendered by ὄφελον treated as a participle . . . with the ‘unreal’ (i.e. historic tense) indicative, e.g., ὄφελον ἀνείχεσθέ μου 2 Cor 11,1; ὄφελόν γε ἐβασιλεύσατε 1 Cor 4,8.” Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., *Biblical Greek: Illustrated by Examples* (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963, English ed. adapted from 4<sup>th</sup> Latin ed. by Joseph Smith, S.J.) n. 15, p. 123, sec. 355. So also Furnish's translation and note, *II Corinthians*, 484–485.

<sup>2</sup> Best rendered as imperative in conjunction with preceding wish (BDF §448.6), although Plummer, 293, Lietzmann, 144, and Bultmann, 201, take it as indicative as, e.g., “Indeed, you have already put up with me.” Martin, following Barrett, says ἀλλὰ as copulative renders a smooth transition from the preceding clause: “I wish you would put up with me. . . . yes, do put up with me” (*2 Corinthians*, 327–328; also Robertson, *Grammar*, 1186).

<sup>3</sup> Furnish points out that while in classical Greek *harmozein* in the middle voice means “to betroth oneself,” “here (as in Philo, *Allegorical Int.* II, 67 and *On Abraham* 100) the middle is used in place of the active (BDF §316.1), perhaps because of Paul's sense of personal involvement in the matter (. . . Plummer, 294; Barrett, 272),” *II Corinthians*, 486.

<sup>4</sup> Some witnesses vary in omitting the second phrase and retaining either ἀπλότητος (κ<sup>c</sup> D<sup>c</sup> H K P Ψ 614 1739 etc.) or ἀγνότητος (Lucifer Ambrose Augustine Vigilius), which scribal oversight by homoeoteluton (–ότητος) explains. Others retain the pair of phrases but reverse the order of the nouns (D\* it<sup>d</sup> Epiphanius), which inattention of copyists can explain. But the chief choice is between witnesses that omit καὶ τῆς ἀγνότητος (first list, above) and those that keep it (P<sup>46</sup> κ\* B G 33 451 it<sup>g, r, ar</sup> syr<sup>h</sup> with\* cop<sup>sa, bo</sup> goth eth). If the shorter reading were original, a copyist likely glossed ἀπλότητος in the margin on the basis of v. 2, παρθένον ἀγνήν, and later copyists moved the phrase into the text. The Editorial Committee of the UBS GNT granted greater weight to the “age and character” of witnesses for the longer reading, although it bracketed the second phrase, in deference to the quality of witnesses that omit it (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 514–515). This study accepts the longer reading, recognizing that καὶ τῆς ἀγνότητος adds stylistic emphasis by repeating the idea of purity from v. 2 within a coordinate pair, but it does not add an idea otherwise absent.

<sup>5</sup> So p<sup>46</sup> B D\* 33 sa; but κ D<sup>3</sup> and uncials, lat, read ἀνείχεσθέ, which adds the element of contingency, even with ἄν missing: “if he proclaims . . . you *would* bear with him” (Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 328). But Paul is not in doubt about

“super apostles.” (6) But even if I am an amateur in speech, I am not so in knowledge, but in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

### Speech Acts

These speech acts occur in this section:

- 11.1 Request that Corinthians “put up” with Paul’s “little foolishness”
- 11.2a Justification for request: Paul is motivated by “divine jealousy” for the Corinthians
  - b Reason for the justification of 2a with observable evidence: Paul betrothed them
- 11.3 Additional reason: a threat to their remaining properly betrothed
- 11.4 Description of their embracing the threat in 11.3
- 11.5 Assertion of no inferiority to “superlative apostles”
- 11.6 Concession of amateur speaking ability; claim of knowledge demonstrated to Corinthians

### Coherence

1. Second Corinthians 11.1–6 coheres conceptually with the preceding vv. through the foolishness Paul rejected in 10.12.<sup>6</sup> While “foolishness” is not expressed in that v., which speaks instead of rivals being οὐ συνιᾶσιν, it becomes clear that Paul finds the rivals to be fools (11.19) and that one of their chief expressions of foolishness is the kind of self-commendation (boasting) and self-evaluation he rejects in 10.12.<sup>7</sup> While it is not until 11.21b that Paul begins to boast, 11.1 announces the boasting to come, for “Paul’s boasting as a fool” is the best referent for the phrase “a little foolishness.” These observations still leave unexplained why Paul mentions his forthcoming foolishness some 20 vv. before he actually begins his boasting as a fool, and this question will be answered in the section “Rhetorical Structure” below.

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how the Corinthians have received the rival ministers (likely a notional one standing for all the sophistic teachers finding home among the Corinthians): They have received them and their variant message.

<sup>6</sup> Bultmann denies any “firm connection of thought” between 11.1–21 and the preceding, and calls it a new beginning. Yet he recognizes that the first part of chap. 11 is linked with the latter part of chap. 10 by the “general idea of comparison” between Paul and his rivals, as well as by the boasting motif, because vv. 16–21 show that the foolishness of v. 1 is the boasting that begins in v. 21b (*Second Letter*, 199).

<sup>7</sup> Chapter 10 ends with a rejection of self-commendation and a recommendation of boasting in the Lord. Self-commendation is a kind of boasting, and chapter 11 concludes with Paul’s foolish boasting; boasting—both acceptable and foolish—is the main topic that joins the two chapters. In chapter 10 Paul says only once that he boasts, in v. 8, but this statement foreshadows the major portion of this discourse in which Paul will boast, in the FS.

2. Paul’s fear that the Corinthians’ νοήματα will be led astray (v. 3) coheres with his intent to bring πᾶν νόημα εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ of 10.3, and both of these cohere with the description in 11.4 of what the rivals have done and the Corinthians have accepted.
3. Internally, vv. 1–4 cohere rather straightforwardly by their developing line of reasoning, launched by the opening wish-request, v. 1. From it, these vv. proceed in such a way that the next sentence connects by clear logic with the previous sentence. The final two vv., 6–7, cohere in two ways: (1) by supplying a second justification for the request in v. 1. The coherence for this reason is strengthened by an implied claim—“you put up with superapostles and their foolishness”—which is expressed in 11.19–20; (2) by responding to an inference from earlier criticisms, both expressed and implied, that Paul is inferior, ταπεινός (10.1), to which he continues to respond in 11.5–6, after describing the corrupting activities of his opponents.
4. Paul’s switch from accusation (v. 4) to defense (v.5ff.) is likewise coherent: The Corinthians have put up with the deceptions specified in v. 4, and Paul has asked them to put up with his foolishness (11.1). Verse 5 rests on the implied premise that if they put up with deceivers, which they have (v. 4, καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε), they ought to put up with Paul’s “little foolishness,” because he is in no way inferior to them.

#### *Pertinent Background—Terms and Concepts*

What is the ἄλλος Ἰησοῦς, the πνεῦμα ἕτερον, and the εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον to which 11.4 refers? Such terms invite interpreters to search for substantive doctrinal differences between Paul and his rivals such as those against which Paul fights in Galatians. However, this discourse nowhere expresses debate over the Jewish law, and neither does it explicitly support proposals that the rivals taught explicit religious doctrines opposed to Paul’s.<sup>8</sup> Bultmann errs in identifying

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The other three references to boasting in ch. 10 emphasize what Paul and his team do not do: They do not boast beyond limit (10.13, 15) and not of work in another’s field (v. 16).

<sup>8</sup> Bultmann argues that the rivals are Gnostic pneumatics whose exercise of authority, boasting, and behavior “indicate that they proclaim another Jesus, another Spirit, and bring another gospel,” *Second Letter*, 203. Schmithals likewise identifies the opponents as Gnostic but also finds “specific, dogmatic, christological teachings” denying the humanity of Jesus, *Gnosticism*, 124–35. Others think “another Jesus” refers to a purely, human, Jewish Jesus distinct from his identity as the risen Lord (e.g., Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 328; Héring, *Second Epistle*, 79; R. V. G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 148). Georgi argues that Paul’s Hellenistic Jewish rivals viewed Jesus as a wonder-working Θεὸς ἀνὴρ, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 272–274.

Paul's rivals as Gnostic pneumatics,<sup>9</sup> but this study agrees with his suggestion that "the very exercise of their ἐξουσία, their καυχᾶσθαι and their behavior . . . indicate that they proclaim another Jesus, another Spirit, and bring another gospel."<sup>10</sup> This study's proposal that Paul continues to conflict with sophistic attitudes and actions (first opposed in 1 Corinthians) explains the data in the present discourse without needing to identify opposing, overtly religious doctrines that his rivals believed. Rivals, with the help of dissatisfied members of the church, have imported fundamental cultural attitudes about social status, eloquence, and leadership that Paul discerns to be inimical to the gospel, and these errors in thought, affection, and behavior have produced *de facto* another Jesus, spirit, and gospel. Unlike the situation expressed in Galatians, where Paul and his opponents conflict over such explicit religious doctrines, in the present discourse Paul conflicts with features of pagan, sophistic culture that rivals have imported into their view and practice of Christian ministry. The rivals' differing view of ministry implies their correspondingly different view of Jesus, but this discourse does not oppose the different view of Jesus, the spirit, and the gospel as religious doctrine, and it therefore does not envision the rivals as teaching or preaching an overtly different Christology or pneumatology (if "Spirit" is intended here). The point is that, regardless of what they preached or taught orally, their way of leading the church conflicts with spiritual leadership that coheres with and expresses the Jesus, spirit, and gospel Paul had communicated to them. From the rivals' opposing view and practice of ministry arise the criteria by which they have judged Paul weak and unqualified to lead, finally, not a true apostle at all. The criteria the discourse has already expressed include proficiency in oratory, including a strong personal presence and delivery, and, perhaps also part of the oratorical ideal, more aggressive leadership. While Paul is humble in person and no orator, rivals are distinguished, bold, in control, and eloquent. As analysis of this discourse proceeds, it will

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<sup>9</sup> As this study argues below, Paul is no less a pneumatic than his rivals, according to this discourse. He differs from rivals not in being the only one who values Christ crucified but in expressing this religious conviction in the way he exercises his ministry—in humility, meekness, and gentleness, without lording it over his followers and without valorizing sophistic oratory and notions of leadership. Anitra B. Kolenkow shows that both Paul and his rivals expect their ministries to be accompanied by divine power issuing in miracles, as well as by the experience of weakness issuing in trials and suffering. The chief difference between rivals and Paul is his weak leadership: He serves and leads humbly, without projecting a strong or overbearing personality; he does not demand money; and he is lenient in church governance (which leads to the accusation that he is powerful only when absent but impotent in person). "Paul and Opponents in 2 Cor 10–13 — *Theioi Andres* and Spiritual Guides," in Lukas Bormann, Kelly del Tredici, Angela Standhartinger, eds., *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition the New Testament World* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) 351–374; here, 364–366. To this, this study adds that Paul's leadership is considered weak also because he does not perform powerful (sophistic) oratory.

continue to note contrasts between Paul’s and his rivals’ views and practices of spiritual leadership. All of these differences constitute the ways in which the rivals’ Jesus, spirit, and gospel differ from and oppose Paul’s.<sup>11</sup>

### Intertextuality

This section evokes one key text, Genesis 3, and Hebrew Scripture traditions expressing God’s jealousy for Israel and Israel’s betrothal to God.<sup>12</sup> Because these traditions are not developed in this brief section, this study emphasizes how they function in this text rhetorically.

### Rhetorical Structure and Development

- 11.1 Request that Corinthians “put up” with Paul’s “little foolishness”
- 11.2a Justification for request: Paul is motivated by “divine jealousy” for the Corinthians
- b Reason for the justification of 2a with observable evidence: Paul betrothed them
- 11.3 Additional reason: a threat to their remaining properly betrothed
- 11.4 Description of their embracing the threat in 11.3: ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν, πνεῦμα ἕτερον, εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον

These vv. express a rhetorically effective, straightforward argument with a clear claim supported by observable reasons and rhetorical reasoning. The rudiments of the argument follow: The claim is formed as a request—Paul asks the Corinthians to accept his soon-beginning boasting in language comparable to similar requests by classical rhetors Isocrates and Demosthenes.<sup>13</sup> This request, repeated in v. 1b for emphasis and then restated in 11.16, is a signpost preparing his hearers for a fundamental shift in the mode of the discourse, from direct to indirect communication with the Corinthians. Paul’s major foolishness does not begin until v. 21b, but vv. 7–11 (even to v. 15) may perform the “little foolishness” v. 1 announces.<sup>14</sup> At the

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<sup>10</sup> *Second Letter*, 203. Bultmann’s three nouns referring to Paul’s rivals—their ἐξουσία, their καυχᾶσθαι and their behavior—cohere with the image of sophists this study sketches in the first chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Close to the proposal of this study concerning the identity of Paul’s rivals and their abusive behavior, Timothy B. Savage suggests that opponents preach ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν because they fail to preach Jesus as Lord who requires his ministers to be servants of all (2 Cor. 4.5), rather than self-exalting masters over believers (11.18, 20). *Power through Weakness: Paul’s Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians* (SNTSMS 86; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 156–157.

<sup>12</sup> God’s jealousy (ζήλος) is associated with divine wrath in LXX Ezek 5.13; 16.38, 42; 23.25; but it expresses God’s concern for Israel in LXX Isa 9.7(6); 37.32; 63.15–16.

<sup>13</sup> *Antidosis*, 13, “I beg you now to listen to my defense”; *De Corona*, 160, “it would be discreditable, men of Athens, that you should be impatient of the mere recital of those arduous labours on your behalf which I had the patience to endure”; cited by Danker, *2 Corinthians*, 161; and Peterson, *Eloquence*, 105.

<sup>14</sup> So R. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 354, referring to Paul’s justifying his self-support in order to give the gospel without cost.

same time, the discourse between 11.1 and v. 21b continues to contrast directly Paul’s ministry among the Corinthians from the activities of his rivals.<sup>15</sup> The request of v. 1 becomes a statement—“The Corinthians should bear with Paul in his foolishness”—when stated as a claim. Verses 2–3 support the claim with two levels of support: (1) he is jealous for them in a godly way because (2a) he oversaw, even effected, their engagement to Christ and (2b) he discerns a grave threat to engagement to Christ: A rival has brought—and they have accepted (ἀνέχεσθε; same as v. 1)—another Jesus, not the Christ Paul preached and to which they were betrothed. Several qualities make this argument and these vv. potentially persuasive: (1) Paul begins with a request, not a direction or a direct correction. Chapter 10 begins similarly, and Paul requests the Corinthians’ acceptance yet again, 11.16, showing a pattern in Paul’s rhetoric. Requesting benefits Paul’s aim by minimizing at various points throughout the discourse his claim to authority to compel the Corinthians and by placing his desire before them for them to consider granting or not. Paul’s expressions of authority toward the Corinthians (apart from persistent critics among them) are restrained in comparison with his invective toward rivals. This distinction evinces Paul’s commitment to governing the church “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” (2) Paul’s first reason for his request is a strong emotion of affection for them (v. 2a), which, if received as sincere, would elicit a positive response. (3) Paul’s second reason, his having betrothed them to Christ (v. 2b), presents a fact with which the Corinthians as a whole must agree and that implies his rightful ongoing responsibility, given the cultural practice of betrothal.<sup>16</sup> (4) Paul’s fear that the Corinthians would be led astray from devotion to Christ (v. 3)

<sup>15</sup> Peterson follows Barrett (*Second Epistle* 271) in saying that v. 1 “places all of the argumentation (not just the Foolish Boast in 11:16—12:13) under the heading of ‘foolishness’” (*Eloquence* 106).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969; paperback 1975) 363–368; S. Safrai, “Home and Family” in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) 748–760. From such sources, it is unclear what some Jewish and pagan practices were during the first century C.E. Regarding Palestinian Jews, “A late midrashic source indicates that marriage brokers existed in the second century C.E., [n. 5: *Ex. Rabba* 6, 3; 43, 1] but it is not known whether the use of an intermediary [other than the fathers] was general in the first century” (S. Safrai, “Home and Family” 752). Within the Empire, including Corinth, the picture is similarly unclear. On the one hand, historians assert that by the time of Augustus “the family structure of [early] Rome [with the *patria potestas*] had all but evaporated, and many women, particularly of the upper classes, were living their lives unhindered by male control” (Albert A. Bell, Jr., *Exploring the New Testament World* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998] 229, citing T. E. V. Pearce, “The Role of the Wife as *Custos* in Ancient Rome,” *Eranos* 72 (1974) 17–33). Yet, on the other hand, “Across the Empire marriages were arranged by the fathers of the couple. . . . This practice continued even as late as the second century A.D. (Pliny, *Ep.* 1.14). The bride’s consent was not essential, but by the first century A.D., few marriages were arranged without it” (Bell, *Exploring the New Testament World* 230–231, citing G. MacCormack, “*Coemptio* and Marriage by Purchase,” *Bulletino dell’Istituto di Diritto Romano* 81 (1978) 179–199; G. Williams, “Some Aspects of Roman Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 48 (1958)

provides his third reason. His way of mentioning the story of the serpent and Eve indicates that he expects all his recipients, Jewish and Gentile, to know it. The brief mention invites knowledgeable hearers to rehearse and condemn the serpent’s deceit and cunning. Then Paul begins to direct such a structure of drama and judgment to the present. His fear is first somewhat general and vague—that their νοήματα be corrupted (v. 3, cohering with similar diction in 10.5, πᾶν νόημα). But the fear specifies a human, if unnamed,<sup>17</sup> agent (v. 4); and then follows the triple-membered series listing the corrupting beliefs—a different Jesus, Spirit, and gospel. The final clause of v. 4 concludes two actions: first, Paul’s naming the threat to their faithfulness that he fears, now more than an outside influence but their response; and second, a now-discovered reason the Corinthians should “put up with” Paul. The clause repeats a key word from 11.1b, forming an *inclusio* for emphasis: Paul requests (imperative) from the Corinthians only what they have already given (indicative) to the rivals—ἀνέχεσθε. If they put up with a messenger whose beliefs are leading them toward spiritual adultery (implied in v. 3), how can they not put up with the man who betrothed them to Christ?

A similar sub-unit occurs at 11.16–20.

- 11.5                    Assertion of no inferiority to “superlative apostles”  
 11.6                    Concession of amateur speaking ability; claim of knowledge demonstrated to Corinthians

The as-yet-most-specific accusation of his rivals’ wrongdoing (v. 4) calls to mind the criticism against Paul that he is inferior to these opponents (v. 5), and he chooses to defend against the two-part criticism—that he speaks poorly (v. 5) and, in the next unit, that he offended the Corinthians by refusing to seek and accept support from them while ministering among them (v. 7). Had the Corinthians merely been in danger of being deceived by rivals without, at the same time, those rivals and critics among the Corinthians having criticized Paul as weak and contemptible, Paul would not have denied his alleged inferiority and interrupted his accusation,

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16–29; and S. Treggiari, “Consent to Roman Marriage: Some Aspects of Law and Reality,” *Échos du monde classique* 26 (1982) 34–44). But those prolonging any variety of traditional marriage, whether Jewish or Greco-Roman, continued to betroth brides to grooms, and dowries and virginity at marriage continued to be necessary or highly valued (Bell, *Exploring* 231–232, citing B. Cohen, “Dowry in Jewish and Roman Law,” *Annuaire de l’institut de Philologie et d’Histoire Orientales de l’Université libre de Bruxelles* 13 (1953) 57–85; and S. Treggiari, “Consent to Roman Marriage” 34–44). Thus Paul’s mentioning the act of betrothal would have made similar, if not identical, sense to Jewish and Gentile believers at Corinth.

<sup>17</sup> Not naming an opponent was itself a form of invective. Cf. Peter Marshall, “Invective: Paul and His Enemies in Corinth,” *Perspectives on Language and Text* (E. W. Conrad and E. G. Newing, eds.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 359–373; here, 366.



which he resumes at 11.12-15. Verse 5 brims with irony: Paul expresses by strong understatement what he already asserted at 10.12 about his incomparability with his opponents; calling them “superapostles” sarcastically.<sup>18</sup> Verse 5 may continue Paul’s request of v. 1, stating in other words what hearers would likely infer, that if they put up with engagement-breakers, they surely should put up with Paul. If v. 5 should cohere with v. 4 in this way, we may infer from vv. 4 and 5 some serious, ironic humor playing upon contrasts in degrees: Paul is surely not inferior to “superapostles” who lead Christ’s bride astray like the serpent deceived Eve.

Then Paul concedes (v. 6) what must have surely been a major criticism of him, that he was no orator (10.10).<sup>19</sup> The phrase he uses in 11.6—ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ—had become a stock expression among speakers who wished to evince proper modesty, usually at the beginning of an address.<sup>20</sup> Paul’s use of this phrase would be received by those who knew it as a conventional expression differently than those who took it only as admission of his amateur status. The former would perhaps discern some humor in Paul’s responding to the criticism by a statement that is ironic in the sense that, on one level it identifies Paul as an amateur speaker, while on another level it identifies Paul with speakers of legendary reputations, which Paul himself would not claim. Paul’s awareness

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<sup>18</sup> Others think Paul refers to rivals in v. 4 but to legitimate apostles from Jerusalem in v. 5, in whose authority the rivals claim to have come to minister at Corinth (e.g., R. P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* 342; also C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* [Harper’s New Testament Commentaries; New York: Harper & Row, 1973] 277–279). But when Paul’s reference in v. 5 is taken ironically (and Paul expresses irony frequently in this discourse), there is no need to see a reference to any party other than the rivals described in v. 4. See Furnish for a thorough consideration, concluding as this study does, *II Corinthians*, 502–505.

<sup>19</sup> The repetition of diction and ideas from 10.10 in 11.6–7 is worth noting. The former includes words for both Paul’s weak in-person presentation, παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενῆς, and his unimpressive speech, ὁ λόγος ἐξουθηνήμενος. Related ideas are expressed in reverse order: in 11.6, unskilled in speaking, ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ; and 11.7, humbled himself, ἑμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν. Paul’s statement that he humbled himself in giving the gospel to the Corinthians through supporting himself by labor may not correspond exactly to his poor in-person presentation. But his unattractiveness does come through in both expressions.

<sup>20</sup> Isocrates uses the phrase to refer to persons trained to be orators but who returned to private life and did not seek a living as rhetorical competitors or teachers of rhetoric; *Antidosis*, 201–204. Dio Chrysostom was fully trained in rhetoric, but he uses the phrase to indicate that he is not a teacher of rhetoric; *Or.* 12.15–16; 42.3. Philo contrasts ἰδιώτης with competitive sophists; *Agr.* 143, 159–160. Philodemus cites two features that distinguish the non-orator, including philosophers and dialecticians, from orators or sophists: only an orator “display[s] his speeches rhetorically [referring to δύναμις in delivery] or according to the received form [referring to speech patterns],” Harry M. Hubbell, “The Rhetorica of Philodemus,” *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 23 (Sept. 1920), 247–382; here 2.134.5, 306, cited by Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 213–214. Socrates contrasts rhapsodes and actors with himself, a simple layman (ἰδιώτην ἄνθρωπον), *Ion* 532e, cited by Peterson, *Eloquence*, 109. Betz urges that Paul’s use of the phrase is ironic, within the tradition of Socratic apology, *Der Apostel*, 66. Noting that ancient rhetoric included “six distinct forms of irony by which one urbanely displayed one’s own skill by affecting the lack of it,” Edwin A. Judge concurs that the Paul’s use here displays either *asteismos* (Lat. *urbanitas*) or *prosopoesis* (“affectation”); “Paul’s Boasting in Relation to Contemporary Professional Practice,” *Australian Biblical Review* 16 (1968), 37–50; here, 37. But he rejects Betz’s main contention that the present discourse

of matters rhetorical, even as he rejects sophistic rhetoric for gospel ministry, may appear also in the phrase ἀλλ' οὐ τῆ γνώσει (v. 6b). Interpreters suggest that Paul refers to various kinds of religious knowledge,<sup>21</sup> but a rhetorical sense is plausible as well. Winter summarizes the long-running discussion in antiquity about the merits and demerits of written speeches vs. extempore speech and of, related to that, the “voiceless” rhetors, those who knew rhetoric well and wrote quality speeches but lacked one or more qualities for effective delivery.<sup>22</sup> Those, as discussed regarding 10.10 above, included appearance, vocal qualities, and gestures, and it is unclear which Paul’s critics allege him to have lacked. But v. 6b may be Paul’s response that, as critics acknowledged indirectly when they praised the strength of his letters, he knew rhetoric adequately, even though he rejected forms of it and reliance on it that undercut the gospel.<sup>23</sup>

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prolongs the tradition of Socratic apology, finding “Paul’s pseudo-apology [to be] remote from the spirit of Socrates,” “St Paul and Socrates,” *Interchange* 13 (1973), 106–116; here 115.

<sup>21</sup> Martin surveys recent interpretation of 11.6, *2 Corinthians*, 343: (1) He identifies γνώσις with knowledge of God and his gospel (1 Cor 1, 2; also Hughes, *Second Epistle*, 380–382); (2) Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 205–206, “sees in Paul’s disavowal of λόγος a turning away from gnostic speculations, as in 1 Cor 2:4, in the interest of a true evangelical γνώσις”; (3) Betz, *Der Apostel*, 59, thinks Paul sides with Cynics (and Socrates, cf. ἰδιώτην ἄνθρωπον, *Ion* 532e, above) against sophistic argumentation, distinguishing as Cynics did between form (*Aussprache*, λόγος) and content (*Inhalt*, γνώσις). (4) Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 280, notes how γνώσις may be defined loosely here and elsewhere in 1 & 2 Corinthians. Winter cites a fifth interpretation, that of J. P. Meyer, who thinks Paul refers with γνώσις to his expertise in forensic rhetoric, based upon study of Luke’s presentation of Paul’s performance before Felix in Acts 24. Meyer maintains that Paul nevertheless rejected rhetoric for gospel proclamation, *Ministers of Christ*, 254–257, cited in *Philo and Paul*, 215–216. Winter has written on the same topic and text in “The Importance of the *Captatio Benevolentiae* in the Speeches of Tertullus and Paul in Acts 24:1–21,” *JTS* 42 (1991), 505–531.

<sup>22</sup> Alcidas, *On the Writers of Written Discourse or On the Sophists*, debated Isocrates on this topic. Isocrates is responsible for the rhetorical system of education that underlay rhetorical education through the Second Sophistic and beyond that into the medieval development of the liberal arts. Despite this influence and his evident rhetorical ability to write speeches used as models throughout antiquity, he lacked the confidence to deliver them orally and also opposed extempore speech (*Against the Sophists*, 9–10, 13; also *The Antidosis*). Alcidas denied that written discourses should be called speeches and further valued extemporaneous delivery more than orations dependent on a manuscript (#9–28; cited by Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 205–206). By the first century CE, the widespread practice of declamation as a key part of rhetorical training clearly exalted extemporaneous speech over written speeches; and this preference is expressed in 2 Cor 10.10 and 11.5–6.

<sup>23</sup> That Paul knew rhetoric in some way, probably that he knew about it more than knew it as a student in a school of rhetoric, seems the minimal claim to make in view of the testimony of Paul’s own critics (10.9–10), of other readers of late antiquity such as Augustine (dealing with the Fool’s Speech), who finds in Paul a kind of eloquence proceeding from wisdom but not from the rhetoric school (*De Doctrina Christiana*, 4.7.11), and contemporary classicists such as C. Joachim Classen. Classen doubts that Paul knew or followed explicit rhetorical theory but believes, on the basis of Paul’s effective Greek writing, that “he must have read a good deal of works written in Greek and thus imbibed applied rhetoric” from his reading; “St Paul’s Epistles and Ancient Graeco-Roman Rhetoric,” in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (Stanley Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, eds.; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 265–291; here, 269.

### Implications

1. Paul's having betrothed the Corinthians implies several points: (1) Betrothal to Christ can be superseded only by marriage to Christ at the *parousia*; therefore, the opponents cannot add to what Paul has already done with them and Christ. (2) Paul has a unique relationship with them that the rivals, who come after Paul's pioneering ministry, cannot have, further distinguishing his and their ministries among the Corinthians. If the Corinthians accept this betrothal metaphor for Paul's ministry among them, it enhances and helps construct Paul's unique authority as founding apostle and pioneer in this discourse. Such an authoring ministry—a ministry that brings into existence a church of believers—implies Paul's right to assess the quality of their relationship to Christ (11.2-4). This right is actually a responsibility Paul bears that is entailed in his role as betrother—presenting the Corinthians to Christ for marriage as a pure virgin. He is authorized to fulfill that responsibility of guardianship and therefore has a warrant for intervening in their lives when he discerns danger. This role-relationship, therefore, further supports and amplifies other claims: Paul's right to discipline the disobedient (10.2, 6); logically, as a betrother, he must belong to Christ as much as anyone else does (10.7); and the very act of betrothing the Corinthians to Christ demonstrates that God has authorized his ministry among the Corinthians (10.13).

The metaphor of betrother, v. 2, compresses within itself other arguments. It is an act of promise and commitment, enacting the greatest intimacy short of marriage itself, to which nothing else can be added before the marriage; it is not possible to supersede, in terms of intimacy and commitment, betrothal except by marriage. Paul's eschatology places the marriage at the *parousia*; nothing hinted at here suggests that opponents expressed a contrary view on this matter. Paul asserts his unique responsibility with authority to deliver them to Christ as a suitable bride and adds to his unique accomplishments among the Corinthians (the first of which he recounts in 10.14, bringing the gospel to them) joining them to Christ in a betrothal that anticipates no interruption or dilution of devotion before the eschatological marriage. With this metaphor, Paul again contrasts his work among the Corinthians sharply from the activities of his rivals. They cannot betroth the Corinthians to Christ, nor can they add to or improve upon the betrothal, because it is not an incremental process. All they can do, from Paul's perspective and consistent with the metaphor he has chosen, is either acknowledge what Paul has already done

and affirm that work in harmony with him or oppose Paul’s work and assume the scurrilous role of betrothal-spoiling seducers. Paul betroths the Corinthians, while his opponents lead them astray.<sup>24</sup>

2. Verse 4 implies Paul’s belief that the Corinthians would agree with him that they should not vary from the Jesus, spirit, and gospel they first received, that is, received from him. If they did not share this belief, the argument of vv. 1–4 would be ineffective. But nowhere else in this discourse does Paul contrast his doctrines of Jesus *et al* from those of the rivals (as he does in Galatians 1–3).<sup>25</sup> The disagreement he addresses most directly is one over standards for discerning and evaluating spiritual leaders.

### Rhetorical Effects

The audience would sense a transition at 11.1, without being sure of what will follow, and also an urgency that is focused and grounded in the following vv.:

1. Hearers would recognize the appeal of v. 2 as intended to communicate sincerity and care: To be jealous for the Corinthians is to experience a strong passion for them, not against them.<sup>26</sup> Such an expression of passionate affection would likely not, by itself, fully overcome the distrust and enmity some Corinthians felt toward Paul, yet it would add to the persuasive force of the discourse.

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<sup>24</sup> Chaim Perelman highlights the argumentative value of metaphor and analogy by recognizing that through them rhetors assert a view of reality in a form quickly communicated and grasped, without, however, listeners necessarily fully “unpacking” the many assertions about reality that may be compressed into such a trope. Perelman, with co-author L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, rightly urge that metaphor and simile be recognized as constituents of argument and not as ornament whose omission from a discourse would not alter its effect significantly (as generally thought in the sophistic tradition of rhetoric: e.g., Quintilian says that rhetorical figures give variety and polish “but that it seems to matter very little for the proof that the arguments be presented in the form of this or that figure,” *Institutes*, 9.1.19–21.). See idem. “The Relations Establishing the Structure of Reality,” in *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver, transl.; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969; originally *La Nouvelle Rhétorique: Traité de l’Argumentation* [Presses Universitaires de France, 1958]), 350–41; reference to Quintilian in “§41. Rhetorical Figures and Argumentation,” 167–171. Also Chaim Perelman, “Analogy and Metaphor,” in *The Realm of Rhetoric* (William Kluback, trans.; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982; originally *L’Empire rhétorique: rhétorique et argumentation* [Paris: n.p., 1977]), 114–125.

<sup>25</sup> Some interpreters see 13.4, ἐσταυρώθη ἐξ ἀσθενείας, as Paul’s response to an errant doctrine of Christ: Martin, 2 *Corinthians*, 475, says “Paul is polemicizing here against a *theologia gloriae*”; and Georgi notes, regarding 13.4, that Paul’s rivals have apparently “presented [Jesus] as a pneumatic who was continuously triumphant,” *Opponents of Paul*, 279. But as discussed above regarding 11.4 and below regarding 13.4, the dispute is instead over the way belief about Jesus expresses itself in the way that leaders govern the church, their attitudes and actions as spiritual leaders. Paul’s leadership is characterized by ταπεινώσις, πραΰτης, ἐπιείκεια, and ἀσθένεια; his rivals’ by ὑποστάσει τῆς καυχήσεως (11.17).

2. Hearers would have to agree from the testimony of their experience that, even as only Paul first reached them with the gospel (10.14), so also only Paul “betrothed” them to Christ. They would probably follow the logic of the metaphor to recognize that act as another basis for Paul’s claim to some authority over them as Christians. By naming this act, Paul involves the Corinthians in the debate about whose leadership they should follow by continuing to face them with their own firsthand experience. While some might demur at specifically the implications of naming Paul their betrother to Christ, none would be able to recall the experience of Corinthians becoming believers in Christ without acknowledging that Paul and his team delivered the gospel they believed. Any who might object to what this metaphor implies about Paul’s unique status and authority would do so while having to acknowledge at the same time that Paul’s ministry resulted in their becoming part of the church of God at Corinth and that “betrother” fits their experience of coming into a special relationship with Christ through Paul’s ministry. What other metaphor might they assert, and how would it account for Paul’s role? If any hearers followed this tack, they would assume the burden of having to construct a more plausible metaphor for their own existence as a Christian community. Paul’s lack of further argument on this matter (especially, not defending the betrother metaphor against another) suggests that he is not conflicting with a different, established understanding of the community’s origin. Paul presumes that they will accept the metaphor, and he derives great rhetorical, convictional force from it.

3. Hearers would have to confront the claim that the ministry of the rivals deviated from Paul’s gospel, through deeply mythic images with strongly emotive qualities (the comparison with Eve and the serpent, v. 3) and negative characterizations of opponents’ actions as betrothal breakers, v. 4. The argument running through vv. 1–4 would exert persuasive force, as discussed above. Its effect would include eliciting the Corinthians’ willingness to indulge Paul in his soon-coming foolishness (v. 1), but more than this, their recognizing Paul’s evaluation of the seriousness of the differences between him and the rivals. If some had thought that the only differences between Paul and his rivals were their culturally more pleasing manner of ministry (especially their eloquence, but perhaps also other features of sophistic culture) compared to his less sophisticated style of ministry. Without elaborating on theological differences, Paul nevertheless makes clear that the qualities some Corinthians prefer in Paul’s rivals entail far more, in Paul’s view, than

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<sup>26</sup> although the LXX tradition of God’s jealousy also includes divine wrath (cf. Ezek 5.13; 16.38, 42; 23.25), which may cohere in this discourse with Paul’s threat to exercise his authority with severity (13.10) if the Corinthians do

innocent preferences. Following the rivals for these preferences amounts to being unfaithful in their betrothal to Christ. This recognition would exert an effect of greater seriousness and the need to reconsider their allegiance to Paul's opponents. The final clause of v. 4—"you put up with him very well"—would surprise hearers in the way it would remind them of Paul's immediately preceding request and would likely elicit from them a sense of obligation to grant Paul's request, even though they would not yet know what his "little foolishness" is.

4. The Corinthians would likely agree with Paul's claim to knowledge, whether substantive, as in knowledge of the wisdom of God or the gospel, or more instrumental, as in knowledge of rhetoric, evidenced in his letters but not used for proclaiming the gospel, for the reasons expressed in 1 Corinthians 2.1–5. If the predominant sense of γνώσις in v. 6 is rhetorical, the believers would be confronted again with Paul's reason for not relying on the human wisdom (1 Cor. 2.5) in Christian ministry.

### **Paul Cannot Compare His Ministry with That of the Rivals (3) Because He, Not They, Gave the Gospel to the Corinthians as a Gift (11.7–11) and (4) Because They Are False Apostles (11.12–15)**

#### *Text*

7 Ἡ ἀμαρτίαν ἐποίησα ἑμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε, ὅτι δωρεὰν τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγέλιον εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν; 8 ἄλλας ἐκκλησίας ἐσύλησα λαβὼν ὀψώνιον πρὸς τὴν ὑμῶν διακονίαν, 9 καὶ παρὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ὑστερηθεὶς οὐ κατενάρκησα οὐθενός· τὸ γὰρ ὑστέρημά μου προσανεπλήρωσαν οἱ ἀδελφοὶ ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας, καὶ ἐν παντὶ ἀβαρῆ ἑμαυτὸν ὑμῖν ἐτήρησα καὶ τηρήσω. 10 ἔστιν ἀλήθεια Χριστοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ ὅτι ἡ καύχησις αὕτη οὐ φραγήσεται εἰς ἐμὲ ἐν τοῖς κλίμασιν τῆς Ἀχαΐας. 11 διὰ τί; ὅτι οὐκ ἀγαπῶ ὑμᾶς; ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν. 12 Ὁ δὲ ποιῶ, καὶ ποιήσω, ἵνα ἐκκόψω τὴν ἀφορμὴν τῶν θελούντων ἀφορμὴν, ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καυχῶνται εὐρεθῶσιν καθὼς καὶ ἡμεῖς. 13 οἱ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι ψευδαπόστολοι, ἐργάται δόλιοι, μετασχηματιζόμενοι εἰς ἀποστόλους Χριστοῦ. 14 καὶ οὐ θαῦμα· αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ Σατανᾶς μετασχηματίζεται εἰς ἄγγελον φωτός. 15 οὐ μέγα οὖν εἰ καὶ οἱ διάκονοι αὐτοῦ μετασχηματίζονται ὡς διάκονοι δικαιοσύνης· ὧν τὸ τέλος ἔσται κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν.

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not respond to his leniency.

### *Translation*

(7) Did I commit a sin by putting myself down in order that you might be lifted up, because, as a gift, I proclaimed the gospel of God to you? (8) [Rather,] I plundered other churches by taking pay / my expenses from them for my ministry for you. (9) And when I was with you and in need, I did not financially burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my needs. In all things I kept myself from being a burden and will keep doing so. (10) As Christ's truth is in me / on my side, this boasting of mine shall not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. (11) And why? Because I do not love you? God knows!

(12) But what I do I will keep on doing, in order to cut off opportunity from those who want such an opportunity, so that in what they boast about they may appear to be just as we [are].

(13) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (14) And no wonder! For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (15) It is therefore no great surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

### *Analysis*

#### *Speech Acts*

This passage expresses the following speech acts:

- 11.7 Complex rhetorical question—Did Paul sin—supported by public evidence—when he humbled himself by giving the gospel without cost?
- 11.8–9 Amplification of his action: service to Corinthians supported by Macedonian gifts<sup>27</sup>
- 11.9 Rationale for action: to refrain (past and ongoing) from burdening
- 11.10 Emphasis on this practice, his boast
- 11.11 Rhetorical question: motive for giving the gospel
- 11.12a Declaration: continue “gospel without cost”
- 11.12b Rationale for continuation: undermine rivals' claim to work on Paul's terms

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<sup>27</sup> Questions this study does not answer that may merit further consideration include these: What effect does mention of support from Macedonian brothers exert? How do Corinthians of this time think of Macedonia and Macedonians? Would mention of Macedonians' supporting Paul prompt feelings based specifically on a Macedonian-Corinthian relationship? Does rivalry among Greek cities from the classical era continue into the first century Imperial era?

- 11.13 Reason for undermining: rivals are false apostles disguised as apostles of Christ
- 11.14 Explanation: (a) Satan disguises himself
- 11.15 (b) therefore, his servants disguise themselves

### Coherence

This study has ventured far enough into the discourse that the number of features that cohere clearly with other features earlier in the discourse is growing. The following are among the most notable coherences:

1. Overall, this unit coheres with 10.12 in continuing to carry out the contrast that it initiates. This unit expresses two important ways that Paul cannot compare himself with rivals: (1) Paul gives the gospel without receiving Corinthian support, while it is clearly implied here and in 11.20 that the rivals have received, perhaps demanded, support; and (2) they are false apostles, while Paul is a true apostle.
2. As Martin points out, 11.7–11 may provide the *μικρόν τι ἀφροσύνης* announced in 11.1 and following the justification for the foolishness that 11.2–6 provide.<sup>28</sup>
3. Ἡ ἀμαρτίαν ἐποίησα ἑμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν, v. 7, and ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καυχῶνται εὐρεθῶσιν καθὼς καὶ ἡμεῖς, v. 12, cohere with *λογίζομαι γὰρ μηδὲν ὑστερηκένοι*, v. 5, by continuing to address the criticism, now embraced by at least a significant portion of the Corinthian church, that Paul does not measure up to the rivals.<sup>29</sup> The citations from v. 7 and v. 12 exist in an ironic relation: Paul has humbled (lowered) himself for the Corinthians' benefit, and his rivals, while on the one hand looking down on Paul, on the other hand seek to appear to be his equal in the terms by which they work.
4. Similarly, ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε, v. 7, coheres conceptually with previous expressions of the positive effect of Paul's ministry among the Corinthians, such as ἡρμοσάμην γὰρ ὑμᾶς . . . τῷ Χριστῷ, v. 2; ἄχρι γὰρ καὶ ὑμῶν ἐφθάσαμεν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 10.14; and τῆς ἐξουσίας ἡμῶν ἧς ἔδωκεν ὁ κύριος εἰς οἰκοδομήν, 10.8.
5. Ἡ καύχησις αὕτη οὐ φραγήσεται εἰς ἐμέ, v. 10, describes Paul's not burdening the Corinthians. As a boast of his ministry as God apportioned it to him (10.13), it coheres with his

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<sup>28</sup> 2 *Corinthians*, 354



accomplishments already mentioned, betrothing the Corinthians to Christ, v. 2, and reaching them with the gospel, 10.13; but also with his first expression of boasting, 10.8: *ἐάν τε γὰρ . . . καυχῶμαι περὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας ἡμῶν*.

6. The rhetorical question of v. 11, *ὅτι οὐκ ἀγαπῶ ὑμᾶς*; coheres conceptually with 11.2 in its expression of affection, *ζηλωτὴ γὰρ ὑμᾶς θεοῦ ζήλω*, and similarly with Paul's denial of an intent to frighten, 10.9: *μὴ δόξω ὡς ἂν ἐκφοβεῖν ὑμᾶς διὰ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν*.

7. Paul's expression of intent, *Ὁ δὲ ποιῶ, καὶ ποιήσω*, v. 12, coheres with similar expressions of ongoing consistency in word and action: *ἐν παντὶ ἀβαρῆ ἑμαυτὸν ὑμῖν ἐτήρησα καὶ τηρήσω*, v. 9; he betrothed them and now guards over their devotion to Christ in the face of the threat from rivals, vv. 2–3; he intends to reach in mission beyond Corinth the same way he first reached to them, 10.14–16; and he declares that *οἰοί ἐσμεν τῷ λόγῳ δι' ἐπιστολῶν ἀπόντες, τοιοῦτοι καὶ παρόντες τῷ ἔργῳ*, 10.11.

8. The result of Satan's disguise as an angel of light, v. 14, namely the deception of the Corinthians (implied in vv. 13, 19–20), coheres with the similar action expressed in v. 3: *ὡς ὁ ὄφεις ἐξηπάτησεν Εὐάν*.

### *Pertinent Background—Terms and Concepts*

What might be the *ἀμαρτίαν* Paul refers to in 11.7? Interpretations tend to divide in two groups. The former take Paul's question ironically, as does Danker—"Am I to be charged with a crime because I put your interests ahead of mine?"<sup>30</sup> In this view, Paul admits to no action that has offended but rather retorts to the putdown that he is inferior to the rivals, "Is this the kind of treatment that I get from you after serving you so selflessly?" Paul reminds the Corinthians that he has been their benefactor, having given them the gospel as a gift (*δωρεάν*), and he performs properly from the cultural script of reciprocity by calling for them to respond with basic gratitude. Danker rejects the idea that this discourse responds to Corinthians' offense at Paul's rejection of their offer of a gift. He also rejects the corollary notion that the discourse portrays Paul as a client receiving support from Corinthian patrons.

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<sup>29</sup> Jan Lambrecht thinks the change of topic is abrupt, but response to demeaning criticism joins vv. 7–11 to preceding vv.; *Second Corinthians*, 175.

<sup>30</sup> *II Corinthians*, 166. Similarly, Martin has Paul asking whether the initial evangelism and the founding of the church was a terrible mistake; *2 Corinthians*, 346.

But these two notions inhere in the second group of interpretations of this *v*. These interpretations take Paul's question straightforwardly, with the key differences among them being the degree of severity given to ἁμαρτίαν and the act it is believed to describe. Ben Witherington renders ἁμαρτίαν mildly, as "mistake," yet thinks that Paul refers to Corinthians' four-fold complaint against his choice to work rather than accept patronage, his poor appearance and contemptible speech, and his refusal to boast.<sup>31</sup> But the majority of interpreters render ἁμαρτίαν intensively, as "sin." Among these, Gerd Theissen identifies Paul's sin as his failure to obey the Lord's command to receive support from those he serves in the gospel (1 Cor. 9.14; Luke 10.7–8).<sup>32</sup> C. K. Barrett suggests that critics would seize Paul's refusal of support as his conceding that he is inferior and undeserving of support.<sup>33</sup> Peter Marshall claims that the offense was Paul's refusal to receive a Corinthian offer of aid, which he locates within these acts: Corinthians offer friendship through a gift offered by wealthy Corinthians; Paul refuses the gift and, with it, the offer of friendship, by which he also initiates a relationship of enmity.<sup>34</sup> Peterson concurs with Ronald Hock in considering Paul's self-humbling to come from his working to support himself, which accompanied his declining the offer of financial support.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Conflict and Community*, 448, citing Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 63.

<sup>32</sup> "Legitimation and Subsistence: An Essay on the Sociology of Early Christian Missionaries," in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (John H. Schütz, trans.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982; originally *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums*), 40–46. But Margaret Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, has argued that "1 Cor 9 is no defense speech by Paul. Instead, Paul calls it 'defense' to justify rhetorically his use of himself as the example for imitation, a rhetorical stance paralleled in antiquity, because he is well aware of the risks he takes in using himself as the example for imitation," 246–247. Mitchell cites for a parallel Isocrates' *Or.* 15.8, in which he decides not to praise himself because that would arouse displeasure or envy in his listeners. Instead he "adopt[s] the fiction of a trial [ἀγών] and of a suit brought against [him]." Then he could say what he wished to about himself in this fictive defense (Mitchell, *Paul and Rhetoric*, 246, n. 335). Mitchell is adamant that at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, the Corinthians had not complained that Paul had refused their gift but that the dispute arose at some point before the writing of 2 Corinthians 10–13, after Paul had already asserted his freedom to serve freely.

<sup>33</sup> *Second Epistle*, 282, citing for illustration Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.6.12

<sup>34</sup> *Enmity at Corinth*, 257–258. An additional theory about the dispute over money conjectures that critics and rivals noted Paul's refusal of the offered gift (or pay) in conjunction with his effort to collect funds for the saints. They interpreted the two negatively, as if Paul the inconsistent, boastful flatterer, wanted to look self-less by refusing gifts to him but then secretly embezzled from the collection. Cf. Peterson, *Eloquence*, 67, citing Judge, "The Social Identity of the First Christians," *Journal of Religious History* 11 (1980), 214; and Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 418.

<sup>35</sup> *Eloquence*, 68. Peterson infers that Paul was probably from the upper levels of society from Paul's seeing work as a form of humiliation (n. 115, citing Dale Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), 123; idem, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), xv–xvi). Ronald Hock suggests that Paul supports himself by manual labor in order to forestall the criticism (leveled historically at sophists) that he offers the gospel for personal gain; but his working humbles him in the eyes of upper-class Corinthians, who would share Plutarch's view that one may "delight in the work [of the craftsmen artisans and] . . . despise the workman." Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 61–65. Plutarch reasons further

If Paul's working is an issue in 2 Corinthians 10–13, it is not marked clearly, apart from the present reference to Paul's self-humbling in 11.7, if it in fact refers to manual labor. These chapters mention his labor otherwise only in the hardship catalog, where it appears among other physical privations (11.27), without emphasizing it or any other item significantly.<sup>36</sup> Labor (ἐν κόποις) is mentioned similarly, without emphasis, also in 2 Corinthians 6.5, as part of another hardship catalog, through which Paul commends (συνίσταντες) his team as “servants of God” (θεοῦ διάκονοι). His labor does not seem to be a topic for dispute in this occurrence either. Yet we know that upper-class Hellenists disdained manual work generally; that critics' attitudes toward Paul at Corinth arise from their cultural sophistication, which would likely include this disparaging of labor; that Paul worked while at Corinth to support himself at least partly; and that, if we take 11.7 straightforwardly, Paul has in mind one or more acts by which he humbled himself among the Corinthians. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that his laboring to support himself was at least a major part of how he humbled himself (ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν). Danker notes that most Corinthians were not of high birth (1 Cor 1.26), and these would not likely look down on Paul because he, like they, worked for a living.<sup>37</sup> But it is likely that the critics to whom Paul responds were among the higher-status Corinthians, even though they may have been the numerical minority in the congregation.

The view adopted in this study thus combines portions of the preceding views. It concurs first with Danker that Paul assumes the role of benefactor, not of client, throughout the discourse. He expresses this role in various ways, as the one who first brings the gospel (10.13–14), as the one who betrothed them to Christ (11.1–3), and as the parent who spends and is spent for his children (12.14–15). But how Paul saw his role is only part of the explanation. How did Corinthians view their role in their relation to Paul? Here we are hampered by claiming knowledge about the Corinthians based only on Paul's discourse to them, a discourse charged with Paul's rhetorical purpose, which condemns his rivals and their allied critics among the congregation but otherwise

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about this view: “Labour with one's hands on lowly tasks gives witness, in the toil thus expended on useless things, to one's indifference to higher things. . . . [I]t does not necessarily follow that, if the work delights you with its graces, the one who wrought it is worthy of your esteem.” *Lives. Pericles*, i.4—ii.1.2. Paul's declining support was practiced also by philosophers wary of having their views fettered by obligation to patrons. Cf. Lucian, *On Salaried Posts in Great Houses* (trans. A. M. Harmon, LCL, 1921) 3:411–481; Epictetus, *Disc.* 3.22.69; also 3.23.9–14, 22–23, 30–32; Plato, *Apology* 19d–e; Aristotle, *Nich. Eth.*, 9.1.7; Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, 1.13; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 77; 78.34–35, cited by Peterson, *Eloquence*, 67–68

<sup>36</sup> 11.27: κόπω καὶ μόχθῳ, ἐν ἀγρυπνίαις πολλάκις, ἐν λιμῷ καὶ δίψει, ἐν νηστείαις πολλάκις, ἐν ψύχει καὶ γυμνότητι.

does not appear to illuminate the rest of the congregation. Yet from Paul's reference to sin and self-humbling in 11.7 and from his rhetorical question about loving the Corinthians in 11.11, this reading concurs with Marshall, Hock, and Peterson that some Corinthians objected strongly to Paul's not receiving some financial gift<sup>38</sup>—or pay<sup>39</sup>—offered him. The likely social contexts within which such an offer and such a refusal make sense include these two: First, following Marshall and Judge, the Corinthian congregation receives Paul's free sharing of the gospel as his gift initiating friendship with them. Higher status Corinthians follow the cultural script and reciprocate to Paul their own gift in order to accept of his overture to friendship and establish it as a friendship among equals. But Paul declines the gift, and they interpret his refusal as a rejection of their friendship and, worse, as Paul's initiation of a relationship of enmity.<sup>40</sup> What would be Paul's reasons for refusing such a gift? He may infer from the offer his continuing, special obligation to those who offer the gift, distinct from his relation to the rest of the congregation, especially if the givers intended to establish themselves as Paul's patrons. While such varying relations among persons of differing social status would be the norm in Hellenistic society, it would not be acceptable to Paul for life in the church of God. Further, Paul would reject the role of client because it would limit his freedom by positioning himself as a dependent in the household of his patron.<sup>41</sup> But second, concurring with Winter and also with Judge, following the sophistic pattern, members of the Corinthian church would perceive Paul as a religious sophist and seek to pay him for his services, both his speaking and his teaching.<sup>42</sup> But

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<sup>37</sup> *II Corinthians*, 167

<sup>38</sup> So Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 257–258

<sup>39</sup> So Hock, *Social Context*, 61

<sup>40</sup> E. A. Judge, "The Reaction against Classical Education in the New Testament," *Journal of Christian Education Papers* 77 (July, 1983), 12

<sup>41</sup> Christopher Forbes, "Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony," 14; Peterson, *Eloquence*, 66–68; Hock describes a Cynic who refused an invitation into Pericles' court so that he could preserve his freedom of speech (*parrēsia*): "Simon the Shoemaker as the Ideal Cynic," *GRBS* 17 (1976), 41–53.

<sup>42</sup> Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 163, noting that critique of sophists' greed originates as early as 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 5<sup>th</sup> cent, BCE and that the sophists' distinguishing mark was 'professionalism,' their charging for instruction. G. B. Kerferd shows that sophists earned more income from tuition than from public display lectures (*ἐπίδειξις*), *The Sophistic Movement*, 27–30; also Hock, *Social Context*, 52; Marshall, *Enmity*, 230, n. 215. E. A. Judge argues that Paul's itinerant ministry, supported by members among the churches he started and aided by a smaller retinue traveling with him, would cause him to appear to be a sophist, within the first- and second-century CE cultural context: Paul, along with Dio, Aelius Aristides, Epictetus, Apollonius of Tyana, and the "charlatan Peregrinus" "were all travelers, relying upon the hospitality of their admirers, all expert talkers and persuaders, all dedicated to their mission and intolerant of criticism" and could all be considered members of the professional sophist class, to which they all could belong notwithstanding how much they differed among themselves in their beliefs and aims ("The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community: Part II," *Journal of Religious History* 1:2 (1961), 125–137; here 126). Thinking Paul to be a religious sophist and then experiencing his rejection of the fees or gifts that appreciative

Paul desires to contrast himself from his sophistic rivals in various ways. Chief among these is his practice of serving without cost at Corinth (11.7–13), presumably to emphasize the fact of the gospel as a gift that cannot be matched by a reciprocal gift of finance, so he declines the offer of fees or financial gift and causes offense among some of the Corinthians.

From these analyses, this study concludes the following concerning Paul’s self-humbling and sin in 11.7: While the v. exaggerates for effect, it is intended straightforwardly: By using ἁμαρτίαν, Paul responds to critics’ sense of offense at his rejection of pay or of a gift offered him. By rejecting the tangible offer, Paul has simultaneously rejected one or more of the following social transactions, which accounts for the offense: an offer of friendship among equals, or of patronage, or of pay (perhaps also with gifts) for services rendered as a religious sophist. Peterson rightly points out that such intentions on the part of the Corinthians are not necessarily mutually exclusive.<sup>43</sup> ἁμαρτίαν signals how seriously his critics have taken his rejection of their offer. With ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν, Paul stresses his own action but probably not the act of rejecting the offer. One might predict that the rejection would arouse hurt and anger within those offering pay or a gift,<sup>44</sup> but the rejection itself would not be as good a candidate for being the act by which Paul humbled himself as would another: namely, Paul’s non-sophistic conduct of his ministry. Chapter one of this study shows that successful sophists enjoyed social prestige, high professional reputation, and wealth. Paul finds these expressed in a way at odds with his gospel expression God’s power, wisdom, and salvation through the crucified Messiah, so he rejects sophistic method and manner. His giving the gospel while declining reciprocal gifts is the feature of his ministry that this verse contrasts over against sophistic practice. Paul’s choosing to offer the gospel, the wisdom of God, in a manner fundamentally opposite the way sophists

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followers would be accustomed to give would elicit at least confusion if not offense from those whose offering Paul refused.

<sup>43</sup> *Eloquence*, 67

<sup>44</sup> raising a most interesting question this study cannot answer: namely, why, if Paul could foresee such a result to his declining the offer, would he nevertheless decline it without exerting significant effort to forestall the foreseeable effect? This discourse does not hint that Paul foresaw the negative effect or attempted to avoid it. Did he misstep so crucially without knowing it and thereby get “blindsided” by the intensely negative response to which 11.17–11 witness? Or are the conjectures offered above by various studies themselves far off the mark? Paul seems, through the Corinthian correspondence alone, aware enough of inter-cultural differences and of the social landscape of the Hellenistic world not to blunder as seriously as it appears he may have. It is not hard to imagine Paul’s declining the offer of support or of a one-time gift, accompanied by sincere appreciation for the offer and explanation of why he should not accept it (perhaps, *contra* Mitchell’s proposal in *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, this is what he believes he has done in 1 Cor 9). And it is not hard to imagine donors tolerating, if not fully agreeing with, such a “no, thank you.” But one imagines this fully aware that we may not have the information necessary to understand the social transaction even minimally.

offered their wisdom humbles Paul in the eyes of others, who think of him as a religious sophist and expect normal sophistic behavior and presentation. Instead, Paul gives the gospel humbly, presenting himself as a person of low status by living in need, appearing poorly dressed, and supporting himself by manual labor.<sup>45</sup>

### *Intertextuality*

Reference in 11.9 to οἱ ἀδελφοὶ ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας evokes 2 Corinthians 8–9, but relations between the present v. and these chapters may be complex, especially if the two chapters are a fragment (or two fragments) distinct from both chapters 10–13 and 1–7. Chapters 8–9 use the generosity of the poor Macedonians to appeal to the presumably more affluent Corinthians' pride of place so that they would not compare unfavorably when the collection for the saints is complete (8.1–7; 9.2–4). One question that the juxtaposition of chapters 8–9 with 10–13 raises is what rhetorical effect, if any, does Paul's mention of Macedonians in 11.9 exert, and how does that effect contribute to the effect of the present discourse? Identifying the source of his financial aid as Macedonians who visited him at Corinth could amplify the topic of Paul's neediness while living at Corinth and his resolve not to receive support from the Corinthians. But declining aid from the affluent among those one is serving while receiving it from poor regional neighbors could also intensify the rebuff the declined donors would feel and make it seem intended to offend them. Paul probably intends his identification of the Macedonian donors simply to emphasize both his neediness and his resolve not to burden the Corinthians. But the role of Macedonia in chapters 8 and 9 could resist Paul's intent in 11.9.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> enumerated in the hardship catalog of the FS (11.27), as well as in other Corinthian hardship lists, specifically or generally (e.g., 2 Cor 6.4–10; 1 Cor 4.10–13). Paul may have intended his manual labor as a way of identifying with lower-status believers, although upper-status elites at Corinth may have seen it as flattery by Paul, and even lower-status believers may not have unanimously approved Paul's humility as appropriate for him as their leader (Dale Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 140, cited by Peterson, *Eloquence*, 68. Martin infers from Paul's evaluating his working as self-humiliation that Paul himself comes from upper levels of society: *Slavery*, 123; *Corinthian Body*, xv–xvi.).

<sup>46</sup> Ralph Martin offers this explanation of Paul's seemingly inconsistent policy of receiving gifts of financial support. Following Bengt Holmberg's suggestion that Paul's approach is more pragmatic than doctrinaire (*Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (ConB NT Series 11; Lund: Gleerup and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 35–57; here 93–94), Martin suggests that Paul accepts financial support from a church he founded only when these two conditions are met: (1) he has left the church and (2) relations between him and the church are cordial (citing Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1912), 205; and K. F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy* (SBT 48; London: SCM Press, 1966), 105–106).

### Rhetorical Structure and Development

While 11.7–15 continues to contrast Paul over against his rivals, the topic of the negative evaluation of Paul, which was in the background during 11.1–4, moves to the foreground in 11.5–6 and provides the dramatic premise for the present unit. Paul has asserted that he is not inferior (vv. 5–6) and now concedes his humble status (v. 7). He does appear as one inferior to, or of a lower status than, his rivals; but he appears so because he has intentionally lowered himself in order to benefit the believers, not because he is in fact inferior to the rivals. This unit develops rhetorically his motive for humbling himself and it identifies his rivals in a way that emphasizes their incomparability.

The unit divides into two sub-units, 11.7–11 and 11.12–15. The first appeals to public evidence that Paul gave the gospel to the Corinthians in a manner that humbled him (11.7–11). This sub-unit implies the contrast between Paul's and his rivals' manner of ministry, and it emphasizes the circumstances attending Paul's ministry among the Corinthians that should show them that he is sincere and not a flatterer in his affection for them. The second sub-unit expresses the contrast between the terms of ministry of Paul and of his rivals, and then it further contrasts Paul from the rivals by identifying them as false apostles.

Overall, the first unit, 11.7–11, expresses two conflicting interpretations of an action that Paul, the Corinthians, and rivals would agree on: Paul served among the Corinthians without receiving any money from them; and rival ministers served while receiving money from them. The two interpretations are (1) that Paul's refusal to receive money showed that he did not love them; and (2) that Paul's refusal to receive money showed the opposite—that his self-less service performed love for them consistent with the gospel that is by its nature gift.

11.7 Complex rhetorical question—Did Paul sin when he humbled himself by giving the gospel without cost?

The question is both rhetorical, clearly expecting a negative response, although without using an interrogative particle; and it is complex, making it hard to imagine any serious response other than the negative. Intense, contrasting language—sin vs. gospel as gift, lowering himself vs. lifting up the Corinthians—yields to the clause that receives emphasis by end stress: ὅτι δωρεάν τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγέλιον εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν; The v. puts before the Corinthians (10.7) Paul's voluntary, self-humiliation—which critics have disdained as disqualifying weakness—immediately next to their existence as the church of Christ. Inferior in appearance, yes, Paul is

that; but that lowliness is connected crucially to their belonging to Christ. Here is the second time Paul connects some concrete aspect of his alleged unsuitability as leader to the Corinthians' relation to Christ: Paul betrothed them to Christ, yet he is allegedly inferior to super apostles (11.2, 5); Paul “gospelized” God’s gospel to them as a gift; yet he abased himself in doing so. That final clause of the v. is filled with important terms stressing the source of Paul’s message—God—and in two ways its character: (1) by diction, δωρεάν; and (2) by the clause εὐαγγέλιον εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν, which repeats ευαγγελι- for emphasis or fullness, the rhetorical figure known as παλιλλογία, or ἀναδίπλωσις.<sup>47</sup> The gospel, to be the gospel, must be transmitted in a way that concords with itself, which is why Paul cannot offer the gospel as a sophist, for professional fee, but he must “gospelize” it. Exactly what behaviors were entailed for Paul in εὐηγγελισάμην we may not know, but offering it freely was at the heart of this action.

- 11.8–9 Amplification of his action: service to Corinthians supported by Macedonian gifts<sup>48</sup>  
 11.9 Rationale for action: to refrain (past and ongoing) from burdening<sup>49</sup>  
 11.10 Emphasis on this practice, his boast

Verses 8–10 amplify the circumstances by which he gave the gospel to the Corinthians in first-person narrative. We do not know if the Corinthians had observed some of the acts recounted: Did they know Paul had “robbed” other churches?<sup>50</sup> They had witnessed the visit of Macedonian believers, but did they know that the visitors brought support for Paul? But they knew that Paul had not taken support from them, and this fact, Paul’s evangelistic practice, he stresses above all in this sub-unit. Danker cites numerous Greco-Roman benefactors who gave

<sup>47</sup> Richard Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 106; R. Dean Anderson, Jr., *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms Connected to Methods of Argumentation, Figures and Tropes, from Anaximenes to Quintilian* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 24; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 18

<sup>48</sup> Danker, *II Corinthians*, says that reference to the Macedonians would “bring the addressees up short” and acknowledges that to modern readers Paul’s citing the “magnanimous poverty-ridden Macedonians” would be rubbing salt into wounds. But Danker approves of Paul’s reference from a Greco-Roman point of view, because Paul is properly expressing gratitude, and the accompanying appeal to a sense of shame was common. The Corinthians would be expected to think about their own debt of gratitude to Paul (169–170).

<sup>49</sup> Martin, following Bultmann, suggests that Paul may respond here to the charge that he pressured the Corinthians for his support, *2 Corinthians*, 247; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 208. Whether or not he was so charged, the discourse uniformly denies that Paul took anything from the Corinthians and, as here, makes it his boast.

<sup>50</sup> Martin notes the military metaphors in the v.: ἐσύλησα and ὀψώνιον. The former is used in classical Greek for stripping a dead soldier of his armor, and the latter may mean a soldier’s pay for buying rations (so Adolf Deissman, *Bible Studies: Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity* [Alexander Grieve, trans.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1901; Winona Lake, Ind.: Alpha Publications, 1979], 266), although Hock argues that it means simply “provisions” (*Social Context*, 92). Peterson observes that the military terms here (esp. ἐσύλησα, “plundered”) cohere with Paul’s use of military images in 10.3–6; *Eloquence*, 110.



freely to their beneficiaries and paid their own expenses so as not to burden others while delivering their benefactions, and he locates Paul in this cultural type.<sup>51</sup> Paul grounds his free service in the gospel in both the gift-character of the gospel itself (cf. τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγέλιον εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν, v. 7) and in his role as father to the Corinthian church (12.14–15; 11.2; also 1 Cor 4.15). Not only does this practice provide the chief topic for vv. 7–10 (also v. 12), but it receives further stress by the oath of v. 10a and by Paul’s naming this practice ἡ καύχησις αὕτη,<sup>52</sup> which is emphasized again by understatement: οὐ φραγήσεται εἰς ἐμὲ ἐν τοῖς κλίμασιν τῆς Ἀχαΐας.

#### 11.11 Rhetorical question: motive for giving the gospel

From the preceding vv., no one can miss the point that offering the gospel at no cost to recipients is central to Paul’s mission, but what is his motive? Critics appear to have imputed dishonorable motives to Paul. Rejecting the offer of friendship expressed through a gift from Corinthians while receiving support from Macedonians and other churches could fuel suspicion of Paul’s true attitude toward the Corinthians. Or if Paul were, on the one hand, declining Corinthian support while, on the other hand, keeping some of the collection for himself, he would prove by his behavior that he takes advantage of the church. But the discourse has aimed to overwhelm its Corinthian hearers with anecdotal proof of Paul’s voluntary sacrifice in order to serve them, leading to the rhetorical question of v. 11. Putting the question in the negative endows it with the quality of the unthinkable—“Would I go to these lengths and *not* love you?”—a quality that it would not have were it put in the affirmative. Forbes suggests that the v. would likely be performed in this way: “‘Because I do not love you?’ Hesitation, and then: ‘God knows I do!’” expressing weighty indignation.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> In his *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field*, Danker cites benefactors who paid their own way, including Apelles, a secretary praised by others for serving his superiors without payment; the Pergan citizen Tiberius Claudius Apollonios Elaibabes, who served as an envoy to Rome three times at his own expense; Adrastus, supporter of Tiberius Caesar, who served without charge as a gymnasiarch and priest and also paid all expenses he incurred through such service (333). Danker cites other benefactors who paid their own expenses in *II Corinthians*, 167–169.

<sup>52</sup> performing yet another contrast: his boast of providing the gospel in a non-sophistic way vs. the sophistic boasting of rivals

<sup>53</sup> “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 17

- 11.12a Declaration: continue “gospel without cost”  
 11.12b Rationale for continuation: undermine rivals’ claim to work on Paul’s terms  
 11.13 Reason for undermining: rivals are false apostles disguised as Christ’s

With 11.12 the discourse continues the act of contrast underway since 10.12 but begins another, namely, the offensive against Paul’s rivals. An offense against them was threatened in 10.2–5, they were critiqued in passing in 10.7, 12, 18, and their corrupting influence was amplified in 11.3–4. But with 11.12–13, Paul attacks them directly and in the strongest of terms. Paul’s declaration (v. 12a) echoes other expressions of consistency between his past or present acts and present or future acts, such as 10.11, 14–16, and 11.9. These all serve to rebut the criticism of Paul’s duplicity and unreliability, but here the key point for Paul’s emphasis on having given the gospel without cost (11.7–11) is clear: That important practice contrasts him decisively from his rivals, who, in Paul’s view, have claimed to minister as he does (v. 12). This claim would be supported by evidence to which the Corinthians are witnesses. The sequence of assertions about the rivals climaxes in 11.13. Earlier the discourse has characterized them<sup>54</sup> as suspecting Paul of fleshly behavior (10.2), claiming to possess a commission from Christ they deny Paul’s having (10.7), commending themselves without justification (10.12), leading the Corinthians astray from pure devotion to Christ, and, here also, as claiming to minister on the same terms Paul has (11.12).

With γὰρ the discourse expresses the accusation of v. 13 as, in form, a reason explaining why the rivals would claim falsely to work on the same terms as Paul does. They would make that false claim because, the discourse asserts, they are false in their greater claim—to be apostles of Christ (v. 13). In this case, the reasoning runs from identity (false apostle) to behavior (claim falsely to work on the same terms as Paul). Similar reasoning occurs in vv. 14–15. Yet the accusation is more than a reason supporting the less important claim asserted in v. 12. The accusation of v. 13 is a kind of climax to the ongoing contrast occurring through the whole section of 10.12–11.21a. Paul expects the preceding contrasts and other descriptions of the rivals to dispose hearers to accept this assertion of the rivals’ true identity. For example, 11.2–4 describes the rivals as misleading the Corinthians Paul has betrothed to Christ, and 11.13 accuses

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<sup>54</sup> or, at times, critics who are members of the church jointly with the rivals or separate from them. This study has not found a reliable way to know when only one or both parties are referred to, but that some Corinthians were critical of Paul but not identical with his rivals seems essential to account for the discourse, for the rivals’ welcome into the church by the time Paul writes the discourse, and for those referred to in 1 Cor who favor Apollos over Paul (1 Cor 4).

them of being ἐργάται δόλιοι. Hearers might note a lightly marked reversal that reaches earlier in the discourse. In 10.7, an unnamed τις claims a special relation with Christ that he denies to Paul, while in 11.12 (and 15) Paul denies even more strongly that his rivals belong to Christ not only in a special way (apostle of Christ) but at all (v. 15 asserts them to be servants of Satan).<sup>55</sup> One might expect the accusation to occur at the very end of this section, immediately after Paul's devastating attack in 11.19–20; however, the link between rivals' false claim in v. 12 and their false identity in v. 13 may account for the accusation's occurring there and not slightly later.

11.14 Explanation: (a) not surprising, (b) γὰρ Satan disguises himself;  
 11.15 (a') therefore, no great surprise if (b') his servants disguise themselves

The accusations the discourse asserts most forcefully occur in v. 13, but the most serious accusation follows, embedded in a dual argument in vv. 14–15. The argument in these two vv. functions first to explain how the rivals, whom the church has embraced, could be what v. 13 asserts them to be. Verse 14a anticipates and acknowledges the hearers' surprise at the extreme accusation of v. 13, ending with “disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.” It simultaneously claims that this disguising is no surprise and supports the claim with another claim that the discourse presumes hearers agree with: Satan disguises himself (v. 14b).<sup>56</sup> Bultmann identifies the reasoning from v. 13 to v. 14 as lesser to greater (*a minori ad maius*). This reasoning describes the form of the two vv.<sup>57</sup> Verse 13 attributes an action to an agent; then v. 14 attributes the same kind of action to a greater agent. Yet Bultmann's analysis attends only to vv. 13–14 as a sub-unit, overlooking how the complete argumentative sub-unit is vv. 13–15. Offering a clear example of how rhetorical discourse does not present argument in strict syllogistic form, this argument proceeds in this form:

<sup>55</sup> similar comparative language occurs in the two locations, but these are only a light marking: ὅτι καθὼς αὐτὸς Χριστοῦ, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς (10.7); ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καυχῶνται εὐρεθῶσιν καθὼς καὶ ἡμεῖς (11.12).

<sup>56</sup> Paul's characterization of Satan as ἄγγελον φωτός is unique to him, while the notion that Satan can transform himself is not. The Gen 3 account, the basis for the earlier exposé of the rivals in 11.2–4, does not refer to Satan. Windisch has cited Job 1.6–12 as the only canonical parallel to ὁ Σατανᾶς μετασχηματίζεται εἰς ἄγγελον φωτός (*Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 342), but it does not describe Satan identically. Martin offers the pseudepigraphical *Life of Adam and Eve* 9.1 as the closest parallel (*2 Corinthians*, 351). It describes Satan's changing himself into the shining form of the angels and talking with Eve, providing one of several extra-canonical Jewish, Christian, and gnostic links among Satan, his ability to transform himself, the serpent of Gen 3, angels, and Eve (e.g., *Apoc. Mos.* 17.1, which has Eve describing Satan appearing as an angel).

<sup>57</sup> *Second Letter*, 209, citing Diogenes Laertius 6.44: “Perdiccas having threatened to put him to death unless he came to him, ‘That’s nothing wonderful, quoth he, ‘for a beetle or a tarantula would do the same.’”

- a chief claim hearers are to accept: rivals disguise themselves as apostles of Christ (v. 13)
- b related claim hearers already accept: Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (v. 14b)
- c tacit cultural warrant hearers already accept: like master, like servant (cf. Matt 10.25)<sup>58</sup>
- a' chief claim restated as a conclusion hearers should now accept: rivals disguise themselves as servants of righteousness (= apostles of Christ; v. 15)

Lesser-to-greater reasoning explains the movement from line a to line b; but the claim in line a is proven only in the movement from line b, through c, to a'. The pertinent reasoning to establish the claim of v. 13 (restated in v. 15) then is greater to lesser, which exerts more logical proof in this instance than reasoning lesser to greater.

This sequence, vv. 12–15, emphasizes directly the accusations expressed in v. 14, yet it accuses again in even more severe language in v. 15 (οἱ διάκονοι αὐτοῦ), but in this case the accusation is indirect, yet embedded in a convincing explanation of how the situation can be as Paul has asserted it to be. In this way the trio of claims expressed in v. 13 receive convincing support in v. 15, and the argumentative support performed in vv. 14–15 includes an even more damaging accusation—the rivals are not merely false apostles but actually agents of Satan.

The final clause of v. 15 appeals to the warrant of divine justice in asserting that the rivals will receive deserts corresponding to their works. Hearers might note the following shift from 10.10–11 to 11.15c: The earlier text has Paul responding to the criticism of discrepancy between his words and his deeds, implying that his deeds disqualify him from being Christ's apostle. The present text asserts, almost exactly oppositely, that the rivals' deeds not only cancel their claim to be Christ's apostles but also reveal their diabolical identity, as well as define their τέλος.

### Rhetorical Style

Diction throughout this unit is strong—highly emotive, contrastive, and emphatic—  
 ἀμαρτίαν; ἑμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε (v. 7); ἐκκλησίας ἐσύλησα with πρὸς τὴν ὑμῶν  
 διακονίαν (v. 8); οὐ κατενάρκησα οὐθενός (v. 9); ἡ καύχησις αὕτη οὐ φραγήσεται εἰς ἐμὲ (v.  
 10); ὅτι οὐκ ἀγαπῶ ὑμᾶς; ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν (v. 11); ἵνα ἐκκόψω τὴν ἀφορμὴν (v. 12); οἱ γὰρ  
 τοιοῦτοι ψευδαπόστολοι; ἐργάται δόλιοι; μετασηματιζόμενοι εἰς ἀποστόλους Χριστοῦ (v. 13);  
 οὐ θαῦμα with οὐ μέγα οὖν (vv. 14, 15); αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ Σατανᾶς μετασηματίζεται εἰς ἄγγελον

<sup>58</sup> Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 309; cited by Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 351

φωτός with οἱ διάκονοι αὐτοῦ μετασχηματίζονται ὡς διάκονοι δικαιοσύνης (vv. 14, 15).<sup>59</sup>  
Comments about most of these terms occur in the preceding section.

### Implications

This unit implies that Paul and the Corinthians disagree on the propriety of his self-humbling and of his supporting himself. We cannot know what the historical Corinthians thought about these matters and how the congregation may not have thought unanimously. What we can describe is the apparent beliefs of the Corinthians implied by this unit of the discourse. This disagreement fits with two theses of this study: namely, that Paul rejects the sophistic model for his ministry of the gospel, which includes the sophist's receiving fees from hearers and students and the sophist's never stooping to work with his hands; moreover, that Paul sees himself as humbled before the Corinthians, positively, as one effectively presenting the gospel of the crucified Messiah, and negatively, as one thought contemptible and unacceptably weak by his critics.

### Rhetorical Effects and Recapitulation of Rhetorical Performance

This unit is next to the last in the present section of the ongoing contrastive σύγκρισις begun at 10.12. The next and final unit (11.16–21a) describes the rivals' abusive deeds. But even before that unit of proof, by the end of the present unit, the discourse has moved hearers to a point of evaluation and decision developed only in this unit, not before. While with the initial contrast between Paul and rivals in 10.13–18 hearers could acknowledge Paul as the unique pioneer of the church at Corinth, they could also harmonize Paul's role as pioneer with a harmonious role for the rivals they have lately embraced, perhaps believing that this relation with both fulfills Paul's description of the diverse ministries among God's servants (1 Cor. 3.5–9). The beginning contrast highlights Paul's unique contributions but does not exclude his rivals from having a place also in the life of the church. But the unit of 11.7–15 clarifies that, from Paul's perspective,

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<sup>59</sup> Use of μετασχηματιζ- three times in vv. 13–15 invites one to ask what rhetorical figure their occurrence performs, but I do not think this three-fold use performs a figure for special effect, unless emphasizing the idea of transforming or disguising exerts a useful effect I have not detected. Instead, the triple use occurs because of the form of argument: v. 13 ends with the participial phrase that functions as a claim to be established. The clause in v. 14b functions as the major claim that the discourse presumes all accept. Then the clause in v. 15b proceeds from the tacit warrant "like master, like servant" (which all accept) to a restatement, now with conclusionary force, of the initial claim. A form of μετασχηματιζ- fits "naturally" in each assertion without performing any additional figurative function.

he and the rivals cannot be reconciled or harmonized such that both he and they can lead in different ways at Corinth simultaneously. To bring forward the language of 1 Cor 3, the rivals have not built carefully on Paul's foundation; they have built with cheap materials, they have assaulted God's temple, and, unless they repent, God will destroy them (1 Cor 3.10, 13, 17 with 2 Cor 11.14–15). The present unit thus brings the comparison between the two, Paul and rivals, to the Corinthians in the form of a forced, exclusionary choice: Paul or the rivals, not both Paul and the rivals. This effect is the most important of the unit and perhaps of the discourse to this point.

In condensed form, the argument running through this section is as follows. Facts the Corinthians have observed (fulfilling the criterion of 10.7) offer the point of beginning:

- 1) Paul has served the Corinthians in the gospel without cost to them and continues to do so.
- 2) Rivals have not served them in this way.

Important claims are elicited from these facts:

- 3) Implied: giving the gospel freely is the only way to transmit the gospel as gospel.
- 4) Because the rivals do not give it freely, (implied:) they are not transmitting God's gospel.
- 5) That action, with others (10.12; 11.4, 20), shows them to be false apostles disguised as Christ's apostles.
- 6) (a) Believers should not be surprised at learning their true identity,  
(b) because Satan disguises himself as an angel of light;  
(a') therefore, it is not surprising (b') that his servants, the rivals, disguise themselves similarly.

Would the unit persuade the implied Corinthians? The unit develops evidence they have witnessed—that Paul served at no cost; that the rivals did not; that Paul has performed in ministry consistently, with integrity, in various ways, despite the criticisms of his chameleon-like variability. They would likely credit Paul with sincerity in his claims of vv. 7–11 and recognize that he has endured privation for them as part of his service in the gospel. Moreover, they would likely accept the tradition that Satan could disguise himself as an angel, and they would agree with the warrant “like master, like servant.” It is possible, perhaps even plausible, that they would begin to concede that criticisms of Paul are exaggerated, perhaps even false. But the move from such concessions to joining Paul in condemning the rivals as false apostles and servants of Satan is large, especially for those who have enjoyed the eloquent, culturally respectable

ministry of the late-coming rivals (whom the Corinthians may compare happily with Apollos, whom they hoped would return for further ministry; 1 Cor 16.12).<sup>60</sup>

Yet for the purposes of the discourse, persuasion is desirable but not essential. Paul is like judges who hope their decisions will convince readers but whose decisions do not require readers' endorsement to have the force of law. Their decisions stand on the basis of the authority conferred onto the judges who rendered them, unless a higher court vacates, remands, or otherwise modifies the decisions. Paul maintains this stance throughout the discourse: He is the legitimate apostle of Christ to Corinth; he will exert his duly apportioned authority as he needs to; he desires to continue to express his authority leniently, in the meekness and gentleness of Christ. He explains and argues, hoping to persuade so that he will not have to exert force otherwise; however, he will perform his apostleship and act within the jurisdiction God has granted him over the church at Corinth, whether or not the believers are persuaded through this discourse to accept him as their apostle. Applied specifically to this unit, Paul has explained why he has humbled himself in gospel ministry and what the true identity of his rivals is. He hopes the believers are convinced by his explanation and argument to this point in the discourse; but if they are not, he will offer more, in the next unit and then in the next major section, which is the FS proper. Finally, after sending this discourse to them, he will proceed to perform his apostleship and restore gospel order at Corinth. How he will have to act in this process depends on how the Corinthians respond to this discourse, its explanations, arguments, and other speech acts.

### **Paul Cannot Compare His Ministry with That of the Opponents (5) Because They Abused the Corinthians, but He Was Too Weak (11.16–21a)**

#### *Text*

11.16 Πάλιν λέγω, μή τις με δόξη ἄφρονα εἶναι· εἰ δὲ μή γε, κἂν ὡς ἄφρονα δέξασθέ με, ἵνα κἀγὼ μικρόν τι καυχῆσωμαι. 17 ὁ λαλῶ, οὐ κατὰ κύριον λαλῶ ἀλλ' ὡς ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ, ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ὑποστάσει τῆς καυχήσεως. 18 ἐπεὶ πολλοὶ καυχῶνται κατὰ σάρκα, κἀγὼ καυχῆσομαι. 19 ἡδέως γὰρ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων φρόνιμοι ὄντες· 20 ἀνέχεσθε γὰρ εἴ τις ὑμᾶς

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<sup>60</sup> Judge notes that Apollos' "powers of persuasion . . . conceivably played a part in arousing the fastidious Corinthians to dissatisfaction with Paul's performance" and that Acts 18.24 compliments Apollos as ἀνὴρ λόγιος, the same words with which Augustus praised Cicero ("Paul's Boasting," 40–41, citing Plutarch, *Cicero* 49.5).

καταδουλοῖ, εἴ τις κατεσθίει, εἴ τις λαμβάνει, εἴ τις ἐπαίρεται, εἴ τις εἰς πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς δέρει. 21 κατὰ ἀτιμίαν λέγω, ὡς ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠσθενήκαμεν.

### *Translation*

(16) I say again, let no one think that I am a fool. But if you do, put up with me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. ((17) What I say I do not say as one in the Lord but as in foolishness, in this boastful confidence. (18) Since many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast.) (19) For you gladly put up with fools, being so wise yourselves! (20) For you put up with it if someone enslaves you, if someone preys on you, if someone takes advantage of you, if someone puts on airs, if someone slaps your face. (21a) To my shame, I say, that we were too weak [for that]!

### Speech Acts

- 11.16 Restatement of request from 11.1
- 11.17 Parenthetical qualification: Paul speaks not according to the Lord but in foolishness
- 11.18 Justification for such boasting: Many boast according to the flesh
- 11.19 Sarcastic justification for the request in 11.16: γὰρ “wise” Corinthians “gladly bear with fools”
- 11.20 Narration of evidence: the abuse the Corinthians accept
- 11.21a Concession, sarcastic and ironic: Paul was too weak to abuse the Corinthians

### Coherence

1. Verse 16 coheres with the initial request for the Corinthians to bear with him in 11.1. It may differ from v. 1 in a progression from requesting forbearance for Paul’s folly (“put up with,” ἀνείχεσθε, ἀνέχεσθε, v. 1) to accepting him as a fool (“accept,” δέξασθε, v. 16).<sup>61</sup>
2. Verses 17–18 cohere with 10.12, 18, regarding those who measure and compare among themselves and who, as evidenced in the following vv., have (also) boasted of worldly things. Paul here concedes that, as a fool and for reasons discussed below, he will boast.

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<sup>61</sup> So Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 360 (with Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 313), who suggests that Paul’s “unmasking” of the rivals cause Paul to be “apparently certain” that the Corinthians now regard him as a fool. Martin also thinks that 11.2–15 supplied the “little foolishness” announced in v. 1. The progression Martin identifies between vv. 1 and 16



3. Verses 19–20 cohere with 11.12–15 and 11.4, by describing with rhetorical flourish the deeds of the false apostles, providing the résumé of their deeds for which judgment is pronounced in v. 15.
4. Paul’s ironic concession that he is “too weak for that” (v. 21a) answers the criticism quoted in 10.10: “his personal presence is weak and his speech, contemptible.”
5. Λέγω in the first clause of both vv. 16 and 21 may mark the boundary of this unit.<sup>62</sup> While one might not expect such a common word to mark a unit, these two are the only occurrences of words built on the λεγ- stem in this discourse.

### *Pertinent Background—Terms and Concepts*

#### The role of the fool

Verse 16 first mentions Paul as a fool, and while he performs the role most fully from 11.21b through 12.10, this first mention is an appropriate place to discuss the likely referents for the term. Forms of ἄφρων occur eight times within 2 Corinthians 11.1—12.11, with the first and last forming an *inclusio* that some see as marking the limits of the FS.<sup>63</sup> The rest of the occurrences reiterate the action Paul names as speaking as a fool.<sup>64</sup> The notion of a fool and foolishness pervades the FS, and the question to be answered is what concept(s) of a fool enable the fullest performance of this portion of the discourse? Three chief options merit consideration; and while this study acknowledges that actual audiences would likely construe “the fool” as performed through this discourse in different ways, it also urges that the implied audience would likely recognize in the performance of the FS a conception of the fool drawn from Hellenistic life and therefore congruent with the cultural characteristics of sophistic opponents and their sympathizers in the Corinthian church.

The first option is the least defined, consisting of perhaps transcultural notions of the person who thinks or acts unwisely, without being focused into any specific tradition or image of the

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may be significant, but both vv. look ahead to the foolish boasting that begins only at 11.21b. Interpreters taking vv. 1 and 16 as essentially synonymous include Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 210; and Zmijewski, *Der Stil*, 193.

<sup>62</sup> Noted by Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 305–306. I cannot see any significance for this occurrence other than that of marking the boundary of this unit lightly.

<sup>63</sup> So Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 357, following J. Zmijewski, *Der Stil der paulinischen “Narrende,”* Köl-Bonn: Hanstein, BBB 52, 1978.

<sup>64</sup> 2 Cor 11.1, ἀφροσύνης; 11.16, ἄφρονα 2x; 11.17, ἐν ἀφροσύνη; 11.19, τῶν ἀφρόνων; 11.21, ἐν ἀφροσύνη; 12.6, ἄφρων; 12.11, ἄφρων.

fool. It focuses instead on specific behaviors that others judge to be unwise rather than on a role popularized in stock images that fills a somewhat stable place in a culture's repertoire of characters. The second option is ἄφρων / ἀφροσύνη, "fool / foolishness," as technical expressions in Jewish wisdom literature, contrasted with σοφός / σοφροσύνη, the wise / wisdom.<sup>65</sup> Ulrich Heckel urges this conception for foolishness and wisdom over against other possibilities, finding the pertinent background for Paul's characterization of his opponents to be the godless fool who boasts κατὰ σάρκα against God.<sup>66</sup> As a result, Paul's boasting is foolish not because it conforms to a Hellenistic role of the fool but because it contradicts the Lord's authority.<sup>67</sup> Yet Paul's boasting in his weakness fulfills Jeremiah 9.22–23, in which boasting in the Lord implies praise of the Lord.

The third option arises from the proposal of Hans Windisch, adopted also by Dieter Georgi and Hans-Dieter Betz, that Paul adopts the role of the "boaster" or "braggart" (ὁ ἀλαζών) performed in the ancient mime.<sup>68</sup> Laurence Welborn has recently focused more sharply and investigated the proposal that "Paul's discourse in 2 Corinthians 11 and 12 is modeled upon the performances of the mimic fools who populated the ancient stage."<sup>69</sup> This proposal deserves consideration because without it, in Welborn's opinion, "many aspects of Paul's most powerful composition [the FS] are poorly understood."<sup>70</sup> The same culture that valued sophistic rhetoric with its social conventions also looked down on mime as low-class art;<sup>71</sup> therefore, by adopting

<sup>65</sup> So Martin, *2 Corinthians* 332, who cites Windisch 318; Barrett, "Christianity at Corinth" 6–14; E. E. Ellis, "Wisdom and Knowledge in 1 Cor," in *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* 45–62.

<sup>66</sup> *Kraft in Schwachheit: Untersuchungen zu 2. Kor 10–13*, WUNT 2/56 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1993), 20–37, 96 n., 211, 195–198, 202–204, 303–304. Cited in review by Scott J. Hafemann, *CRBR* 9 (1996), who, with Heckel, rejects the possibility that Paul's performance of the fool in this discourse may be shaped by Greek comedy, although he does not mention mime specifically.

<sup>67</sup> Heckel, *Kraft in Schwachheit* 194–198, 304; cited by Hafemann.

<sup>68</sup> Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* (KEK 6: Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924) 316, n.2; Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 337, who points to the major work on the ancient mime by Hermann Reich, *Der Mimos: Ein literar-entwicklungsgeschichtlicher Versuch* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1903); Betz, *Der Apostel*, 79–82; "Paul's Apology," 9–10.

<sup>69</sup> "The Runaway Paul," *Harvard Theological Review* 92: 2 (1999), 123. Welborn (123, n. 71) attributes the lack of the study of the ancient mime as a pertinent background to the FS to two sources: (1) fragmentary extant sources; (2) "a more fundamental source of resistance" in "the difficulty scholars have in imagining that the apostle of Christ would have made constructive use of such a vulgar form of art."

<sup>70</sup> Welborn, "Runaway Paul," 123.

<sup>71</sup> William Beare, *The Roman Stage: A Short History of Latin Drama in the Time of the Republic* (London: Methuen & Co, 1964; 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed.): "The social status of such performers [mime] was low" (149); "Wide indeed was the gulf between such performers [mime] and the actors who, in dignified mask and costume, appeared in the theatre of Dionysius to perform the tragedies of Aeschylus. It is not certain that all low-class performers were always maskless. . . . [B]ut at least we may say that no respectable actor would appear on the Greek stage *without* a mask."

the role of the mime fool, Paul steps into an existing character-type and role that corresponds in its low status to the disparaging opinion of him that his critics and opponents have expressed. In a word, the mime fool fits in significant ways how Paul's critics and opponents already view him; and submitting to their judgment of him in order to show it to be wrong is the main strategy of the FS.

The mime is, in William Beare's words, "at once the most primitive and the most permanent" of forms of entertainment related to drama. "In its earliest form it cannot be classed as drama at all,"<sup>72</sup> but instead existed as the art of mimicry, performed as part of the repertoire of traveling entertainers that included jugglers and acrobats. Early mimes entertained by mimicking persons and animals—Plato mentions entertainers imitating the neighing of horses in the *Republic*<sup>73</sup>—accompanied by skilled gestures ("the mimi were akin to the acrobats") and facial expression, all in impromptu performances representing everyday scenes, such as "fruit-stealing or the arrival of a quack doctor."

By the New Testament period, this Greek form of entertainment had already become familiar throughout the Roman Empire as well.<sup>74</sup> Beare describes the typical mime company as a small group of men, women, and children "traveling from town to town like gypsies, setting up their simple stage and curtain in some market-place and giving their show." Mimes performed also in the theatre, including at Corinth, in the orchestra, while the stage was being set for a new play,<sup>75</sup> as well as at banquets in the homes of the wealthy,<sup>76</sup> who, as wealth accumulated, would "include mime actors on their household staffs."<sup>77</sup> Even if he avoided the theatre, Paul would still have opportunities in his travels to see mimes in action. Welborn asserts that "it is impossible that Paul would not have encountered the mimes in the marketplaces of Roman

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An element of indecency clung to the mime from the beginning; its aim was mere amusement, the *mimicus risus*" (150).

<sup>72</sup> Beare, *Roman Stage*, 149

<sup>73</sup> 396b; cited by Beare, *Roman Stage*, 149.

<sup>74</sup> Beare, *Roman Stage*, 151, explains how the mime may have come to Rome during the Republic and may have influenced the development of literary Latin comedy. "Plautus' [(c. 251–184 B.C.E) Latin] adaptations of Greek New Comedy contain much jesting, buffoonery and horseplay of a kind which would have been quite appropriate in the mime. His very name, 'Flat-foot', may perhaps suggest that he himself acted as a *planipes* or barefooted mime." Welborn, "Runaway Paul," cites evidence that the mime influence other literary genres as well: satire, elegy, philosophical dialogues, and the novel (129).

<sup>75</sup> Welborn, 126, citing Apuleius, *Met.*, 10.29.

<sup>76</sup> Beare, *Roman Stage*, 149; Welborn, "Runaway Paul," 127; an example of such a mime performance in a home is in Xenophon, *Sym.* 2.11; 4.54; 9.2–6.

<sup>77</sup> Welborn, 127, who cites Polybius, 31.25.4; Sallust, *Jug.*, 85.39.

cities.”<sup>78</sup> Given its improvisational and lower-class origins, the mime had both non-literary and literary traditions but with only forty-two mime titles and some one hundred-forty lines of mime text surviving.<sup>79</sup> Our knowledge of ancient mime depends, therefore, as much on references to aspects of the mime in contemporary writers as on the slim quantity of extant text.

Mime plots were simple, short, improvised pieces with abrupt *dénouements* and endings. “[A]musing, topical, utterly unrestrained by an considerations of technique or decency, yet capable of adopting on occasion the most sententious style, the mime came nearer than any other form of drama to the real tastes of the Roman populace.”<sup>80</sup> Welborn identifies what made the mimes attractive to broad audiences: Mimes “portrayed the rich variety of everyday life—its situations, characters, and manners—with such realism and frankness that spectators of all classes recognized themselves and their contemporaries.”<sup>81</sup> According to Beare, the personnel and general roles within the mime centered on

the leading actor or actress (*archimimus*, *archimima*), to whom the rest were little more than foils. . . . The arch-mime would perhaps begin by announcing the title, or even summarizing the plot. . . . ; he was almost continuously on the stage, and he kept the dialogue so much under control that ‘the second actor in the mime’ was the phrase denoting one who, as we should say, ‘played second fiddle’. The actor *secundarum partium* took such roles as the clown or fool; one of his methods of raising laughter was probably to take the words of the *archimimus* in too literal a sense—an old trick even in Plautus’ day.<sup>82</sup>

These personnel performed stock characters, whose features “remained stable, with local variations, through all periods of the mime and its related forms.”<sup>83</sup> These “were distinguished by appearance and manner, as well as the content of their speeches.” Welborn finds the following pertinent to the FS: the leading slave, the braggart warrior, the anxious old man, and the learned imposter.<sup>84</sup> “The leading slave (θεράπων ἡγέμων) was a majordomo who boasted of his position of authority over other servants.” His main job was that of a cook, and he often symbolized gluttony. He is pictured in texts and on terra-cottas with a ruddy complexion, reddish hair and bushy, raised eyebrows; in Plautus’ memorable description in *Pseudolus* (1218–1219),

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<sup>78</sup> “Runaway Paul,” 128

<sup>79</sup> Beare, 155

<sup>80</sup> Beare, 153

<sup>81</sup> “Runaway Paul” 129, which cites Richard Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and Its Audience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992) 137.

<sup>82</sup> Beare, 153–154; also Welborn, 125.

<sup>83</sup> Welborn, 131

“potbellied, with thick legs, swarthy complexioned, with a big head, sharp eyes, red mouth, and tremendous feet.” He stands akimbo, self-confident in his authority over other slaves, even “threatening to ‘fillet’ them, ‘the way a cook does a lamprey’.”<sup>85</sup> He spouts military expressions frequently, “such as, ‘I want to lay siege to this town, and capture it today.’”<sup>86</sup> He appears in Pollux’s *Onomasticon*, the farces of Plautus, and works of Seneca (*Apocolocyntosis*), Petronius (as a basis for the freedman Trimalchio in *Satyr.*), and Lucian (in his “burlesque of the assembly of the gods in *Jupiter Tragoedus* 1–13”).

The braggart warrior<sup>87</sup> is ubiquitous in Greek and Roman comedy, predominating over other forms of braggarts (ἀλαζόνες). This character “imitates the courageous person in every way he can, making a bold show in situations that are not really dangerous.” Aristotle defines the ἀλαζών as one “who pretends to courage which he does not possess.”<sup>88</sup> He appears in text and image as a swaggering, handsome, youthful soldier, whose hair “nods in a crest over his brow.” In one depiction on a vase from lower Italy, two comic actor-soldiers appear fully armed, the one the braggart warrior, the other his follower, “a hideous dwarf with a prominent belly.” This braggart appears in works such as the following: Pollux’s *Onomasticon* (4.147), Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* (in the person of Lamachus), in Seneca’s first-century C.E. *Apocolocyntosis*, and in seven of Plautus’ twenty extant plays (including one titled after this character).<sup>89</sup> His *miles gloriosus* “has seen new and exotic lands in the Greek East; he has conquered many of them with incredible rapidity, and has returned laden with riches and honors; nor is he reticent about his miraculous feats, but boasts in his exploits and conquests.” So established was this character that Plautus could parody it in the *Bacchides*, in the person of a braggart slave (*servus gloriosus*), who delivers “a speech of self-glorification in epic style, comparing his past and future exploits with those of the Greek heroes at Troy.”

The foolish old man was likewise an established role, the “baldheaded fool” (μορὸς φλακρός or *mimus calvus*, bald voluntarily by visiting barbers daily) who is described and pictured also with a pointed beard. He is anxious, continuously deceived, and frequently abused physically.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 131, 137. The following discussion of the four stock characters is drawn entirely from Welborn’s essay, 132–137, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>85</sup> Welborn, 132, citing Plautus, *Pseudolus*, 458–461, 38–81.

<sup>86</sup> Welborn, 132, citing Plautus, *Pseudolus*, 383.

<sup>87</sup> *miles gloriosus*; simply ἀλαζών in line 86 of Plautus’ comedy *Miles Gloriosus*.

<sup>88</sup> Welborn 133; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.7.8.

<sup>89</sup> The other six are *Bacchides*, *Curculio*, *Epidicus*, *Poenulus*, *Pseudolus*, *Truculentus*.

“Juvenal ridicules a client who accepts abuse from his patron in the hope of a good dinner, finding his situation more amusing than that of a fool in the mime: ‘If you can endure such things, you deserve them,’ Juvenal concludes, predicting that ‘some day you will be offering your head to be shaved and slapped.’”<sup>90</sup> The foolish old man appears in works by Pollux, Nonius Marcellus, Martial, and Juvenal, and also in a surviving “picturesque adultery mime” text, *P.Oxy.* 413, from late in the first century C.E.

The learned impostor, including sophistic orators, philosophers, prophets, and doctors, was satirized throughout antiquity, originating at least as far back as Dorian mime, in the fourth century B.C.E. Aristophanes’ satire of Socrates as such a fool in the *Clouds* shows that this stock character was already established in Attic comedy. Lucian’s description of the philosophers in *Icaromenippus* 5 fits the character type generally:<sup>91</sup> “dourness of visage, paleness of complexion, and length of beard.” Lucian savages rhetoricians in his *Rhetorum praeceptor* (11–13). Aristotle includes as a third class of ἀλαζόνες “those who pretend to proficiency in prophecy, philosophy, and medicine.”<sup>92</sup> Such learned fools appear in works by the above writers and these: Athenaios (the *Deipnosophists*), Epicharmus (mimes), Menippus of Gadara (writings lost, but models for Varro and Lucian, Herodus (mimes), Decimus Laberius (mime fragments).

Two or more stock characters might combine to portray a single individual, as Seneca demonstrates in his portrayal of Claudius in *Apocolocyntosis*, where he is depicted first “as a harmless old fellow, then as a doubtful hero, now as officious slave, again as a confused antiquarian.”<sup>93</sup> Paul may portray the four stock fool characters discussed above in various parts of the FS.<sup>94</sup> The appropriateness of each stock character for the text portion for which Welborn has proposed it is considered in the discussion of each section. Here we may state generally the way in which these stock characters may contribute to this analysis of the FS. We begin by acknowledging that Paul himself names and emphasizes what he is doing—speaking as a fool (11.1, 16–17, 21b, 23b; 12.11). Taking these declarations seriously, we ask questions such as these: What did it mean, or might it have meant, to Paul as he expresses himself in this discourse and to both the audience implied by the discourse and the early actual audiences who received

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<sup>90</sup> Welborn, 135; Juvenal 5.156–158, 5.170–172.

<sup>91</sup> in Welborn’s words, 136.

<sup>92</sup> Welborn’s words, 136; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 4.7.13.

<sup>93</sup> Welborn 137, citing Eden, *Seneca. Apocolocyntosis* 13–17, 64, 95.

the discourse for him to so describe his actions in these ways? What notions of “fool,” “foolishness,” and “speaking as a fool” would have been known to Paul and to his contemporaries? From these, which best fit the discourse and its performance, as best we can imagine it? This study aims neither to uncritically endorse all proposals nor to insist that only one notion of the fool and speaking as a fool could or is demanded by the text. It aims to avoid the reification of genre and discourse type so that what is more properly seen as descriptive is used instead as prescriptive. What seems most likely in this case is that several notions and at least two traditions of the fool—the Jewish wisdom tradition and the Hellenistic mimetic tradition—are both available to Paul and the early recipients of this discourse and apropos enough to shape the way Paul’s performance was received in the first century. This study will show the pertinence and plausibility of especially the stock character of the ἀλαζών for making explicit various dimensions of the FS that other notions and the Jewish wisdom tradition do not make equally explicit. But doing so does not mean that the study claims that such other notions are excluded. Because Paul was a Jew and the Corinthian congregation was ethnically and socially diverse, we should expect that the early recipients of this discourse would bring to their reception of this discourse various pre-understandings that would shape their interpretations of it, and the study does not find that it was crucial to Paul to point to only one notion of the fool and exclude all others.

Apart from the benefits that using the Hellenistic stock character of the fool as an interpretive lens brings to interpreting the FS, its pertinence to the FS is supported by the conclusion of Christopher Forbes, independent of Welborn’s study, that from 10.1 on, one of the criticisms to which Paul responds is that he is both a flatterer (κολαχ) and a boaster (ἀλαζών).<sup>95</sup> These independent studies, focusing on the pertinence of a single stock character to different portions of this discourse, together increase the plausibility of the claim they share: namely, that the stock character of the boaster figures significantly in the understanding of this discourse.

Throughout the present discourse, Paul uses the ἄφρων word group for “fool,” drawn from Jewish wisdom literature, including Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon; but in 1 Corinthians he uses forms of μωρία. There μωρία is contrasted against σοφία, while in the present discourse the

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<sup>94</sup> Welborn identifies Paul as “playing the ‘leading slave’ in 11.21b–23, acting the ‘braggart warrior’ in 11.24–27, evoking the ‘anxious old man’ in 11.28–29, and portraying the ‘learned impostor’ in 12.1b–4 and 12.7–9,” “Runaway Paul,” 137.

<sup>95</sup> “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 15–18

contrast would be between ἄφρων and the person who evinces σωφροσύνης (although this latter term is not actually used). Similarly, throughout the Hellenistic texts cited in this survey of the character of the fool, terms for “fool” vary significantly. As Welborn says, “Greek is rich in the vocabulary of ‘foolishness’; usage varies from author to author.”<sup>96</sup> Aristophanes refers to Socrates as ἄτοπος and καταγέλαστος; Seneca calls Claudius μωρός, and Lucian uses a variety of terms—άνόητος, ασύνετος, γελοῖος.<sup>97</sup> With such demonstrable lexical variety, vocabulary differences do not in and of themselves constitute sufficient evidence to judge the notion of the stock character of the fool impertinent to a text that exhibits other features with which the character fits well.

### Why play the part of the fool?

Paul expects a benefit from adopting the role of the fool; he chooses it consciously. His aim for the whole discourse is expressed at the beginning (10.1–2, 6) and end (13.10) of it—to help the Corinthians prepare for his upcoming third visit. We should expect that Paul believes that adopting this role will be part of that help. He declares that his critics and opponents have forced him to be a fool (12.11), which may include both the foolish activity of commending himself (as 12.11 expresses), as well as adopting the role of the stock character of the fool in a recognizable way. Because of the criticisms he has faced and answered in this discourse before the beginning of the FS, we can say that critics and opponents certainly pushed him in the direction of playing the fool, because their claim that he behaved as a flatterer and a boaster (especially 10.1–2, 10) comes close to saying—and may in fact be tantamount to saying—that he has behaved as fool and for that reason is disqualified to continue to lead the Corinthian church as its apostle. Thus Paul submits to this demeaning judgment toward him, a submission signaled by his ironic concession that he was weak (11.21a).

Adopting this role allows Paul to participate in exactly the same activity—self-recommendation—as his opponents do, notwithstanding his emphatic declaration of intent, “I would not dare to classify or compare . . .” (10.12). He does not respond to his opponents’ inflated boasting in kind except as a fool, preserving the relation of incomparability he has asserted soberly between them and him. Adopting this role further gives Paul enormous freedom

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<sup>96</sup> “Runaway Paul,” 137, n. 181.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.



in this portion of his speech act. By accepting the role of the fool and performing his weakness, he allows his critics and opponents to continue to enjoy their sense of superiority and power, and he does not threaten their sense of self directly. His action explicitly invites them to continue to look down on him. Playing the fool disarms his critics and affords him the kind of cover he needs in order to do and say whatever he wishes, because it is not really he, Paul, who says and does these things but it is instead Paul-as-fool.<sup>98</sup> While his critics are disarmed, Paul has the opportunity to communicate obliquely, indirectly, in modes that have distinguished the most effective communicators across time, including Jesus, Shakespeare, Kierkegaard, and Sartre. Within the space the role of the fool creates (the freedom of the fool to do and say things a sober, wise person would not), the weak Paul can manipulate powerful critics rhetorically for their own good, but completely without his dominating them: he remains the actor, the weak, unthreatening fool, and they should not take seriously (that is, hold against Paul) anything to which they object. After all, it came from a mere fool. Paul seizes the performance space that the role of the fool gives him in order to apparently reinforce his opponents' pretensions while at the same time undercutting them through parody and satire, and all of this could have been performed with comedic touches throughout, unleashing the powerful force of humor, which his opponents first direct toward Paul but then, through his parody and satire, find boomeranging back to them. Finally, by playing the fool, Paul submits to the wrong judgments against him, accepts and bears them (the λογισμοὺς . . . καὶ πᾶν ὑψῶμα ἐπαυρόμενον; 10.4–5), in order ultimately to dismantle them from within. Through his FS, through his playing the role of the fool, through his performance of weakness, Paul performs the spiritual warfare he threatens in 10.3–6.

### *Rhetorical Structure, Development, and Style*

This unit, 11.16–21a, concludes the first major section of proof for the claims expressed in 10.7–12. It concludes by unleashing withering invective toward the rivals, whom Paul has just labeled false apostles and servants of Satan. The unit provides what the final clause of the previous unit, ending in v. 15, named: the works of these false apostles. The chief argument of this unit is as follows, re-organized in the syllogistic form that it can easily assume:

Major premise: The Corinthians bear with fools (11.19; proven in v. 20)

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<sup>98</sup> This use of more than one persona occurs explicitly in 12.2–5, where Paul calls attention to his boasting for “a man” distinct from himself yet, finally, clearly understood to be himself.

Minor premise: Paul is (in their eyes) a fool (11.16)

Conclusion: Therefore, the Corinthians should accept Paul (11.16)

But argument is only one dimension of the rhetoric of this unit in its function as a conclusion of five units of contrast between Paul and his rivals. With the immediately preceding unit, this unit is the most damaging in its attack on the rivals. One may debate which sequence exerts greater force—visualizing the rivals’ acts of abuse before naming them false apostles or visualizing the abuse afterward, as the discourse does. But in either event, Paul has saved the most damning speech acts of this section for the final position where they receive natural stress and also form a fitting conclusion to the ongoing contrast between him and them.

11.16 Restatement of request from 11.1

11.17 Parenthetical qualification: Paul speaks not according to the Lord but in foolishness

11.18 Justification for such boasting: Many boast according to the flesh

In this unit, 11.16–21a, Paul approaches the beginning of his main boasting,<sup>99</sup> which he will perform as a fool. The discourse repeats the first announcement of 11.1, although the discourse has progressed in the intervening vv. Paul may have already expressed “a little foolishness” (v. 1) in the boast justifying his policy of self-support (vv. 7–11). Further, Corinthians who embrace the rivals may think Paul foolish to attack the rivals as he has (vv. 12–15). This reason may account, in part or completely, for request for acceptance if they think him foolish. The parenthetical qualification of vv. 17–18 indicate that Paul regards the upcoming boasting (καὶ γὰρ καυχῆσομαι) of the FS and not the preceding to be that part of the discourse that he speaks οὐ κατὰ κύριον. Paul’s justification for his boasting—because πολλοὶ καυχῶνται κατὰ σάρκα—should itself be considered part of what Paul says ὡς ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ and not κατὰ κύριον. As a result, one should ask why Paul decides to boast, since he has already expressed the contrary direction of Scripture (10.17) and denied that he would dare to put himself in the same class with the rivals (10.12). While the answer necessarily entails conjecture, these reasons seem implied by the discourse:

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<sup>99</sup> Lambrecht believes Paul starts boasting in 11.5–6 and continues in vv. 7–10 (*Second Corinthians*, 179). Martin agrees that vv. 7 provides the “little foolishness” to which 11.1 refers (*2 Corinthians*, 354). Paul does refer to his boast of giving the gospel in 11.7–10 and earlier to his boasting about his authority (10.8) and within the divine limit (10.13–17). But boasting of the FS is strongly marked as the main boasting the discourse performs (11.21b, 30; 12.1, etc.).

(1) The current situation is serious enough to justify an approach Paul would otherwise avoid. Paul may express this evaluation in the middle of the FS: *καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ* (12.1). This reason acknowledges that the rivals have succeeded in gaining significant influence and that Paul's future with the church and the church's faithfulness to the gospel (11.2–4) is jeopardized apart from appropriate action. (2) An influential group within the church, if not the church as a whole, has asked Paul to join in the comparison among other ministers serving them (the rivals). But what would be the scenario in which such a request would come? Perhaps church members who preferred Apollos' style of ministry over Paul's, after Apollos declined (at least through Paul: 1 Cor 16.12) to return, invited other ministers to serve. These both brought letters of commendation from established leaders (from Jerusalem?) to the Corinthian church (2 Cor 3.1) and submitted in writing or performed orally something on the order of their ministerial *curriculum vitae*, a self-commendation (10.12). Enough influential church members preferred some of these ministers over Paul that they communicated to him their desire for him to respond to concerns they had with his ministry and to submit his own *vita*, probably with the desire of gaining a basis on which they could officially and respectably release Paul from any further obligation to the church. Any such actions that occurred or were even hinted at, especially if they were accompanied by a severance offer, would go a long way in accounting for Paul's strong reaction to the issue of self-support. What was sent to Paul may have included the rivals' self-commendation, to which the FS is Paul's response. Somewhat similarly, Betz thinks that Paul's rivals have submitted a report of observations, not accusations, of Paul to the church. The church has forwarded the report to Paul and asked him to respond to it.<sup>100</sup> (3) As discussed above,<sup>101</sup> Paul is able to respond to the extreme situation without encouraging the practice of self-praise by offering his boasting through the dramatic role of the fool. Adopting this role gives Paul a kind of deniability. With it both of these statements are true: Paul is boasting (but only in character as a fool), and he is not boasting (as right-minded Paul). Adopting this role allows Paul to do what he otherwise could not approve doing.

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<sup>100</sup> *Paul's Apology*, 5–6; *idem.*, *Der Apostel*, 44–46

<sup>101</sup> See the section “*Why play the part of the fool?*”

11.19 Sarcastic justification for the request in 11.16: γαρ “wise” Corinthians “gladly bear with fools”

11.20 Narration of evidence: the abuse the Corinthians accept

An argument justifies the request of v. 16, as illustrated above. The request is actually the conclusion following two premises: The Corinthians already accept fools (11.19); if they judge Paul to be a fool, then accepting him is none other than continuing to accept what they already accept—fools (11.16). Paul’s justification for boasting attacks the Corinthians sarcastically (vv. 19–20) and concedes, ironically, Paul’s weakness (of which he is accused in 10.10). This attack develops rhetorical force by enumerating the ways the opponents have abused the “wise” Corinthians.

Danker points out the satirical wordplay in v. 19 in his rendering: “You brainy people (φρόνιμοι) are delighted to put up with the brainless (ἀφρόνων).”<sup>102</sup> Then v. 20 amplifies its parallel clause in v. 19 by visualizing the abusive acts of the rivals in a series of parallel clauses. As a rhetorical technique, this kind of series is described by Quintilian as amplification by accumulation, an enhanced force achieved by the piling up of related words or phrases.<sup>103</sup> Amplification is perhaps the single most important tool of rhetoric. It contributes to persuasion by increasing the force of a particular claim on an audience so that they take it more seriously.<sup>104</sup> Amplification is joined here—and throughout the discourse—by a further rhetorical tactic common to invective, that of intentionally not naming the opponents, so as to deny them the presence and status that naming would provide or enhance.<sup>105</sup>

How would hearers take v. 20, with its five parallel clauses, each begun anaphorically with εἴ τις and sequenced without conjunctions?<sup>106</sup> The repetitive form exerts force, which is enhanced by the vivid verbs. Danker suggests their contemporary nominal versions to communicate the strong invective this v. delivers. Paul considers his rivals to be “slavers, gluttons, pocket-stuffers, swaggerers, and face-slappers.”<sup>107</sup> Should these be taken literally<sup>108</sup> or metaphorically<sup>109</sup> or

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<sup>102</sup> *II Corinthians*, 177.

<sup>103</sup> Without the series being arranged in a progression leading to a climax (*Institutes*, 8.4.27).

<sup>104</sup> Quintilian prefaces discussion of the four kinds of amplification with this pithy observation: “The real power of oratory lies in enhancing or attenuating the force of words” (*Institutes*, 8.3.89).

<sup>105</sup> So Peterson, *Eloquence* 113, and Furnish, *2 Corinthians* 511. Also Peter Marshall, “Invective: Paul and His Enemies in Corinth,” *Perspectives on Language and Text* (E. W. Conrad and E-G. Newing, eds.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 366–367, who notes that “Paul never once names an enemy.”

<sup>106</sup> which interpreters render usually to emphasize the reality, not the mere possibility, of such actions. Martin: “the one who” + finite verb (*2 Corinthians*, 364); Furnish, “when someone” + verb (*II Corinthians*, 485).

<sup>107</sup> *II Corinthians*, 177

otherwise figuratively,<sup>110</sup> in the manner in which much invective is expressed? Based on the criticisms of Paul and his implied or expressed characterizations of his rivals elsewhere in this discourse, if the verbs are taken hyperbolically, a real and still abusive action roots each occurrence of hyperbole. Paul sees the rivals of enslaving and taking advantage of the Corinthians by their leading them astray from devotion to Christ (11.3); they further prey upon believers by, in Paul’s view, taking money in exchange for ministry of the gospel; and they lord it over the Corinthians with an attitude of superiority (certainly towards Paul), perhaps what Paul terms “boastful confidence” (11.17). But what of a literal referent for “someone who slaps you in the face”? From study of the anthropology of spiritual guides in various traditions, ancient and modern, Kolenkow suggests that “the hitting of face and/or hands heavily or lightly” is a typical pedagogical method used, among others, to encourage the disciple to change lifestyles.<sup>111</sup> From his study of ancient fools’ discourses, Welborn has adduced pertinent “slapping” scenes that he relates to the present unit: “Like the mimic fool, who is ‘accustomed to knuckles’ (κονδύλους εἰθισμένοι), and ‘is slapped at the public expense’ (δημοσίᾳ ῥαπίζεται), the Corinthians are preyed upon, and slapped in the face.”<sup>112</sup>

11.21a                    Concession, sarcastic and ironic:<sup>113</sup> Paul was too weak to abuse the Corinthians

For this study, this ironic concession, answering to the accusation of Paul’s weak oral delivery in 10.10, provides important evidence that the key charge against Paul was that he was weak, with a weakness that came through in his public presentation as a speaker and otherwise also as a leader. As indicated above, partly, this study proposes that the church communicated criticism of Paul to him, probably in writing, containing the accusation he quotes in 10.10.<sup>114</sup> All of the criticisms occasion, at least in part, the writing of this discourse. That criticism, understood as this study has proposed, emphasizes the inconsistency between Paul’s effect

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<sup>108</sup> So Allo, *Saint Paul. Seconde épître aux Corinthiens* (Paris: Gabalda, 1956), 20; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 291, with some hesitation.

<sup>109</sup> So Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I, II* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1969), 211; Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 347; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 211–212.

<sup>110</sup> So Betz, *Der Apostel*, 116–117

<sup>111</sup> “Paul and Opponents,” 366–368, 370

<sup>112</sup> “The Runaway Paul,” 151, citing A. Nicoll, *Masks, Mimes and Miracles: Studies in the Popular Theatre* (New York: Cooper Square, 1963), 87–88; John Chrysostom, *Poenit.* 4.3 (PG col. 760) referring to mimic fools as “slapping one another”; and H. Windisch, *Zweite Korintherbrief* 346–349.

<sup>113</sup> Zmijewski concurs, calling this unit an *ironischen Einräumung* (*Der Stil*, 217)

through his letters *in absentia* and through his presence. While his oral delivery is a major dimension of his weak presence, what we today would mean specifically by one's speech delivery is narrower than what the criticism entails. Paul's attack on the rivals in v. 21a, along with his concession of weakness, indicates that the weakness his critics attacked included all of his behaviors involving speaking as a leader while present among them and not only those that a professor of speech communication might evaluate when an orator is delivering a speech.<sup>115</sup> In v. 21a, Paul's verbs do not refer at all exclusively to speech, yet all of them may refer to the effects of what the rivals spoke and how they spoke to the Corinthians. In short, Paul attacks the rivals' way of leading, their way of manifesting what they claimed to be apostolic authority. This study proposes that Paul's critics likewise had attacked not just his lack of eloquence but more generally his way of leading, his way of manifesting authority, which they claimed was inadequate, weak. In the Hellenistic context, eloquence was essential for leadership, but accompanying eloquence were the attitudes and behaviors of persons of high status, persons who were, in the language of 1 Cor 1.26, σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, δυνατοί, and εὐγενεῖς. But God, according to Paul in the following vv., has chosen to humble all these, to bring them to nothing (καταργήση, v. 28) so that no flesh may boast in God's presence (v. 29). Such high-status persons (including those pretending to such status) could manifest their status superiority in ways demeaning to their social inferiors. The invective of 2 Cor 11.20 portrays such hubristic actions. They are connected to sophistic culture not only by references in this discourse such as 10.10 and 11.5–6 but also by Philo's recounting sophists' expressions of disdain for their non-sophistic opponents in *That the Worse Attacks the Better* (= *Det.*). Discussed more thoroughly in the first chapter of this study,<sup>116</sup> the following extract has sophists describing their opponents in this way, as the first part of a contrastive σύγκρισις: They are “almost without exception obscure people (ἄδοξοι), looked down upon (εὐκαταφρόνητοι), of mean estate (ταπεινοὶ), destitute of the necessities of life (τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐνδεεῖς), not enjoying the privileges of subject peoples or even of slaves (ὑπσκόων καὶ δούλων ἀτιμότεροι), filthy (ρυπόωντες), sallow (ὠχροί), reduced to skeletons (κατεσκελεμένοι), with a hungry look from want of food (λιμόν ὑπ' ἀστρίας

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<sup>114</sup> allowing, as well, that other criticisms were communicated at the same time. But it is noteworthy that only in 10.10 does Paul so clearly quote (or appear to quote verbatim) a criticism.

<sup>115</sup> Our contemporary—and even the ancient—notion of oratory may be far more formal and distinct from everyday speech than that in view in the criticism of Paul's weak presence. what counted as Paul's speaking while present with the Corinthians.

<sup>116</sup> See near the end of ch. 1 the sub-section *Paul Critiques Sophistic Conventions: 1 Corinthians 1–4*.

ἐμβλέποντι), the prey of disease (νοσερώτατοι), in training for dying (μελετώντες ἀποθνήσκειν)” (Det. 34a). Such a demeaning view comes from those who enjoy superior social status and concords with the attitudes and actions expressed in Paul’s invective of 2 Cor 11.20. The same sophists describe themselves in antonyms as “men of mark (ἔνδοξοι) and wealth (πλούσιοι), holding leading positions (ἡγεμόνες), praised on all hands (ἐπαινούμενοι), recipients of honours (τιμώμενοι), portly (υγιεινοί), healthy and robust (πίονες καὶ ἐρρωμένοι), reveling in luxurious and riotous living (αβροδίαιτοι καὶ θρυπτόμενοι), knowing nothing of labour (πόνον οὐκ εἰδότες), conversant with pleasures which carry the sweets of life (ἡδοναίς συζώντες) to the all-welcoming soul by every channel of sense” (Det. 34b). Winter emphasizes the similarity between these contrasts in Philo and those Paul expresses in 1 Cor 1.26–28 between those of high status—the σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, δυνατοί, and εὐγενεῖς—and those God called—τὰ ἀγενῆ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὰ ἐξουθενημένα . . . τὰ μὴ ὄντα.<sup>117</sup>

Thus the irony of Paul’s concession in v. 21a gains special force because it responds precisely to (and thereby evinces) the fundamental criticism of him: that he is, or appears to be, ταπεινός, which expresses itself in weak leadership, of which his lack of eloquence is only one, although an important, dimension. Winter has emphasized Paul’s rejection of eloquence as an appropriate vehicle for proclaiming the gospel more than other features of his weak leadership.<sup>118</sup> Marshall has emphasized the hubristic behaviors and attitudes of Paul’s rivals and Paul’s consequent opposition to them and identification with the humble and weak.<sup>119</sup> Kolenkow stresses specifically rivals’ indictment of Paul’s weak governance of the church: As analysis of the FS will make clear, Paul shares with his rivals similar lineage, power and miracles, as well as trials and suffering.<sup>120</sup> But “strength (authority and its characteristics), money, and the behavior of one’s followers are the contact points at which they confront each other. . . . Paul is saying, ‘I have done what Θεῖοι ἄνδρες do (signs, the endurance of tribulations). My opponents (not I) have performed the half-dubious actions of the Θεῖος ἀνὴρ or the spiritual guide (coercive measures), asking for material support. I do not wield power for destruction.’” To which rivals “could say, ‘But you have collected money [cf. 2 Cor 8–9; 12.16], and your disciples do not

<sup>117</sup> *Philo and Paul*, 192–193

<sup>118</sup> *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*, joined in this view by A. D. Litfin in *St Paul’s Theology of Proclamation*.

<sup>119</sup> *Enmity in Corinth*

<sup>120</sup> Among these, interpreters of this discourse least acknowledge the latter pair as experiences shared by rivals and Paul. See the discussion of the interpretation of the hardship catalog below.

behave well (i.e., you have not struck or disciplined them). You simply write tough.”<sup>121</sup> Paul has already acknowledged his personal presence was weak in its lack of eloquence (11.6); now he acknowledges further that his presence has been too weak to abuse believers as his rivals have.<sup>122</sup>

Throughout this attack on his rivals, Paul avoids calling the Corinthians “fools” directly, instead coming close but stopping short by calling them “wise” sarcastically (11.19). Paul has called the rivals fools and worse—servants of Satan—but he may seek to avoid breaking off communication with the Corinthians, his critics among them, by directing such expressed terms of invective to the rivals only. Yet, as this case shows, they can infer and judge themselves what Paul’s description of their role vis-à-vis the opponents implies them to be. Paul requests not to be thought foolish with his humbling himself (vv. 7–11) and his concession of weakness (v. 21a), but, from Paul’s view, who puts up with regular abuse from those who are supposed to seek their followers’ best interest? The Corinthians have not only accepted fools but they have accepted the treatment given to comic fools. (The rivals would undoubtedly characterize their behavior differently, probably as using their authority more severely for the good goal of guiding the Corinthian believers to spiritual maturity more effectively than they think Paul has done and is doing.<sup>123</sup>) But leaving this criticism unexpressed, Paul leaves the Corinthians to infer from the evidence what they are, without his alienating them unnecessarily by calling them fools directly.

### Implications

Perhaps the most important implication of this section is what Paul’s invective and ironic concession reveal about the conflict between him and his rivals. As explained above and asserted throughout this study, the chief accusation that Paul is weak is developed and clarified, by implication, in this section. The weakness of Paul pertinent to the conflict in this discourse is not the extent of his suffering through hardships (addressed below in discussion of the FS), which

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<sup>121</sup> “Paul’s Opponents,” 366, 367

<sup>122</sup> Interpreting 11.21a with 11.29, Welborn comments that “Paul is ‘too weak’ to retaliate against his opponents for their abusive treatment of his converts. When the Corinthians are slapped, Paul’s face burns” (“Runaway Paul,” 151).

<sup>123</sup> From studies of the practices of spiritual guides, both ancient and modern, Kolenkow suggests that Paul and his rivals conflict mainly over the proper use of power in the spiritual formation of disciples. Paul is too weak, rivals say, because he writes tough but, in person, is not getting believers to give money to support their leaders, nor is he getting them to improve their behavior (referring to the ongoing sins Paul mourns in 12.20–21). Paul, they say, is producing disciples who “will be reckoned ἁδόκιμοι” (cf. 10.18) and he along with them (which Paul acknowledges in 13.6; “Paul and Opponents,”). Far from abusing the Corinthians, in the view of rivals they are simply doing what is customary and necessary to form mature disciples.



some interpret as opposite the pneumatic boasting of his rivals. Neither is the weakness of Paul exclusively his lack of eloquence. Instead, the weakness for which he is criticized is his method and manner of spiritual leadership. Paul serves and leads out of the *πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιεικειίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, which he manifests through being *ταπεινός*, through not only rejecting the prideful self-display of eloquence but also refusing to seek (or even receive) the support of those to whom he truly gives the gospel, but even further, rejecting the heavy-handed “strength” of coercion and severity with believers, even if one could say that the end—maturity as a disciple—could justify the means. For Paul the *πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιεικειίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ* entails re-presenting the humility of Christ, the weakness of Christ crucified (13.4), as essential in order to transmit the gospel faithfully and adequately, in order to communicate the God of love (13.11) and the love of God (13.13 Gk.). This study asked, toward the end of the previous chapter, whether Paul’s rejection of the art of persuasion, with its presumption of human freedom, accompanied by his discourse of authority would issue in a dictatorial, oppressive stance toward those subjected to his authority. From the perspective of this discourse, the oppressors are those who pride themselves in their rhetorical proficiency and who lord it over the church, apparently in the name of leading believers from a position of strength. In the face of such an approach to leading God’s people, Paul concedes to the Corinthians that he leads from weakness, because he loves them. This unit thus implies that the stakes involved in Paul’s conflict with his rivals are much broader and deeper than a “turf war” over jurisdiction; they extend to the very character of Christian identity and of spiritual leadership: specifically, to how a leader should help form disciples. It also reveals tensions, if not paradoxes, about Paul’s predicament: Will he have to be tough and forceful in order to continue to be weak? How will he maintain his principles and yet effectively confront the evident influence rivals exert over the congregation, especially in response to the demand that he boast about his qualifications and achievements in ministry?

### *Rhetorical Effects*

After Paul has contrasted his ministry sharply from the activities of his opponents in four ways<sup>124</sup> (with observable evidence in three instances), including naming them false apostles and servants of Satan, those within the audience who are the least bit open to re-evaluating the

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<sup>124</sup> (1) Paul reached the Corinthians first with the gospel; (2) Paul betrothed them to Christ; (3) Paul gave them the gospel as a gift; (4) the opponents are false apostles. (1) through (3) are supported by observable evidence.

opponents and their negative assessment of Paul would be doing so. The key actions within the first three contrasts are incontestable, even if not all Corinthians would accept the conclusions Paul intends to follow. The claim in the fourth contrast—that the opponents do not work on the same terms as Paul does—is likewise incontestable, but that fact does not guarantee that the Corinthians would endorse Paul's labeling them false apostles. What they would have to grant, however, is that Paul has served them uniquely and beneficially and that his service, whether or not Paul is the leader most to their liking on various other counts, deserves an appropriate response of gratitude.

Paul's commencing the language of foolishness (11.16–17) would elicit assent from critics, who already think Paul foolish, and because they think that way, would likely grant Paul a hearing as a fool, at least initially. His harshest critics would even agree that Paul's promised speaking foolishly is without the Lord's authority, because they have doubted that Paul is properly authorized anyway (although Paul's recital of his service throughout 10.13—11.12 would surely plant some doubt in the minds of such critics). But the invective beginning with v. 19 challenges the Corinthians to reconsider the service Paul's rivals have rendered them. Hearers may well resist this negative depiction of these leaders, but these compressed word-pictures have nevertheless evoked images in the minds of hearers, images that are linked to emotional responses that themselves exert persuasive force and would tend to plant doubt about the true motives and intentions of Paul's opponents.<sup>125</sup> If the Corinthians also recognized this portrayal as comic, as Welborn suggests, the images would organize into a dramatic structure. In that structure, Paul's opponents would be characters abusing fools, and the Corinthians would infer their own role as the abused fools! When they themselves draw this inference, the effect is stronger than if Paul had asserted that they were fools for putting up with other fools. Even if the Corinthians would not agree with this inference, they would most likely infer it and have to consider it. Again, this process would, at the least, plant doubt about their judgments about Paul and his opponents.

Verse 21a would tend to further destabilize previously firm judgments about Paul and his opponents. It ends this passage of invective with ironic sarcasm. In 10.8 Paul insisted that his exercise of divine authority would not result in his being shamed, and in 10.1, 10 he

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<sup>125</sup> Danker notes (v. 19) that Paul's engaging in "the rhetorical sport of invective" makes it "imprudent to find a specific referent in the Corinthians' congregational experience for each of the verbs" (*II Corinthians* 177).

acknowledged the criticism that his public presence is weak. In 11.21a, Paul admits, ironically, that he is shamed because he is shown as weak—too weak to abuse the Corinthians. This sarcastic confession, following the explosive images of abuse at the hands of opponents, would exert great rhetorical effect. The concession would first please his critics but then, when its sarcastic, ironic force is felt, would cause them to burn from being slapped. Paul will immediately adopt the role of the fool (v. 21b), but in vv. 19–21 it is the Corinthians, not Paul, who are pictured as fools for putting up with fools. Here Paul has again sharply contrasted his effect upon them from the effect of his opponents; and in this case, the effects derive from the Corinthians’ ongoing, present experience, not just from past, founding events.<sup>126</sup> This confession shows the very criticisms and despised qualities that have devalued Paul to be superior, in this context (i.e., what they mean for the well-being of the Corinthians), to the vaunted qualities of the leaders who have lobbied for their loyalty, all the while abusing them. Paul in his weakness has loved them, while the opponents in their power have abused. Danker rightly considers the rhetorical force of these vv. to be “devastating.”

#### *Recapitulation of Rhetorical Performance*

This unit has concluded the first section of proof in the discourse, running from 10.13 to 11.21a. This section may accomplish multiple purposes. This study discerns a key act performed through it that other studies, Bultmann’s excepted, have not emphasized: namely, that after asserting that he dare not include himself in the same class as his rivals, the following units perform a contrastive *σύγκρισις* that shows the following important ways in which the activities of Paul and of his rivals are incomparable:

Only Paul’s team reached the Corinthians with the gospel of Christ and is humanly responsible for their becoming Christians (10.14). Paul has the founding of the church at Corinth as unique evidence that God has granted him jurisdiction over the area, which the rivals have usurped.

Only Paul betrothed them to Christ, bringing them to an intimate commitment to Christ, an act that, given the logic of the metaphor, none other can supercede before the *parousia*/marriage to Christ (11.2). The rivals have only led the Corinthians astray (11.3–4).

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<sup>126</sup> Such events include Paul’s bringing the gospel to them first, betrothing them to Christ, and financing his initial mission among them without taking their money.

Paul served the Corinthians in the gospel humbly, without any cost, as a gift (11.7). He pledges to continue to do so for the express purpose of sharply distinguishing the basis of his ministry from the basis of the rivals' activities (11.10–12). Their false claim to work on the same terms as Paul does reveals, for Paul, their true identity. They, who have accused Paul of being unqualified to be an apostle, are themselves false apostles and servants of Satan (11.13, 15).

Paul has served the Corinthians without abusing them, which his rivals have (11.20–21). Paul's alleged weakness is now more clearly shown to be his lenient, non-coercive manner of ministry in the *πραύτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ* and not exclusively his lack of (or decision not to display) eloquence when speaking in person (10.1, 10).

Does this sequence of units manifest any kind of progression? Paul's activity among the Corinthians is recounted in a roughly chronological sequence and with a possible intensification of his relationship with them—from pioneering the church, to betrothing them like a father to Christ, to finally demonstrating and declaring his love for them by serving humbly without cost. The sequence of units progresses similarly in its portrayal of the rivals as impostors. The discourse first portrays them as boasting in work that Paul has done, as if they had done it, and as violating Paul's divinely apportioned jurisdiction. It then portrays them in a role corresponding to that of the serpent who led Eve astray: They lead the Corinthians from pure devotion to Christ to another Jesus, spirit, and gospel. Then the discourse has the rivals lying that they work in their mission on the same terms as Paul does by supporting himself and not burdening the Corinthians. Finally, in two steps, Paul calls them false apostles, servants of Satan, and then he personalizes this characterization by portraying the rivals as abusers of the Corinthians, drawing upon the Corinthians' own experience of the rivals and, in contrast, their experience of Paul, who, in ironic agreement with the accusation against him, was too weak to abuse them (but instead loved them). From the key claim governing this section—that Paul would not dare to class himself with the rivals (10.12)—to its end in 11.21a, the section develops an intensifying contrast between Paul and rivals, which ends with Paul's declaring and demonstrating his love (11.11) and conceding his inability to abuse them set in contrast with the rivals' identification as impostors and servants of Satan (11.13, 15) who have abused the Corinthians (11.20).<sup>127</sup> Danker is correct

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<sup>127</sup> The first unit concerns Paul's divinely granted jurisdiction, his reaching the Corinthians first, and his boasting within the limit of God's apportionment, none of which the rivals can claim (10.13–18). The second unit (11.1–6)

in describing the effect of this section as devastating.<sup>128</sup> Throughout it Paul has appealed through evidence the Corinthians have witnessed firsthand (10.7), through argument using that evidence, and through assertions of value (e.g., 11.11) and intention (e.g., 11.12) to establish rhetorically the claim of 10.12 that he dare not classify or compare his ministry with the activities of his rivals. The contrasts between Paul and rivals are so great that the church cannot follow both. The discourse and Paul's imminent visit together require the Corinthians to choose between the two.

Criticism of Paul's weakness has been accompanied also by the request, or demand, that he too submit his ministry résumé, his self-commendation. The discourse to this point has rejected the possibility that Paul can, or should, compare himself with his rivals, and it has also begun to account for, or defend against, the charge of weakness. The next section responds to both the request and the criticism in a way that allows Paul to say that he did not join the boasting game exactly as his rivals have played it and that rebuts the criticism of his weakness by the highest of authorities.

#### **PAUL IMITATES HIS OPPONENTS IN BOASTING OF HIS MINISTRY—BUT ONLY AS A FOOL (11.21b—12.10; a *Probatio*, Part II)**

Why the need for more proof after the proof offered in 10.13–11.21a? Through it, Paul has distinguished his ministry from the activities of his rivals and has shown, however one might define his weakness, that his ministry has been strong enough to cause their existence as a church and that it has avoided misusing them in any way. But this proof is evidently not enough to meet the rhetorical needs that occasion the discourse. Paul feels forced by the situation to boast (12.11), and acknowledging this perception helps us account better for the discourse as a whole. Paul has received the criticisms of him, of which 10.10 is the weightiest. He has also received the

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amplifies the effect of Paul's reaching them through the metaphor of his betrothing them to Christ, giving Paul an additional unique role in the Corinthians' lives. With that role comes the responsibility of protecting their devotion to Christ, which emphasizes Paul's jurisdiction over the ongoing life of the church, not restricted to only its beginning. Further, this unit characterizes the rivals ominously, unlike the first unit in which they are characterized simply as unwarranted boasters. The second unit characterizes the rivals as playing the role of the serpent who beguiled Eve as they lead the Corinthians astray. The third unit (11.7–11) emphasizes the terms on which Paul began and continues his ministry among the Corinthians—sacrificial and humbling for Paul, but uplifting for the believers, all at no cost to them, because Paul loves them. The fourth unit (11.12–15) portrays the rivals more malignantly: They lie about ministering on the same terms as Paul and are called by Paul false apostles, servants of Satan. The fifth unit (11.16–21a) connects this identity of the rivals with their abusive acts among the Corinthians, again calling on the Corinthians to invoke their personal experience.

<sup>128</sup> *II Corinthians*, 177

request, or demand, that he commend his ministry as his rivals have, and, as 11.23 indicates, with the request has come, in some form and in some way, one or more examples of the self-commendation he is to imitate. He has received a model or a pattern for his boasting. As distasteful to him as it is, he submits to the request. He has objected to such boasting for good reason (10.17). Yet he has also indicated throughout the discourse that he will boast, nevertheless: 10.8; 11.1, 16–18. Despite his condemnation of such boasting, Paul has planned his boast from the beginning of the discourse, and much of it before this point serves to prepare for the boasting of 11.21b–12.10.

Can we better express how the preceding units prepare for the boasting? What would the discourse lack, in content and effect, were the *Exordium* and perhaps the *Propositio* to give way immediately to the FS, excising at least what now fills 10.12–11.21a? If the discourse evinces a coherent purpose that is fulfilled in part by each unit in its present arrangement, answering the question will reveal more to us about the intended function of various discourse units. Were 10.12–11.21a to be excised from the discourse, the discourse would lose the devastating contrast between Paul and the rivals that supports his contention that he cannot class or compare himself with them. Without this section, the discourse would lose Paul's recital of his history with the Corinthians, throughout which they are witnesses to the truth about Paul's (and the rivals') behaviors toward and among them, fulfilling the call to look at the evidence in 10.7 (and restated in 12.6). In short, this section allows Paul to state his case on his terms without having to fit it into the boasting pattern that he will submit to (although only subversively). His case concludes with the rivals' branded with the worst possible titles and accused of terrible treatment of the Corinthians, the latter of which the Corinthians will be able to confirm from personal experience. Paul's case also ends with his declared and demonstrated love for the Corinthians and the arresting irony of his love that is "weak" in that it does not abuse them. Now as he fulfills the request that he match the self-commendation of the rivals, the Corinthians receive this new part of his performance with a whole different constellation of facts, images, and appeals exerting force in their minds than they would have otherwise, had Paul launched his foolish boasting immediately, without the first section of proof filling 10.12–11.21a. Through this just-completed section, Paul has justified logically, ethically, and emotionally his threat of divine war against the rivals (10.3–6) and his resistance to the practice of self-commendation. He has also advanced significant proof for the three strong assertions of 10.7, 8, 11, with more to come both in and

after the foolish boasting in the FS. From this section, Paul would be justified in simply refusing to commend himself as requested; however, he has decided on a strategy for foolish boasting that will further prove his case and valorize the weakness for which he has been pilloried.

### **Paul Boasts, Foolishly, that He Is a Better Servant of Christ (11.21b–29)**

#### *Text*

21b ἐν ᾧ δ' ἂν τις τολμᾷ, ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ λέγω, τολμῶ κἀγώ. 22 Ἑβραῖοί εἰσιν; κἀγώ. Ἰσραηλιταί εἰσιν; κἀγώ. σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ εἰσιν; κἀγώ. 23 διάκονοι Χριστοῦ εἰσιν; παραφρονῶν λαλῶ, ὑπὲρ ἐγώ· ἐν κόποις περισσοτέρως, ἐν φυλακαῖς περισσοτέρως, ἐν πληγαῖς ὑπερβαλλόντως, ἐν θανάτοις πολλάκις. 24 ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων πεντάκις τεσσεράκοντα παρὰ μίαν ἔλαβον, 25 τρίς ἐραβδίσθη, ἅπαξ ἐλιθάσθη, τρίς ἐναυάγησα, νυχθήμερον ἐν τῷ βυθῷ πεποίηκα· 26 ὁδοιπορίαις πολλάκις, κινδύνοις ποταμῶν, κινδύνοις ληστῶν, κινδύνοις ἐκ γένους, κινδύνοις ἐξ ἔθνων, κινδύνοις ἐν πόλει, κινδύνοις ἐν ἐρημίᾳ, κινδύνοις ἐν θαλάσῃ, κινδύνοις ἐν ψευδαδέλφοις, 27 κόπῳ καὶ μόχθῳ, ἐν ἀγρυπνίαις πολλάκις, ἐν λιμῷ καὶ δίψει, ἐν νηστείαις πολλάκις, ἐν ψύχει καὶ γυμνότητι· 28 χωρὶς τῶν παρεκτὸς ἢ ἐπίστασίς μοι ἢ καθ' ἡμέραν, ἢ μέριμνα πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν. 29 τίς ἀσθενεῖ καὶ οὐκ ἀσθενῶ; τίς σκανδαλίζεται καὶ οὐκ ἐγὼ πυροῦμαι;

#### *Translation*

(21b) But in whatever respect anyone is audacious—I am speaking foolishly!—in that respect I too am audacious. (22) Are they Hebrews? I am too. Are they Israelites? I am too. Are they Abraham's descendants? I am too. (23) Are they servants of Christ? (I am talking like an insane person!) I am even more—with far greater labors, with many more imprisonments, with far worse beatings,<sup>129</sup> often at the point of death: (24) from the Jews on five occasions, I received forty [lashes] minus one; (25) three times I was beaten with a rod; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and day I spent in the open sea;

(26) during many journeys, in dangers from rivers, in dangers from robbers, in dangers from my people, in dangers from Gentiles, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wilderness, in dangers at sea, in dangers among false brothers;

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<sup>129</sup> *or*, with countless beatings

(27) in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, without food frequently, in cold and without enough clothing.

(28) Apart from these external things,<sup>130</sup> [there is] the daily burden on me of my concern for all the churches: (29) Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not burn with distress?

### *Analysis*

Why would Paul indulge in the very kind of boasting of which he clearly disapproves? As 12.6 expresses, Paul is truthful when he recites his experiences throughout the Fool's Speech, including the hardships of vv. 21-29. But truth telling can still be foolish, when it is worldly and not in the Lord. Paul's objection to such boasting is, in this context, because it aims at one-upmanship among fellow servants of the Lord and of the believing community; and such an aim does not cohere with the new creation and leads to the divisiveness Paul has already attempted to correct through 1 Corinthians. Because Paul considers the boasting in vv. 21–29 to be foolish he does it only while simultaneously expressing his disapproval of it. He boasts in this way because he feels he must, at least temporarily, in view of the goals of the discourse—to move the Corinthians back to loyalty and obedience to him and his gospel. With this boasting, Paul says, in effect, "I can boast this way if I must to show you on your own terms that I am in no way inferior but actually superior to my opponents. But this kind of boasting is madness anyway; it really doesn't prove the point at stake here: namely, who is the true apostle of Christ to you Corinthians. But because you need this kind of show, I'll give it to you, although it is purely foolish, and I do it only while playing the role of the fool." With such boasting, the discourse indeed portrays Paul as "a better servant of Christ"--the thesis of these vv.--but also denies that such boasting is consistent with being such a servant.

### *Speech Acts*

- 11.21b      Announcement of the beginning of foolish boldness, α σύγκρισις
- 11.22              Declaration of parity on topic of race and pedigree
- 11.23              Declaration of superiority on topic of achievement; stress on the foolishness of the exercise

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<sup>130</sup> *or*, those things left unmentioned



- 11.23b List of acts proving Paul’s better service to Christ, beginning with labors
- 11.23c–25 List of acts of service “at the point of death”
- 11.26 List of acts of service “in dangers”
- 11.27 List of hardships of labor; concludes “external things”
- 11.28–29 List of burdens—acts of service to the churches

### Coherence

1. This section coheres clearly with 11.1, 16, performing in full the foolishness announced there. It further coheres with the earliest indication that Paul would boast, his concession in 10.8 that he does boast of his apostolic commission and its authority. This discourse exists in a fundamental way for the purpose of performing this foolish boast—fulfilling the request of the church and allowing Paul to subvert the very practice and, at the same time, to valorize his divinely approved weakness. Thus the discourse is arranged around the FS, and it is the rhetorical center of the discourse.
3. It coheres internally through the relation of claim and support and the stylistic parallels uniting the lists. The thesis of the FS is that Paul is a better servant of Christ than the boasting rivals, and all that follows in the speech supports this thesis.

### Pertinent Background—Terms and Concepts

1. *Hardship lists*: The FS contains the lengthiest of Paul’s hardship lists.<sup>131</sup> This discussion of such lists, or catalogs, aims at the narrow purpose of helping decide how the discourse intends the hardship list in the FS to be received by its implied audience.<sup>132</sup> Much study of this and other hardship lists has aimed at identifying the tradition source, form, and style of

<sup>131</sup> 11.23—11.29; others are Rom. 8.35; 1 Cor. 4.10–13; 2 Cor. 4.8–9; 6.4b–5, 8–10; 12.10; Phil. 4.12.

<sup>132</sup> John T. Fitzgerald offers a thorough history of the interpretation of Pauline hardship catalogs, except that he does not deal with the present catalog, in *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* (SBL Dissertation Series 99; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1988), 7–31. Laurence Welborn, “The Runaway Paul,” urges that while such study of hardship lists “illuminate[s] features of the style and content of 2 Cor. 11:24–27, the relevant context for understanding Paul’s list of hardships is the fool’s speech, with its boast in labors and exploits” (143, n. 222). This study incorporates insights from Welborn’s study of fools’ discourses chiefly in Hellenistic dramatic literature, but it does not fully accept or incorporate Welborn’s assertion that we can or have yet established the “fool’s speech” as a distinct form or genre. This adoption of insights from fools’ discourse without seeing the hardship lists as primarily evincing the form of a Hellenistic “fool’s speech” may result from my not having yet explored Welborn’s proposal sufficiently. My reservation lies not in acknowledging the existence of the stock Hellenistic character of the fool, with the various sub-types Welborn enumerates, but in

the lists. The predominant opinion from the time of Bultmann forward has been that such lists originate from the Cynic-Stoic traditions and express elements of the diatribe style. But for this study, the aim is not to establish any particular traditional, formal, or stylistic dependence but instead to discern how this list in the FS functions to help the larger discourse perform its purpose. Other such lists from Mediterranean antiquity, whatever their more specific source, contribute to this aim when we consider not so much their provenance but their function within their discourses as they contribute toward the purposes of those discourses.

Studies of the hardship list in the FS that consider its rhetorical function have proposed two main interpretations: (1) that the list parodies the self-praising *encomia* and comparisons performed by Paul's opponents; or (2) that the list is intended straightforwardly, as Paul's foolish self-praise of himself as a better servant of Christ. Called by various names—*peristaseis* catalogs, tribulation lists, hardship catalogs—such lists, of various lengths, are ubiquitous in the ancient Mediterranean world and considered by Jonathan Z. Smith to be “perhaps the most archaic and pervasive of genres.”<sup>133</sup> The main stream of twentieth-century studies of these lists for New Testament studies, following the work of Rudolf Bultmann and Wolfgang Schrage, viewed the lists as primarily a Cynic-Stoic form and used this identification as one reason for locating Paul within or relating him closely to that philosophical tradition.<sup>134</sup> But the brief history-of-religions study of first-century CE hardship lists by Robert Hodgson shows that such lists appear in many more religious and philosophical traditions than those on which Bultmann and W. Schrage focused. This discovery led to his arguing that “no one religious or philosophical current fully accounts for the provenance and meaning of all the lists, and that each list must be investigated against the

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agreeing that the discourses of these dramatic fools share enough formally to identify the “fool’s speech” as a useful form.

<sup>133</sup> *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 44, cited by John T. Fitzgerald, “The Catalogue in Ancient Greek Literature,” in Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, eds., *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference*. JNTS series 146 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 275. Terms for such lists include: κατάλογος, πίναξ, ἀναγραφή, ἀπογραφή. While form critics use “catalog” to indicate an ordered list and “list” to indicate an unordered one, Fitzgerald found the terms used interchangeably in ancient Greek literature, with κατάλογος comprising both ordered and unordered lists (276, n.4).

<sup>134</sup> Robert Hodgson, “Paul the Apostle and First Century Tribulation Lists,” *ZNW* 74 (1983) 59–80. R. Bultmann, *Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt und die kynisch-stoische Diatribe*, *FRLANT* 13 (Göttingen, 1910) 71–72; W. Schrage, “Leid, Kreuz und Eschaton. Die Peristasenkataloge als Merkmale paulinischer theologia cruceis und Eschatologie,” *EvT* 34 (1974) 141–175.

full range of background material.” With regard specifically to Paul’s hardship lists, Hodgson urged that lists used by Plutarch and Arrian in their portrayals of Alexander the Great pertain to Paul’s hardship lists, including the list in the FS, as much or more than those studied by earlier scholars. Plutarch’s “On the Fortune of Alexander” urges that Alexander’s achievements resulted not from fate alone, but also from his virtue: “[T]he supremacy . . . he won at the price of much *blood* and of *wounds* . . . many a night did he spend *without sleeping*, many a *blood-stained day* did he pass amid *combats* . . . against *irresistible forces* and *innumerable tribes*, against impassable *rivers* and *mountain fastnesses*. . . .”<sup>135</sup> This study discusses below that to which Paul attributes his endurance through hardship.

Arrian’s Alexander delivers a hardship list in circumstances similar to Paul’s in 2 Corinthians 10–13. In a speech to homesick soldiers contemplating rebellion, Alexander “reminds them of their debt to his father Philip, then of their daring exploits together, [and] finally of his own labors,”<sup>136</sup> in an effort to prevent the rebellion.

All these noble deeds of my father towards you are great indeed, if looked at by themselves, and yet small, if compared with ours. . . . Yet you may feel that while you were enduring the *toils* and *distresses*, I have acquired all this without *toil* and without *distress*. But who of you is conscious of having endured more *toil* for me than I for him? Or see here, let any who carries *wounds* strip himself and show them; I too will show mine. For I have no part of my body, in front at least, that is left without *scars*; there is no *weapon*, used at close quarters, or hurled from afar, of which I do not carry the mark. Nay, I have been wounded by the sword, *hand to hand*; I have been *shot with arrows*, I have been *struck from a catapult*, *smitten many a time* with stones and clubs, for you, for your glory, for your wealth; I lead you conquerors through *every land*, *every sea*, *every river*, *mountain*, *plain*. I married as you married; the children of many of you will be blood-relations of my children.<sup>137</sup>

John T. Fitzgerald continued his lengthy study of Paul’s Corinthian hardship lists *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel* with a brief study of the rhetorical functions of ancient catalogs, or lists.<sup>138</sup> Drawing upon studies of scores of lists,<sup>139</sup> Fitzgerald finds the primary function of

<sup>135</sup> 326 D-E in F. C. Babbitt et al. *Plutarch’s Moralia* (15 vols. Loeb: Cambridge, 1936–69)

<sup>136</sup> Hodgson 78.

<sup>137</sup> *Arrian’s History of Alexander and Indica*, trans. E. I. Robinson, vol 2. (Loeb; Cambridge 1954) VII.10.1–3. Emphasis is Hodgson’s, 78.

<sup>138</sup> “The Catalogue in Ancient Greek Literature,” in Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, eds., *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference*. JNTS series 146 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 275–293. As a style (*Stil*), a catalog contrasts with narrative, although some catalogs mix list with narrative. As an example, Fitzgerald cites Paul’s narrative recounting of a specific hardship, 2 Cor. 11.32–33, at the end of the list of hardships (281). As a literary form (genre, *Gattung*), catalog is a form that has no form—“no definite arrangement or component parts. . . . At best one can speak of discernible patterns in extant catalogs”

most lists to be amplification, or αὐξήσις (*auxēsis*).<sup>140</sup> In this function,<sup>141</sup> lists “create the feeling of quantity, size, greatness, fullness, completeness, and thereby raise the significance of what is related.” Usually, such lists aim at creating the effect of great mass more than at emphasizing specific items in the lists, “however important these may be in their own right.”<sup>142</sup> Ancient rhetoricians distinguished various methods of amplification,<sup>143</sup> but accumulation is the method that results in a list, a consensus among rhetoricians that Longinus expresses: “amplification consists in accumulating (συνπλήρωσις) all the aspects and topics inherent in the subject and thus strengthening the argument by dwelling (ἐπιμονῆ) upon it.”<sup>144</sup> The style of such amplifying lists includes elements such as these: quantitative adjectives and adverbs; comprehensive terms like πᾶς;<sup>145</sup> asyndeton; frequent repetition of the same word (often in anaphora). Quintilian recommends asyndeton “when we are speaking with special vigour: for it at once impresses the details on the mind and makes them seem more numerous than they really are.”<sup>146</sup> With their primary aim of amplification, lists commonly appear in epideictic rhetoric, by which, as Aristotle observes, speakers seek to endow subjects with “importance and grandeur (μέγεθος).”<sup>147</sup> Lists occur often, consequently, in epideictic forms such as *encomium* and *synkrisis*, and Fitzgerald notes without further comment the occurrence of “the *synkrisis* at the beginning of the self-laudatory *peristasis* catalogue in 2 Cor. 11.22–23.”<sup>148</sup>

Beyond amplification, Fitzgerald identifies subsidiary purposes lists may fulfill. Lists may “lend an air of *facticity and objectivity* to what is being related”; and they may prove

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(283, n. 22). The following discussion of the primary and subsidiary functions of catalogs summarizes Fitzgerald’s perspective.

<sup>139</sup> including these: Austin, J. N. H. *Catalogues and the Catalogue of Ships in the Iliad*, PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1965; Towner, W. S., *The Rabbinic ‘Enumeration of Scriptural Examples’* (SPB, 22: Leiden: Brill, 1973); Marót, K., *Die Anfänge der griechischen Literatur: Vorfragen* (Budapest: Verlag der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1960); Beye, C. R., *The Catalog as a Device of Composition in the Iliad*, PhD diss., Harvard University, 1958; also *The Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Epic Tradition* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1966); Trüb, H., *Kataloge in der griechischen Dichtung*, PhD diss., Zürich University, 1952.

<sup>140</sup> Fitzgerald cites discussions of amplification in Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.9.40; Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 12.1; Cicero, *De Oratore*, 3.104.

<sup>141</sup> which this study has already identified, through Quintilian, as the essence of rhetoric

<sup>142</sup> Fitzgerald, “Catalogue” 287.

<sup>143</sup> Quintilian gives five (*Institutes* 8.4.1–29), Theophrastus six (Spengel, *Rhetores Graecae* III,326,24–28), and Longinus hyperbolizes—“ten thousand kinds” (*Subl.* 10.11.2).

<sup>144</sup> *Subl.* 12.2, cited by Fitzgerald 286.

<sup>145</sup> Fitzgerald 285

<sup>146</sup> *Insti.* 9.3.50; cf. also Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.12.3–4; cited in Fitzgerald 286.

<sup>147</sup> Fitzgerald’s words, 285; Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.9.40.

what is being narrated: indirectly, when a list's "objective appearance lends probability to the surrounding material"; and directly, when a list supports a claim.<sup>149</sup> In such cases, lists perform proof (*ἀποδείξις*), a function that goes beyond the rhetorical functions needed for epideictic oratory "with its undebated topics."<sup>150</sup>

2. *The encomium*: The speech of praise belongs to the epideictic species of rhetoric and, throughout classical to Roman imperial periods, had subjects as varied as great historical and mythological leaders, cities, events, and, in satirical *encomia* one's opponents, while in humorous ones, gnats and hair.<sup>151</sup> Beyond learning about *encomia* from the extant samples, we know that it was taught as a composition exercise in the final stages of Hellenistic grammar schools, in the curriculum known as the *progymnasmata*, as preparation for higher-level rhetorical studies taught in the *gymnasium*.<sup>152</sup> The *Progymnasmata* of Hermogenes (third century CE), typical of others for selection and sequence,<sup>153</sup> sets out these exercises: myth, tale, *chreia*, proverb, refutation and confirmation, commonplace, *encomium*, comparison, characterization, *ecphrasis* (description), thesis, and introducing a bill.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Fitzgerald 285, n. 37.

<sup>149</sup> Fitzgerald 288. Note 55, 288–289, names twenty-one other ways lists may function: "Specific catalogues, depending on their content and context, may have an almost limitless variety of functions. The following list of functions is drawn from the texts discussed by Marót, Trüb, Beye, Austin, and Towner [whose works are cited above]: (1) illustration, (2) creation of a mood, (3) structuring principle, (4) introduction of characters and their importance, (5) rehearsal and recapitulation for mnemonic reasons, (6) an economizing device to pay homage to ideas/persons that cannot be developed or treated extensively, (7) characterization, (8) glorification, (9) a preparatory device to lay the basis for further discussion or episodes, (10) preliminary survey, a kind of table of contents, (11) *tours de force* by which a speaker or writer demonstrates his credentials and virtuosity or struts his scholarship, (12) a delaying device to increase dramatic tension, (13) incantations and magic, (14) an archaizing device, (15) lamentation, (16) consolation, (17) exhortation and persuasion, (18) boasting, especially in taunts and vaunts, and as justification for privileged status (genealogical lists), (19) organization and systematization of knowledge and experience, (20) analysis, and (21) instruction."

<sup>150</sup> Fitzgerald 288, which cites Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.17.3; also Spengel, *Rhet.* II,441,6–8

<sup>151</sup> Aphthonius's late 4<sup>th</sup>-century CE *Progymnasmata* distinguishes the *encomium*, dedicated to mortals, from festive odes, dedicated to gods. He lists these as "proper objects of praise" for *encomia*: "persons and things, times and places, dumb animals and, in addition, plants." "The *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius," Ray Nadeau, trans., *Speech Monographs* 19 (1952), 264–285.

<sup>152</sup> The term *progymnasmata* first appears in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1436a25. The earliest extant *progymnasmata* comes from Theon of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. George Kennedy (and others) insist that "ancient education was so conservative that the exercises go back at least to [pre-1<sup>st</sup> cent. CE] Hellenistic times," *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 270. Forbes argues that until the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE only the teachers of rhetoric, not the grammar teachers, would have taught the *progymnasmata* to students, thus placing the sequence at the beginning of the highest level of rhetorical education: "Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony: Paul's Boasting and the Conventions of Hellenistic Rhetoric," *NTS* 32 (1986) 7. But Forbes provides no evidence for the claim.

<sup>153</sup> Charles Sears Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400) Interpreted from Representative Works* (New York: Macmillan, 1928) 23.

<sup>154</sup> Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric*, 23–28.

Simpler and otherwise different from the traditional forensic or deliberative speech, the *encomium* typically ordered its topics as the late fourth-century CE rhetorician Aphthonius instructs in his *Progymnasmata*:

Now, this is the exact division of the *encomium*, and you should work it out under these topics: you will make the *exordium* according to the subject at hand; next, you will place genus, which you will divide into race, fatherland, forebears, and fathers: then, you will take up education, which you will divide into inclination to study, talent, and rules; then, you will bring out the most important topic of the encomium, the achievements, which you will divide into the spirit, the body, and fortune—the spirit like courage or prudence, the body like beauty, swiftness, or strength, and fortune like power, wealth, and friends. To these you will add comparison, in order to infer a greater position for the one being praised through the process of placing side by side; finally, the epilogue more in the style of a common prayer.<sup>155</sup>

D. L. Clark notes that the writers of *progymnasmata* “lavish[ed] more detailed and elaborate directions” on the *encomium* than on any other exercise.<sup>156</sup> This superlative attention to praise and its corresponding act of censure correlates with the developments in Roman imperial times of epideictic rhetoric as the primary species of public discourse and specifically of the Second Sophistic, with its emphasis on self-display.

3. The σύγκρισις, or rhetorical comparison, was also a task in the *progymnasmata*, and it too originates as a rhetorical practice from earlier times. Aristotle appears to have been the first to reflect on the rhetorical use of comparison, for which he distinguished two purposes: first, as a tool of rhetorical argument by example<sup>157</sup> and as the topic for inventing material within the judicial *peroration*, within which Aristotle recommends that speakers close their speeches by summarizing what they have argued in comparison with the arguments of their

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<sup>155</sup> Nadeau, transl., 273. Burton Mack, in *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990) 48, lists typical *encomium* topics as follows:

1. *Exordium*
2. Narration: Origin/Genealogy/Birth
3. Achievements
  - a. Education/Pursuits
  - b. Virtues
  - c. Deeds
  - d. Blessings/Endowments
4. *Peroration*: Honor/Memorial

<sup>156</sup> *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957) 195. Clark also cites Henri-Irénée Marrou’s discussion of Theon’s treatment of topics for *encomium* in 36 divisions and subdivisions (*Histoire de l’éducation dans l’antiquité* [Paris, 1948] 274).

<sup>157</sup> *Rhet.* 1393b 4. “Comparison” is παράβολη here. Rhetorical proof by example, or παράδειγμα, is one of the two κοινῶν πείσεων, the forms of proof common to all species of rhetoric, the other being proof by enthymeme (ἐνθυμήματος), the rhetorical equivalent to reasoning and logical demonstration by syllogism.

opponents.<sup>158</sup> Aristotle identifies amplification as the second rhetorical use of comparison, recommending to students that when the subject of an encomium “does not furnish you with enough material in himself, you must compare (ἀντιπαραβάλλειν) him with others, as Isocrates used to do. . . . And you must compare (συγκρίνειν) him with illustrious personages, for it affords ground for amplification and is noble, if he can be proved better than men of worth.”<sup>159</sup> These and other similar uses of comparison appear in the ongoing rhetorical tradition.<sup>160</sup> The fourth-century BCE anonymous *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* teaches comparison and contrast as means for amplifying and minimizing subjects in *encomium* and invective; Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae* mentions Meleager of Gadara’s σύγκρισις, apart from an *encomium*, in an extended comparison of pease-porridge and lentil soup, with the apparent aim of determining which was the better.<sup>161</sup> Σύγκρισις is a convention in the handbook “Art of Rhetoric” attributed to Dionysius of Halicarnassus.<sup>162</sup> It advises speakers delivering orations at festival games to “compare (παραβάλλειν) the festivals with others” in order to invent their material.<sup>163</sup> With Philo of Alexandria, Polybius the historian, and Dio Chrysostom, instruction about comparison comes to include a doctrine of propriety of comparison. Expressed variously, the common idea is that comparisons require a basis of similarity. Philo denies eleven times that dissimilar things may be compared: for example, the Jewish God cannot be compared with things called gods, even though kings and commoners may be compared.<sup>164</sup> In *Oration* 4.35 Dio expresses a similar denial of the possibility of comparison: “For these reasons he (Diogenes) refused to compare (παραβάλλειν) himself any farther with the king of the Persians, since there was a great difference between them. In fact, the king was, he said, the most miserable man alive. . . .”

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<sup>158</sup> *Rhet.* 1419b 5 in Book 3, dealing with style. “To compare” is παραβάλλειν here.

<sup>159</sup> *Rhet.* 1368a

<sup>160</sup> These sources are identified by Forbes, “Paul’s Boasting,” 2–7.

<sup>161</sup> 4.159a.

<sup>162</sup> T. D. Smith in his unpublished dissertation *Studies in the Pseudo-Dionysian Techne Rhetorike* (University of Pennsylvania, 1973) dates the pertinent passages no later than the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, but D. A. Russell and Nigel Wilson in *Menander Rhetor* date them in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE or later (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), Appendix, 362.

<sup>163</sup> Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, 362, and *Dionysios von Halikarnassos, Opuscula*, ed. Usener-Radermacher (Leipzig, N.D.) 257–258.

<sup>164</sup> Philo: *De Posteritate* 105; *De Agricultura* 155; *De Ebrietate* 43, 45; *De Vita Contemplativa* 3, 9, 56; Polybius: *Histories* 1.II; 6.XLVII.

Plutarch's novella-length *Lives*<sup>165</sup> concludes each treatment of pairs of Greek and Roman notables with a brief σύγκρισις<sup>166</sup> that assesses their merits and standing, some equal, others favoring one over the other. He also advocates comparing oneself to others more virtuous, “being pricked by the consciousness of [one’s] own shortcomings,” as part of one’s progress in virtue.<sup>167</sup>

But the development in the rhetorical use of comparison most important for this study is the teaching of σύγκρισις in the *progymnasmata*.<sup>168</sup> Because these were textbooks with classroom examples, they probably influenced rhetors widely, all of whom would have worked through its sequence as part of their education. The *Progymnasmata* of Theon from the first century CE expresses the same doctrine of propriety in comparison taught by earlier rhetoricians, and it treats comparison as a double *encomium*. Regarding comparing people, Theon writes that

one firstly juxtaposes their status, education, offspring, positions held, prestige and physique; if there is any other physical matter, or external merit, it should be stated beforehand in the material for the *encomia*. Next one compares actions, preferring the finer ones and those responsible for more numerous and greater benefits; those which are more stable and durable; those which were especially opportune; those for which the failure to perform them would have resulted in the occurrence of great injury; those performed out of choice rather than of necessity or chance; and those performed by the few rather than the many. Commonplace and hackneyed things should not be singled out for praise. . . . [R]efer to those things done with effort rather than ease, and things done after the appropriate age and opportunity rather than those performed when the possibility was there.<sup>169</sup>

Hermogenes' *Progymnasmata* treats comparison as one of six techniques for inventing amplifying commonplaces and as a common technique for inventing material for *encomia*.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Donald Lemen Clark relates the *progymnasmata* to Plutarch's *Lives*: “Sometime in his school career Plutarch must have practiced the elementary exercise of comparison. Would it not have shown him the fundamental technic which he uses in the *Parallel Lives*?” *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955) 199.

<sup>166</sup> each fewer than ten pages in the Loeb edition.

<sup>167</sup> *De Profectibus in Virtute* 84d; William C. Grese, “De Profectibus in Virtute (Moralia 75A–86A)” in *Plutarch's Ethical Writings on and Early Christian Literature*, Hans Dieter Betz, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1978) 29. Plutarch also notes in “De Tranquillitate Animi” (#470c) that “it is . . . highly conducive to tranquility of mind . . . not, as most people do, (to) compare oneself with those who are superior” to avoid distressing oneself. To feel better, one can compare oneself to a slave.

<sup>168</sup> The term appears first in *Rhet. ad Alexandrum*, 20.

<sup>169</sup> R. J. Mortley, trans., from L. Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci* (Frankfurt, 1854) 2: 112–115; in Forbes, “Paul’s Boasting,” 6.

<sup>170</sup> At the end of a paragraph explaining how to invent material for an *encomium* for plants, Hermogenes writes “Comparisons you will lay hold of everywhere”; C. S. Baldwin, trans., in *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic*, 33.



Hermogenes treats comparison as its own form in the *progymnasmata* and distinguishes different aims for different comparisons:

Now sometimes we draw our comparisons in terms of equality, showing the things we compare as being equal either in all respects or in several; sometimes we put one ahead, praising also the other to which we prefer it; sometimes we blame the one utterly, and praise the other, as in comparisons of wealth and justice. There is even comparison with the better, where the task is to show the less to be equal to the greater, as in the comparison of Heracles with Odysseus. But such comparison demands a powerful orator and a vivid style; and the working out always needs vivacity because of the need to make the transitions swift.<sup>171</sup>

4. *Self-praise*: Apart from the *progymnasmata*, both teachers of rhetoric and itinerant sophistic orators advertised and competed among themselves using comparison. When such comparison became self-advertisement, speakers were liable to be judged by Hellenistic conventions governing self-praise, which were summarized in Plutarch's essay, "On Praising Oneself Inoffensively." An important reference to sophistic self-praise comes from the *P.Oxy.* 2190. In it Neilus, a first-century CE rhetoric student away from home in Alexandria, writes to his father about the circumstances of his education.<sup>172</sup> Neilus disparages his present sophist-teacher, Didymus, who has recruited students to his school with the promise that he "would take better care [of them] than the others" in Alexandria.<sup>173</sup> But Neilus does not think Didymus is doing a good job, and it irks him that he who "used to be a mere provincial teacher sees fit to compete (εἰς σύγκρισιν) with the rest" of the Alexandrian teaching sophists.<sup>174</sup> The frequent discussion of sophists by Dio of Chrysostom and Epictetus includes mention of their practice of self-advertisement, and it is likely that such self-praise included

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<sup>171</sup> L. Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci* (Frankfurt, 1854), vol. 2, 14–15; transl., C. S. Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic*, 33–34.

<sup>172</sup> E. Lobel, C. H. Roberts, and E. P. Wegener, trans. *The Oxyrhynchus Papyrus*, vol. 18 (London, 1941). This discussion draws upon comments about *P. Oxy.* 2190 by Bruce Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 6f., 14, 18, 19–39, 49, 54, 67, 76, 81, 95, 97, 164, 171, 232; Edwin A. Judge, "Paul's Boasting in Relation to Contemporary Professional Practice," *Australian Biblical Review* 16 (1968) 37–50; Christopher Forbes, "Paul's Boasting," 7, 9; Frederick W. Danker, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: 2 Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989) 157; Victor Furnish, *II Corinthians* 480; Brian K. Peterson, *Eloquence* 97.

<sup>173</sup> lines 20–22: ἔλεγεν ἐπιμελήσεσθαι τῶν ἄλ- / λων μᾶλλον. . . .

<sup>174</sup> lines 28–29. Whereas the original modern editor of this papyrus, C. H. Roberts, transliterated φιλόλογος as a proper name, Winter follows the revisions of J. Rea ["A Student's Letter to His Father: *P. Oxy.* XVIII 2190 Revised," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 99 (1993) 75–88], who cites evidence from funerary inscriptions that the term referred to promising young men who died before fulfilling their promise and other evidence that it referred as well to members of the Alexandria Museum (80). Rea translates φιλόλογος "tutor," but Winter prefers "scholar" because "tutor" does not, in his view "convey the duties understood in the first century of a tutor" (29–30). As Winter reads the letter, Neilus has not been able to enter a sophist's school because such are in

comparison with other popular teachers, as the preceding example shows.<sup>175</sup> Lucian's "A Professor of Public Speaking" satirizes the self-promotion of popular teachers of rhetoric. Lucian has one teacher ask a new student how he heard of him and, at the same time, he praises his virtuoso oratory:

Do not expect to see something that you can compare (παρὰβαλεῖν) with So-and-so, or So-and-so; no, you will consider the achievement far too prodigious and amazing even for Tityus or Ephialtes. Indeed, as far as the others are concerned, you will find that I drown them out as effectively as trumpets drown flutes, or cicadas bees, or choirs their leaders. . . .

Then he encourages his student to advertise himself similarly: "[I]f anyone accosts you, make marvelous assertions about yourself, be extravagant in your self-praise, and make yourself a nuisance to him. 'What was Demosthenes beside me?' 'Perhaps one of the ancients is in the running with me!' and that sort of thing."

The works of Dio and Epictetus indicate that Lucian's satire expresses accurately the attitudes of some sophists recruiting students. From them and *P.Oxy.* 2190 we can identify two situations in which such self-praising comparisons would be performed: the one in informal interviews with potential students, the other in public declamations, particularly those sophists would use to introduce themselves to a city. We do not know how the same or similar discourses would be performed within the activities of the church at Corinth. Perhaps both situations in the secular sphere had corresponding situations within the Corinthian church: informal interactions between sophistic ministers and church members, perhaps also more formal interviews with church leaders, and then sermons or lessons during worship, in which the minister's discourse might perform comparisons between himself and other ministers and styles of ministry while addressing perhaps other topics, such as legitimate Christian leadership. While we have studies addressing the letter of commendation that may shed some light on how the Corinthian church might have used such written documents in accepting itinerant ministers, we do not yet have any developed proposals describing the likely oral interactions between ministers such as Paul's opponents and Christian congregations. All that we know is that self-commendation and comparisons between orators occurred frequently in first-century Hellenistic life and that it is therefore probable that 2

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short supply. He, with some friends, are instead looking for "a person whom he can emulate and [he] would see as a sophist as such" (30).

<sup>175</sup> See the discussion of the views of these writers on the sophists in chap. 1 of this study.

Corinthians 10–13 refers to actual events, however its rhetorical expressions may exaggerate or otherwise modify them.

We do know, however, how some Hellenists judged self-praise and distinguished acceptable and inoffensive self-praise from the odious. The most important work dedicated to this topic is Plutarch's essay "On Praising Oneself Inoffensively."<sup>176</sup> The topic was one from the rhetorical schools, and its term *περιαυτολογία* occurs among rhetorical writings, although none treat it as fully as does Plutarch.<sup>177</sup> Plutarch moralizes this rhetorical precept and discusses "the circumstances that justify self-praise[,] . . . the devices that make it acceptable, and advice for avoiding it when it is uncalled for."<sup>178</sup> Self-praise (*περιαυτολογία*) is justified in these circumstances:

1. when, by "permitting himself to mention his good accomplishments and character [, the statesman] is enabled to achieve some good" (539 E);
2. when "defending your good name or answering a charge . . . [,] displays . . . a lofty spirit and greatness of character, which by refusing to be humbled humbles and overpowers envy" (540 C-E);
3. "when [the man cast down by fortune] stands upright in fighting posture 'like a boxer closing in' using self-glorification to pass from a humbled and piteous state to an attitude of triumph and pride, strikes us not as offensive or bold, but as great and indomitable" (541A-C);
4. when "a statesmen when wronged . . . make[s] some boast to those who deal hardly<sup>179</sup> with him"(541C);
5. when "a man [is] reproached for his very triumphs[, for he] is entirely pardonable and escapes all censure if he extols what he has done. For this, it is felt, is not recrimination but self-defence"<sup>180</sup> (541 E);

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<sup>176</sup> *Plutarch's Moralia*, trans. Phillip H. De Lacy and Benedict Einarson, vol. 7 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959) 110–167. Scholars examining the Fool's Speech refer to this essay frequently.

<sup>177</sup> *περιαυτολογία* is used by Alexander in Spengel, *Rhet. Graec.* 3, 4.9 and Plutarch, 539 E. *Plutarch's Moralia* translators De Lacy and Einarson suggest that *περιαυτολογία* "comes from the softened expression 'to speak about myself' that Demosthenes uses in the oration *On the Crown* (4 and 321); and it is probable that the whole topic was suggested to the rhetoricians by that oration," VII.110.

<sup>178</sup> De Lacy and Einarson, *Plutarch's Moralia*, VII.111.

<sup>179</sup> with unjustified harshness, *τοὺς ἀγνωμονοῦντας*

<sup>180</sup> Plutarch continues: "It was this, for example, that allowed Demosthenes to speak with full freedom and made palatable the self-praise with which he fills nearly the whole oration *On the Crown*, as he glories in the very charges brought against him: his conduct as ambassador and statesman in the war" (541 E)

6. when “showing that the opposite of what one is charged with would have been shameful and base”<sup>181</sup>; (541 F–542 A)
7. when the statesman-speaker “harmoniously blend[s] the praises of his audience with his own[, for] he [thereby] remove[s] the offensiveness and self-love in his words”<sup>182</sup> (542 A);
8. when speakers do “not . . . lay claim to everything, but . . . [let] part of it rest with chance, and part with God” (542 E);
9. “when praised as eloquent, rich, or powerful, to request the other not to mention such points but rather to consider whether one is of worthy character, commits no injuries, and leads a useful life[, for] he that does this does not introduce the praise, but transfers it.” (543 B);
10. when speakers “do not present their own praise in all its brilliance and undimmed, but throw in certain minor shortcomings, failures, or faults,” including, for example, “a confession even of poverty and indigence or actually of low birth” (543 F, 544 B);
11. when “a man might praise himself to exhort his hearers and inspire them with emulation and ambition” to some good end (544 D-545 B);
12. “when in order to overawe and restrain the hearer and to humble and subdue the headstrong and rash” (544 F);
13. “where mistaken praise injures and corrupts by arousing emulation of evil . . . , it is no disservice to counteract it” even though it is “most unstatesmanlike to pit oneself against (ἀντιπαρὰβάλλειν) the praise and fame of others” (545D);

But self-praise is “altogether odious and vulgar, as one who would win applause from the humiliation of another” when one “intermingles praise of himself with censure of another, and causes another’s disgrace to secure glory for himself” (547 A). The following discussion of Paul’s boasting shows that it was justified, in Plutarch’s view, by several circumstances, even though Paul characterizes it as foolish.

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<sup>181</sup> Plutarch cites Demosthenes, who is praising himself in the sense of defending the counsel and leadership to Athens for which he is now on trial: “Who would not rightly have condemned me to death if even by word I had tried to sully any of our country’s glories?” *On the Crown* 101. Plutarch continues: “And in general the oration *On the Crown* uses the most felicitous contrasts, as each charge is refuted, to introduce self-praise” 542 A.

<sup>182</sup> referring again to Demosthenes and *On the Crown*

### Intertextuality

The lists in this section amplify similar topics and specific acts expressed in other Pauline *peristaseis* catalogs: Rom 8.35; 1 Cor 4.10–13; 2 Cor 4.8–12; 6.4–10;<sup>183</sup> Phil 4.12.

### Rhetorical Structure and Development

The key question is how these vv. function. They perform part of Paul's boast, an act he emphatically qualifies as foolish, but to what, specifically, does "foolishness" properly apply, according to the discourse itself? Foolishness properly describes the act of self-commendation (10.12), the act of comparing oneself with others, without regard for God's criteria for evaluation (10.12, 17–18), and the kind of boasting Paul performs in the FS.<sup>184</sup> The act of boasting in the FS is foolish because it performs the comparison that Paul criticizes in 10.12, 17–18. The comparison aims not at the glory of God or the good of believers but at establishing superiors and inferiors among ministers who are *διάκονοι Χριστοῦ*, and such an aim conforms to the sophistic culture but not to the new creation.

But what of the contents of the boasting, especially in this section, vv. 22–29? Are the assertions in the vv. themselves foolish or only the use to which Paul puts them in this foolish boasting contest? In other words, how does the discourse intend an audience to understand this boasting, and how, likely, would Paul's Corinthian audience understand them? Beyond the rhetorical form of a *synkrisis*, which this study argues structures, informally, most of this discourse (including but going beyond the FS), this section presents also the rhetorical form of the *encomium* and the hardship list, or *peristasis* catalog, in service of the *synkrisis*.<sup>185</sup> In this section, the hardship list supplies the matter for the *encomium* topics. How would a Hellenistic audience likely receive, or interpret, this hardship list in a discourse of self-praise?

The FS begins with the traditional *encomium* topics of genus in the four comparisons of vv. 22–23, although Paul's brevity on each point of comparison departs from convention by failing

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<sup>183</sup> See the helpful diagram in Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 370

<sup>184</sup> 11.17. Boasting is foreshadowed in 11.1, announced in 11.16–17, and begun in 21b, where boasting is expressed through *τολμάω*.

<sup>185</sup> although this *encomium* functions as part of a *synkrisis*. The *synkrisis* is expressed in vv. 22–23 but implied in the following vv. of the FS. From the context of chs. 10–13, one recognizes that Paul's boasting in the FS responds to negatively comparative boasting by his opponents. A *synkrisis* could consist of two *encomia* or of an *encomium* paired with vituperation. George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 205.

to amplify what he merely lists.<sup>186</sup> In these two vv., Paul responds to his opponents' claims most directly—"Are they . . . ? I am too! / even more!"—indicating that they were probably following an encomiastic form with their self-commendation and intramural comparisons. Moreover, it is important to note that Paul is following the pattern given to him; he is responding in kind to the boasting of his rivals.<sup>187</sup> But what of the following stock topic of education and then achievements? Verse 23 expresses a thesis for vv. 23–29, that Paul is a better servant of Christ. Because it appears that this assertion, like those in v. 22, consists of the opponents' claim answered by Paul, then it would follow the order of their boast as Paul received it. The opponents may have intended the claim to be part of their pedigree under Aphthonius's topic of genus or, following Burton Mack's summary of typical *encomium* topics, the combined sub-topic of "Education/Pursuits" under "Achievements."<sup>188</sup> Perhaps the *topos* δῆκονοι Χριστοῦ (11.23) has already become an early Christian modification to the standard *encomium topoi* listed in the rhetorical handbooks and *progymnasmata*.

Verse 23 presents interpreters with a key decision. It states a claim that vv. 23b–29 (and, in the view of some, through 12.10) support, a function on which most agree. But how do these vv. support it—ironically or straightforwardly? E. A. Judge and his students Peter Marshall, Christopher Forbes, and Bruce Winter share with Dieter Georgi and others the assumption that the opponents' boasting (to which Paul's discourse responds) lists, at this point, their achievements as δῆκονοι Χριστοῦ, achievements other than the kinds of hardships Paul lists.<sup>189</sup> Georgi says that the form the opponents used was the letter of (self-)recommendation<sup>190</sup> and that

<sup>186</sup> Forbes, "Paul's Boasting," 19

<sup>187</sup> Recognizing this in-kind character of Paul's response argues against Betz's proposal that Paul's boasting is part of his emulating Socrates in defending against the charge that he is a false philosopher. Betz, *Der Apostel*, 13–42; "Paul's Apology," 2–5; Peterson, *Eloquence*, 112.

<sup>188</sup> *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 48

<sup>189</sup> Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985) 215; Plummer, *Second Epistle* 322; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 532–533, 535–536; Judge, "St. Paul and Classical Society," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 15 (1972): 35; idem, "St. Paul and Socrates," 114; Georgi, *Opponents of Paul* 279–280; Forbes, "Comparison" 18–19; Garland, "Paul's Apostolic Authority," 378–379; Witherington, *Conflict & Community* (here, not direct parody of opponents' claims, but of Augustus' *res gestae*; Bultmann follows Fridrichsen in seeing the *res gestae* as offering a stylistic model for Paul's hardship list but does not think Paul here parodies the *res gestae*.)

<sup>190</sup> Han-Chie Kim's often-cited study, *The Familiar Letter of Recommendation*, SBL Dissertation Series 4 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972), analyzes the form of 83 papyrus Hellenistic letters of recommendation and also these "passages of commendation" in the NT: references to such letters (indicating that the writer of Acts and Paul were familiar with the form and perhaps varieties of it)—Acts 9.2; 18.27; 22.5; 1 Cor. 16.3; 2 Cor. 3.1–2; "passages of commendation"—Rom. 16.1–2 (perhaps vv. 3–16); 1 Cor. 16.15–16, 17–18; Phil. 2.29–30; 4.2–3; 1 Thess. 5.12–13a; Philm; 3 John 12; Heb. 13:17. If all are correctly classified as directly related to letters of (re)commendation, none nevertheless contribute to this study because each is so brief and fails to express the kinds and quantities of topics that appear to have constituted the letter (or other form of discourse) of (self-)

these letters listed the opponents' genus qualifications (corresponding to 11.21b–22). Then, in vv. 23–29, “[w]hereas Paul boasted of his sufferings, the opponents . . . [listed] their spiritual experiences and powerful deeds. In their opinion (but not Paul’s) these attested to the authenticity and vividness of their representation of Christ. . . . [T]hey must have believed that the power of Christ was present in the mighty deeds of his messengers.”<sup>191</sup> Interpreters from the Judge school presume that the opponents boasted through a more-or-less traditional *encomium* form and do not distinguish that form from the commendation letter; however, they agree with Georgi in viewing 11.23ff. as an “ironic parody of self-praise and comparison of his opponents.”<sup>192</sup> Forbes finds that Paul follows the traditional *topoi* of the *encomium* but that “he radically inverts the content. . . . [H]e amplifies what he should minimize and minimizes what he should amplify. His topics so far have been birth and racial status, and service to Christ [vv. 21b–23a]. Next,<sup>193</sup> where one would expect magistracies and honours, or some equivalent, Paul brings forward beatings and dangers on all sides—humiliation, disgrace and hardship.”<sup>194</sup> Correspondingly, this interpretation also views 11.30—12.10 as a continuation of 11.21b–29 and a continuation of the ironic parody of those vv., not as a distinct sub-section performing a different kind of speech act.

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commendation to which the FS responds. For example, Kim analyzes Paul’s commendation formula into three parts: (a) the introduction; (b) credentials of the recommended; (c) the action Paul requests for the recommended by the recipients. Of these, the credentials would be the component in which one would expect to find items corresponding to the encomiastic *topoi* in opponents’ self-praise. But in each, the credentials relate the recommended to Paul, “in the hope that the recipient would accept him as if the writer himself were being recommended” (Kim 127). The credentials do not express the topics we see in the FS. The non-Pauline commendation passages are similarly unhelpful to this study.

<sup>191</sup> *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 280; cf. 245; English translation and slight revision of *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief: Studien zur Religiösen Propaganda in der Spätantike* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964).

<sup>192</sup> Winter, *Philo and Paul* 224–225. Forbes, “Paul’s Boasting” (18) considers these vv. to be “boasting, like a fool—a ruthless parody of the pretensions of his opponents. . . . [a] boasting ‘of my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest on my’ (12.9).” Judge describes Paul’s boasting in this discourse as “deliberate parody” in “The Conflict of Educational Aims in New Testament Thought,” *Journal of Christian Education* 9 (1966), 44–45; however, he later questions the accuracy of seeing Paul’s boasting as only parody: “The difficulty I now see with this [Judge’s 1966 view], however, is that Paul takes his ‘foolish’ boasting with too much anguish for us to assume it was merely a mockery, unless of course the interjections are themselves part of the irony”: “Paul’s Boasting in Relation to Contemporary Professional Practice,” *Australian Biblical Review* 16: 1–4 (1968) 47.

<sup>193</sup> Forbes does not see vv. 23b–29 as support for the claim of 23a that Paul is a better servant of Christ nor the possibility that the traditional *encomium* topics have been modified by early Christians to fit their emerging sub-culture.

<sup>194</sup> Forbes, “Paul’s Boasting” 18

Other interpreters take vv. 23b–29 straightforwardly and not as parody.<sup>195</sup> Of these, some see 11.29 or 11.30 as transitional to a new sub-section in which Paul begins boasting, not foolishly (11.17) and κατὰ σάρκα (10.2) but τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας (11.30) and ἐν κυρίῳ (10.17) in the acts performed in the FS. For these, the hardship list of vv. 23–29 supports Paul’s claim, foolish but true, that he is a better servant of Christ. The list with its thirty items fulfills several functions lists may serve, including these: It (1) supports the claim of v. 23a, (2) creates the effect of facticity, especially with the enumerated portions, and (3) overwhelms the hearers with the concentration of so many events of toil, suffering, and danger in a brief portion of discourse.<sup>196</sup> While we must conjecture in our efforts to reconstruct the commendations of Paul’s opponents and while some within any given ancient audience may have heard the list as opposing Paul’s sufferings to his opponents’ spiritual ecstasies or other ministerial achievements, the following reasons indicate that the implied audience likely would have received the list of vv. 23–29 as a response to similar self-praise through reciting hardships by Paul’s opponents:

1. “Praise and self-praise for the endurance of hardships were extremely widespread in the ancient world,” according to John T. Fitzgerald, “and it would be surprising if [Paul’s] opponents did *not* refer to hardships in their self-commendation.”<sup>197</sup> Even among the Stoic and Cynic sources Dieter Georgi cites, the endurance of adversity is connected to the bearing of the title δίακονος.<sup>198</sup>
2. Paul uses hardship lists straightforwardly, without parody, in other places. Here are references to the lists identified by Hodgson, with brief comment:<sup>199</sup> (1) Romans 8.35 lists

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<sup>195</sup> Kolenkow, “Paul’s Opponents,” 362–366; Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 24–25; Sampley, “Paul, His Opponents,” 168; Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 122; Danker, *II Corinthians*, 180–81 (with Paul’s assuming the Greek role of the “endangered benefactor”); Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 450; Glenn Holland “Speaking Like a Fool: Irony in 2 Corinthians 10–13” in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (JSNT Sup 90; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 259. Danker’s view has Paul consciously presenting himself as “a person of exceptional merit,” (185) an “endangered benefactor” to the Corinthians whose many hardships show what great danger he has endured on their behalf: The recital of hardships “is a capital rhetorical maneuver. For at the end Paul will, in the judgment of the Corinthians, be standing firmly on his feet as a distinguished benefactor who has endured so much for the sake of the gospel”(181). In Danker’s view, Paul’s hardship catalog follows an established cultural-rhetorical script to demonstrate straightforwardly what he exclaims in v. 23: “Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one!”

<sup>196</sup> The following sections discuss the rhetorical style and rhetorical effect of the hardship list further.

<sup>197</sup> *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 25, n. 95

<sup>198</sup> Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 25, n. 95

<sup>199</sup> It is not possible to consider the function of each as fully as each deserves. To do so would require other studies similar to this one.



seven tribulations that function to affirm the triumph of the love of Christ.<sup>200</sup> (2) The list in 1 Corinthians 4.10–13a in tone and function is most like the hardship list of the FS. It is preceded by sarcasm that begins to contrast the Corinthians, in their status of being filled, rich, and kings (4.8), against Paul’s status (4.9). Then begins the hardship list, which opens with three sarcastic antitheses followed by six hardships (including manual labor) and then concludes with three antitheses. This list contrasts Paul’s and the Corinthians’ material and social circumstances with language complex in its qualities. When Paul asserts that they are filled, rich, and reigning, he asserts it straightforwardly but also sarcastically and perhaps ironically, because he undercuts his exclamatory assertions—“I would that you [really] *did* reign” (v. 8d)—revealing that on some level he does not grant that they actually are what they think themselves to be. The concession of v. 14—“I do not write this to make you ashamed”—indicates that Paul expects the Corinthians to receive the hardship list as an endorsement of him as, in Frederick Danker’s term, an endangered benefactor to whom they owe gratitude for his service to them through such adversities. (3) 2 Corinthians 4.8–9 lists four antitheses that aim “primarily at establishing God as the source of power which transforms” the hardships “into conditions for . . . authentic ministry.”<sup>201</sup> (4) 2 Corinthians 6.4b–5 lists ten adversities<sup>202</sup> by means of which Paul’s team, as θεοῦ διάκονοι commend themselves (συνιστᾶντες<sup>203</sup>). Four other adversities occur in antitheses in vv. 8–10. This combined list shares a number of words with the hardship list in the FS, but it does not perform irony or parody and is free of the overt polemic that characterizes the FS. Instead, Paul intends this list to commend his ministry to the Corinthians, leading to their being reconciled to him (5.20; 6.1 παρακαλοῦμεν). (5) 2 Corinthians 12.10 lists five hardships by means of which he boasts straightforwardly and paradoxically of his weaknesses. This boast

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<sup>200</sup> Here are the items within each list (as listed by Hodgson, “Tribulation Lists” 66–67): (1) Rom. 8.35b—affliction, anguish, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword; (2) 1 Cor. 4.10–13a—We are fools, you are wise; we are weak, you are strong; you are honored, we are despised. We are hungry and thirsty and naked; we are maltreated and homeless; we labor. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are insulted, we exhort; (3) 2 Cor. 4.8–9—hemmed in, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not overtaken; overwhelmed but not annihilated; (4) 2 Cor. 6.4b–5—afflictions, hardships, anguishes, blows, imprisonments, riots, fatigues, watchings, hunger; 2 Cor. 6.8–10—honor and shame; ill repute and good repute; evaluated to be imposters while being true; held as unknown, thought known well; as dying, though we live; as punished, though not killed; as grieving, yet always rejoicing; as beggars, yet abounding in wealth; as impoverished, yet owning all things; (5) 2 Cor. 12.10—weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, anguishes; (6) Phil. 4.12—How to be abased; how to abound; plenty and hunger; abundance and want.

<sup>201</sup> Hodgson, “Tribulation Lists” 66

<sup>202</sup> nine, if ἐν ὑπομονῇ πολλῇ qualifies the following adversities in the list

is in the Lord and not of itself foolish because it centers on God’s power expressed in a way that excludes self-praise or self-seeking rivalry. It does not parody opponents’ boasting as much as it challenges it and shows it to be worthless. (6) Philippians 4.12 presents three antitheses that elaborate straightforwardly on Paul’s claim to know how to be content in all circumstances.

This brief survey of the other Pauline hardship lists shows that Paul expected his audiences to receive such recitals positively, as a way of commending his ministry to them and as a way of tapping into their gratitude toward him for his service to them. While some of the lists contrast Paul’s material and social circumstances with those of his recipients, none parody the actions of others. The lists, therefore, constitute precedents for Paul’s reciting his adversities straightforwardly in vv. 23–29 of the FS.

3. The three comparisons in v. 22 and the diction of excess in vv. 23b–27 suggest that Paul continues the same point-for-point comparison in vv. 23b–29 that vv. 21b–23a announce and initiate. Verse 23b imitates exactly the question pattern created in the three comparisons of v. 22: Noun or noun phrase (Ἑβραῖοί, σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ) + εἰσιν; . The only innovation at v. 23b is the introduction of the comparative language, the diction of excess. Instead of asserting that he too is διάκονοι Χριστοῦ and moving on to the next topic as he has done with the preceding comparisons, Paul declares his superior service: ὑπὲρ ἐγὼ and then proves it rhetorically through the amplifying hardship list. The unnumbered adverbs expressing excess—περισσοτέρως twice and ὑπερβαλλόντως and πολλάκις each once in v. 23—occur in phrases whose comparisons are elided: “far greater labors, with many more imprisonments, with far worse beatings.” These depend, for a complete comparative statement, upon other statements of which the recipients are already aware—that is, “labors far greater *than those of which my opponents boast*; many more imprisonments *than they have experienced*; beatings far worse (or numerous) *than theirs*.” The elided comparative constructions along with the point-by-point comparative pattern established in vv. 22–23a establish the likelihood that the hardship list corresponds with, even as it exceeds, a similar list embedded in the self-praise of the opponents. “The logic is crude, and *deliberately* so. Since [Paul] has suffered *more* than his opponents, he is *more* a messenger of Christ than they.”<sup>204</sup> In a milieu in which

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<sup>203</sup> The textual witnesses vary only in the form of the lexeme and do not affect this observation.

<sup>204</sup> Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 25, n. 95.

the recitation of such hardships was routinely received as commending the persevering benefactor, had the opponents *not* boasted of their adversities as δῆκονοι Χριστοῦ, which is more likely: that Paul would have shaped his hardship list to demonstrate his endurance through greater hardships or that he would have seized the opportunity to taunt opponents for their lack of such evidences of service to Christ? When Paul wished to distinguish the basis of his service from that of his opponents', he did so in forceful language (11.12–13), and it is likely that he would not bypass a similar opportunity within the FS.

4. Elsewhere throughout the FS Paul responds to topics about which the opponents have boasted; therefore, “to view the *peristasis topos* as another item in their list of vaunts is to treat it in continuity with the other items in this section.”<sup>205</sup> Opponents have boasted of their Jewishness, their status as δῆκονοι Χριστοῦ, their “visions and revelations,” and their miracles,<sup>206</sup> and Paul responds to all of them. It would be surprising if the hardship list, embedded within these topics, did not correspond to a similar boast of the opponents.
5. But may Paul in this case not only respond in kind to opponents' hardship lists but also parody the convention of self-praise itself through such recitals? That is, may Paul not only respond foolishly, joining the game of intramural comparison, which game the Lord does not approve; but may he not also play the dramatic role of the fool in this comparatively lengthy and well-enumerated list? Dale Walker suggests that the “precise enumeration and detailed list make Paul's ‘credentials’ waver between the heroic and the silly. (A little endurance looks noble, but persistent endurance raises the suspicion that maybe [one is] . . . a habitual loser.) Yes, Paul has endured a lot, and more than his rivals. But [after enduring] . . . so much it contradicts the rest of his rivals' credentials. That contradiction makes the value of the suffering-credential uncertain. So, Paul has trumped them at comparing hardships, but mitigated the value of the test. Parody seems like a good label for that.”<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Donald Dale Walker, personal correspondence by e-mail, July 5, 2001. Cf. his unpublished University of Chicago dissertation, *Paul's Offer of Leniency (2 Cor. 10:1): Populist Ideology and Rhetoric in a Pauline Letter Fragment (2 Cor. 10:1–13:10)*, 1997, unavailable to me but forthcoming from J.C.B. Mohr/Siebeck, 2002.

This section develops through the following sub-units:

- 11.21b Announcement of the beginning of foolish boldness, a σύγκρισις
- 11.22 Declaration of parity on topic of race and pedigree
- 11.23a Declaration of superiority on topic of achievement; stress on the foolishness of the exercise

Paul’s matching the effrontery (τολμᾶ) of his opponents is next to his qualification that he speaks foolishly: the two are related, because the boasting of his rivals is foolish, as is Paul’s joining them. Paul steps into character as a fool at this point. Like the leading slave of the mime, who, in Plautus’s comedies, “dares everything,” “fashions audacious plans and dares to put them into action,” “positively disdain and mocking the fates,”<sup>208</sup> Paul boasts of what he dares to do—to match and exceed his rivals’ boasting. His boasting in the following vv. of the hardship list will compare in extravagance to the slave Libanus in Plautus’s *Asinaria*, who boasts of his daring and endurance: “by our wit, wiles, deceits, and machinations, our shoulders bold displaying courage in the face of rods, we have just defied hot irons, crucifixion, chains, fetters, dungeons, stocks, manacles, and harsh whippers well acquainted with our backs!”<sup>209</sup>

Paul’s rival-matching boast in ancestry (v. 22) fulfills the form of the *encomium*, but εὐγένεια was also parodied,<sup>210</sup> and Paul critiqued the sophistic pride in noble birth in 1 Corinthians 1.25–31, concluding with the same quotation from Jeremiah 9.24 that occurs in 2 Corinthians 10.18.<sup>211</sup> Welborn asserts that Paul’s boast at this point is comparable to the leading slave character who is anxious about his humble origins and cites Seneca’s satire of the deceased Claudius. The character Claudius fabricates his noble origins but is exposed by the goddess Febris as a vulgar Gaul born at Lyons, home of the unscrupulous and eventually wealthy slave and later freedman of Julius Caesar, Licinus, thereby implying that Claudius shares his vulgar qualities.<sup>212</sup> But this specific assertion of Paul’s fulfilling the role of the mime fool is not convincing from the evidence cited. The assertion presumes that Paul invented the opening sequence “Hebrews, Israelites, seed of Abraham,” while it is surely the case that he is responding to his rivals’ choice of these terms; and his response of κἀγώ betrays not Paul’s “anxiety over . . . banausic origins”

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<sup>208</sup> Welborn, “The Runaway Paul” 139, citing Beacham on the “clever slave” in Plautus, *Roman Theatre* 37–38.

<sup>209</sup> *Asinaria* 546–551; also Erich Segal, *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 145, cited by Welborn, 139.

<sup>210</sup> See the elaborate recitation of a humble, even scandalous, lineage by Bion in Diogenes Laertius 4.46–47; cited by Welborn, 139.

<sup>211</sup> See discussion near the end of ch. 1 of this study, under the heading “Paul Critiques Sophistic Conventions: 1 Corinthians 1–4.”

but perhaps the anxiety of his rivals who first boasted of their noble origins in this way. If so, then Paul's playing the fool may not in all cases call attention to his foolishness as much as it points instead to and exposes the foolishness of the boasting of the rivals. From other of Paul's writings, it is clear that in his understanding of the new creation in Christ, noble birth, whether Jewish or Gentile, benefits nothing.<sup>213</sup>

Paul's response, ὑπὲρ ἐγώ, to the rivals' boast (v. 23) that they are διάκονοι Χριστοῦ,<sup>214</sup> evinces something of the "chest thumping of the leading slave."<sup>215</sup> Paul's short response rhetorically heightens his laconic κάγω in vv. 21–22 and introduces a list of hardships that seem, by their quantities and intensities, to trump corresponding boasts by his rivals. And his qualification—παραφρονῶν λαλῶ (v. 23)—emphasizes the madness of the boasting in language stronger than ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ in 11.17, 21.<sup>216</sup>

11.23b-f List of acts proving Paul's better service to Christ, beginning with labors

Four unnumbered hardships, concluded by "often at the point of death," head the listing of Paul's acts of better service, or representation, of Christ. Each asserts that it is greater in quantity or quality than the similar or corresponding boast of the rivals by a strong comparative expression, περισσοτέρως (two times) or ὑπερβαλλόντως or πολλάκις.

11.23g–25 List of acts of service "at the point of death"

"Often at the point of death" from v. 23g provides a descriptive heading for this sub-unit of five hardships. Distinct from all the items in vv. 23–29, Paul enumerates these hardships: five times, three times, once, three times.

11.26 List of acts of service "in dangers"

"During many journeys" heads this sub-unit, which is composed of seven kinds of dangers in journeys, each headed by κινδύνοις, with natural and human adversities. "Dangers among false brothers" concludes this sub-unit and may receive emphasis both by end-stress within this list of seven items and also by its ability to evoke in the minds of hearers an association with the rivals, whom Paul has named "false apostles" and "servants of Satan" (vv. 13, 15).

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<sup>212</sup> *Apocolocyntosis* 6; cited by Welborn 141.

<sup>213</sup> See discussion in chap. 1 of the rejection of εὐγένεια in 1 Cor. 1.25–31; cf. also Paul's rejection of "confidence in the flesh" in Phil. 3.4–9; also Gal. 5.6.

<sup>214</sup> which Dieter Georgi concludes means "servant" less than "envoy, proclaimer, personal representative" of Christ, synonymous with "apostle"; *The Opponents of Paul*, 27–32.

<sup>215</sup> Welborn 141

The doublet “in labor and hardship” heads six hardships of privation and list effects or personal circumstances attending the other hardships and dangers. Welborn treats all the items in vv. 24–27 as Paul’s boasting of “accomplishments,” modeled on the exploits of the braggart warrior. Plays of Plautus include prime examples of this character. At the beginning of *Miles Gloriosus*, Pyrgopolinices boasts, aided by his parasite Artotrogus, of amazing military feats, of “one hundred and fifty in Cilicia, a hundred in Scythobrigandia, thirty Sardians, sixty Macedonians—those are the men you slaughtered in one day.” Pyrgopolinices asks for the sum total, and Artotrogus replies, “Seven thousand.” The warrior responds, “Yes, that’s what it ought to be. Your calculation is quite correct.”<sup>217</sup> John A. Hanson, in his study of the braggart warrior, suggests that this and similar scenes, with their lists of exploits and conquests, parody “the marked desire for numerical precision of official Roman monuments of conquest,” including contemporary honorific inscriptions (including the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*) and sepulchral *elogia* of Roman generals.<sup>218</sup> The braggart warrior, then, caricatures a figure familiar from everyday life.<sup>219</sup> Other examples include the speech of a centurion, recorded by Livy (42.34), who boasts of exploits from his twenty-two years of service; Alcibiades’ “ironic encomium”<sup>220</sup> of Socrates in Plato’s *Symposium*, which praises the philosopher’s superiority, his endurance through hardships (especially a bitter winter) and his valor and calm in battle—evincing such superiority that fellow soldiers “looked askance at him, thinking that he despised them”;<sup>221</sup> the boasting contest in *Apocolocyntosis*, with Hercules describing labors of fantastic travels, founding towns, and fathering the Celts, and Claudius boasting of his

<sup>216</sup> Windisch 353; cited by Welborn 142, n. 216.

<sup>217</sup> “The Braggart Warrior,” in *The Complete Roman Drama*, George E. Duckworth, ed., vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1942) 549–550 [45–46].

<sup>218</sup> John Arthur Hanson, “The Glorious Military,” in *Roman Drama*, T. A. Dorey and Donald R. Dudley, eds. (New York: Basic Books, 1965) 57; cited by Welborn 143. Hanson also excerpts as a second example of this desire to boast officially with enumeration “the *Columna Rostrata*, where Duilius about 260 B.C. described feats in part as follows: . . . and all the Carthaginians hosts and their most mighty chief after nine days fled in broad daylight from their camp; and he took their town Macela by storm. And in the same command he as consul performed an exploit in ships at sea, the first Roman to do so; . . . and by main force he captured ships with their crews, to wit: one septireme, 30 quinqueremes and triremes; 13 he sank. Gold taken: 3,600 pieces; silver: 100,000; total in sestertii: 2,100,000” (57–58).

<sup>219</sup> Hanson, “Glorious Military,” argues that Plautus’s representation of the returning soldiers—officers and common soldiers—is realistic, his *miles gloriosus* a dramatic character “relevant to his own society” (61); cited by Welborn, 143, n. 227.

<sup>220</sup> so Welborn 144, citing commentary by Kenneth Dover, *Plato. Symposium* 172–175.

<sup>221</sup> W. R. M. Lamb, transl., *Plato: Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias*, vol. 5 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925) 220b: οἱ δὲ στρατιῶται ὑπέβλεπον αὐτὸν ὡς καταφρονοῦντα σφῶν.

accomplishments and hardships, as a judge, conqueror, and moral reformer.<sup>222</sup> The fabulous usually featured in the braggart warrior’s boast, and perhaps Paul mentions *νυχθήμερον ἐν τῷ βυθῷ πεποίηκα* (v. 25b) elicit that effect, because it, taken literally, “would describe a sojourn in the depths of the sea with a miraculous rescue, as in myths and fables.”<sup>223</sup> Overall, Paul’s list does not emphasize the fabulous, and their enumerations, while impressive and intended to overwhelm the items listed by rivals, are not in the exaggerated numbers of the fictional characters or the official, propagandistic accounts, such as Augustus’ *Res Gestae*. Paul’s list reports his actual experiences; hence, it can be read simply straightforwardly, and it can elicit sympathy for his endurance of great risk for the gospel. However, the form in which it is presented, considered in the literary and historical context that the above examples represent, allow and invite an ironic reading as well, as Paul the braggart warrior imitates, exaggerates, and mocks the prior boasting of his rivals as the second actor in the mime. “The actor *secundum partium* took such roles as the clown or fool; one of his methods of raising laughter was probably to take the words of the *archimimus* in too literal a sense—an old trick even in Plautus’ day.”<sup>224</sup> Paul’s opponents have already played their part as fools, as the *archimimus*,<sup>225</sup> and now Paul’s speech responds to theirs.

#### 11.28–29 List of burdens—acts of service to the churches

The anxiety of pastoral ministry (vv. 28–29) is the topic that unifies this final sub-unit of hardships. It stands in a climactic position and exerts an additional pathos force by holding together various thoughts and feelings. Read straightforwardly, it connects Paul’s hardships and his service to the churches: Their well being provides the purpose for his enduring such hardships. It also initiates Paul’s reconstruction of the notion of his weakness. Paul is no elitist; he identifies with those who lack status even as he, in the eyes of his Corinthian critics and opponents, likewise lacks status. Similarly, “[w]hen members of his churches are made to stumble, as is happening with the Corinthians, Paul burns with anger against those who would

<sup>222</sup> Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis* 5–8; cited by Welborn, 144–145, nn. 235–238.

<sup>223</sup> Welborn 145, citing Windisch, *Zweite Korintherbrief* 351.

<sup>224</sup> Beare, *Roman Stage* 154.

<sup>225</sup> Paul has called opponents not only false apostles but also fools (11.19). But he does not amplify that label directly throughout the FS. His strategy seems to shift from direct accusation (11.13–20) to the equally or potentially more effective undercutting of the opponents by himself playing the fool. But if the Corinthians “get the point,” they will realize that Paul’s playing the fool imitates the opponents; therefore, if Paul imitates them and Paul is a fool, what are they except fools themselves? The dramatic logic is something of a trap: If the Corinthians enjoy Paul’s foolish performance, they would appear to be simultaneously judging the rival ministers to be fools. It is more effective for Paul’s purposes if the Corinthians make and recognize that judgment rather than his amplifying his judgment and communicating it directly to the Corinthians, as he does in 11.13–20.

destroy his work.”<sup>226</sup> Read as “fool’s speech,” Welborn suggests that Paul here adopts the specific character of the anxious old fool, a character established in the mime.<sup>227</sup> In the mime poem ‘Αλιεῖς, an old fisherman seeks anxiously the reality of his eponym, “Asphalion,” “assurance” (ἀσφάλεια) of escape from danger.<sup>228</sup> The poet describes “the anxieties of poor workingmen: ‘for a man of toil may not so much as sleep for the disquietudes (μέριμναι) of his heart. No, if he nod ever so little at nights, then is his slumber broke suddenly short by the cares that beset (ἐφιστάμεναι μελεδῶναι) him.’”<sup>229</sup> The poem continues by describing a worrisome dream Asphalion had and the comforting interpretation offered by a friend. Through the poem, Asphalion “reveals himself as a type of the old fool, care-ridden and superstitious. It is this fool whom Paul evokes with his reference to the ‘anxiety’ he feels for the churches.”<sup>230</sup> Paul expresses his weakness (11.29a), a standard feature of the old fool as portrayed in comedy and mime: baldheaded, weak intellectually and physically, “easily deceived, and frequently the recipient of blows.”<sup>231</sup> Seneca so caricatures Claudius’ weaknesses humorously: the way he wags his head, drags his right foot, the way his hands shake uncontrollably and he makes confusing and unintelligible sounds.<sup>232</sup> Lucian’s portrait of the tragic Zeus “evokes the same type of fool”: Zeus is impotent, frightened and pale, confused, trembling, without counsel to offer fellow deities, and unable to intervene in human affairs.”<sup>233</sup> Finally, in the mime *P.Oxy.* 413, the old fool “must stand by and watch as his favorite slaves are condemned and executed.”<sup>234</sup> Paul is like this fool, because he is unable to do more when Christians are “made to fall” than become indignant (echoing his response of weakness in 11.21a?). From her different approach to this material, Kolenkow concurs that Paul’s weakness of love is expressed in his care for and identification with members’ weaknesses.<sup>235</sup>

In considering the hardship list, what Paul does not include in support of his service to Christ is notable. First, he does not mention any results from all the hardships. He endured them all but

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<sup>226</sup> Peterson, *Eloquence* 122; this view is shared by Martin 383-32; Bruce 244; Barrett 302; Furnish 520.

<sup>227</sup> “Runaway Paul” 147, citing J. M. Edmonds, ed., “Theocritus ‘Αλιεῖς” in *The Greek Bucolic Poets* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

<sup>228</sup> Welborn 145, citing Reich, *Mimus* 374.

<sup>229</sup> Welborn 146, quoting ‘Αλιεῖς 21.2-5.

<sup>230</sup> Welborn 146.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., citing Reich, *Mimus* 448, who “observes that the mimic fool is called *alopus*, ‘one who receives blows as his proper portion’ . . . in the Latin glosses.”

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., citing Seneca, *Apoc.* 5.2.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. 147, citing *Apoc.* 4.2; Lucian *Jup. trag.* 1, 3, 4, 14, 25, 32, 34.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.



does not even directly relate them to benefits his efforts produced for the Corinthians or other churches. Bultmann notes that Paul does not mention miracles, to which we may add churches started, conversions, and other signs and wonders.<sup>236</sup> Such items do not appear in this list or elsewhere in the FS for perhaps one or more of these reasons: (1) The opponents' hardship list(s) did not include such items, so Paul's does not either, on the presumption that the FS responds closely, point by point, to the corresponding discourse by the opponents. (2) Paul has already out-boasted his opponents, so there is no need to lengthen his boast. (3) Listing results of the hardships with the list does not better fulfill Paul's playing the fool and in fact might undercut it, especially if the larger goal is to lead hearers indirectly to the conclusion that the prior boasting of the rivals is itself foolish. Were Paul to list or amplify the positive results of his enduring hardships in this FS, he would be taking this part of his boasting too seriously, relying on it to earn the Corinthians' commendation. Because Paul agrees to play the boasting game only as a last resort, he does not seek to praise himself more than what he must; hence, he leaves out reports of ministerial success beyond the endurance of the hardships.

### Rhetorical Style

How does the style of these vv. contribute to their rhetorical effect? Numerous interpreters have noted evidence of careful design in this section.<sup>237</sup> This design produces three important effects: first, it shows that Paul can perform the rhetorical art of boasting, even though earlier he has not denied that his public-speaking skills were judged inferior (11.6); second, the design assists in portraying Paul effectively as a "better servant of Christ"; and third, it stimulates emotion, arousing appreciation for and sympathy toward Paul. The rhetorical force of the style is treated in these units: v. 21; vv. 22-23a; vv. 23b-27; vv. 28-29.

Verse 21 exhibits the oral-speech phenomenon of an interrupting parenthetical expression: ἐν ἀφροσύνη λέγω. This parenthetical interruption encourages whoever performed the letter on its first reading to deliver it as oral speech that emphasizes both Paul's evaluation of this boasting and also the ongoing comparison between Paul and his opponents that the discourse is

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<sup>235</sup> "Paul's Opponents," 372-373

<sup>236</sup> Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 215

<sup>237</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 369-372; Forbes, "Paul's Boasting," 18-22; Peterson, *Eloquence*, 118-122; Zmijewski, *Der Stil*, passim; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 442, passim.

performing. Assonance in 11.21b, λέγω τοιμῶ κἀγώ, contributes non-rational force to the verbal acts the words perform.<sup>238</sup>

In contrast to the broken rhythm the parenthetical interruption produces in v. 21, the strict parallel series of four rhetorical questions in vv. 22–23 both continue the comparison between Paul and opponents and initiate a building to rhetorical climax in v. 29. Verses 22–23a are here analyzed.<sup>239</sup>

v. 22 Ἑβραῖοί εἰσιν; κἀγώ. (7 syllables; 3 words)

Ἰσραηλῖται εἰσιν; κἀγώ. (9 syllables; 3 words)

σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ εἰσιν; κἀγώ. (9 syllables; 4 words)

v. 23a διάκονοι Χριστοῦ εἰσιν; [παραφρονῶν λαλῶ,] ὑπὲρ ἐγώ. (12 syll. [omitted]; 5 words)

Progression toward climax occurs both phonetically (syllables and word counts increase) and semantically (more specific [from "Hebrews" to "servant of Christ"] and rhetorically more intense).

The claim to be a better servant of Christ states the thesis for vv. 23–29. The hardship list expressed in these vv. supports this claim as its rhetorical proof. Having this claim expressed so directly signals the rhetorical-proof function of this catalog, discussed earlier. Phrase by phrase, the style contributes to the rhetorical force of these vv. in various ways. The four phrases of v. 23d–g share a similar syntactical form that exerts rhetorical force. Each phrase begins with the preposition ἐν (anaphora),<sup>240</sup> followed by a noun, then a comparative adverb of extent or frequency. Their force results from verbal parallelism, amplification, and progression. Parallelism in and of itself signals to hearers the similarity of the content expressed through parallel form and gives a kind of pleasure that comes from repetition with variety. Such a parallel list exerts a “pathetic amplification,”<sup>241</sup> especially when, as here, the main terms evince progression, which Quintilian identified as incremental amplification.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 372, points out the assonance, not the opinion about its effect.

<sup>239</sup> Arrangement from Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 370; syllable and word counts from Peterson, *Eloquence and the Proclamation of the Gospel* 118.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.3.30.

<sup>241</sup> George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 90–91, cited by Peterson, *Eloquence*, 119.

<sup>242</sup> *Inst.* 8.4.8: “It is also possible to heighten our style less obviously, but perhaps yet more effectively, by introducing a continuous and unbroken series in which each word is stronger than the last.”

v. 23d-g ἐν κόποις περισσοτέρως,  
 ἐν φυλακαῖς περισσοτέρως,  
 ἐν πληγαῖς ὑπερβαλλόντως,  
 ἐν θανάτοις πολλάκις.

Verse 24–25 list the kinds of θανάτοις Paul experienced, and he enumerates each, achieving both greater *pathos* and concrete veracity. Verse 26, the longest sub-unit within vv. 21b–29, lists eight dangers from Paul’s ὁδοιπορίαις πολλάκις in anaphoric verbal parallelism, with perhaps an imperfect progression of increasing syllables, but combining poles of experience: natural and personal, city and wilderness, land and from water, Gentiles and false brothers. It divides syntactically into two groups: the first with four phrases ending in a genitive of source, the second with four phrases introduced by ἐν. Danker describes it as exerting “the effect . . . of an avalanche of suffering that climaxes in the rhetorical questions in v. 29.”<sup>243</sup>

v. 26	ὁδοιπορίαις	πολλάκις,	(Syllables, less κινδύνοις)
	κινδύνοις	ποταμῶν,	(3)
	κινδύνοις	ληστῶν,	(2)
	κινδύνοις	ἐκ γένους,	(3)
	κινδύνοις	ἐξ ἔθνων,	(3)
	κινδύνοις	ἐν πόλει,	(3)
	κινδύνοις	ἐν ἐρημίᾳ,	(5)
	κινδύνοις	ἐν θαλάσσει,	(4)
	κινδύνοις	ἐν ψευδαδέλφοις,	(5)

This sub-unit ends with special *pathos* with a word, perhaps of Paul’s making, that would evoke ψευδαπόστολοι from 11.13, and hearers would recognize that the rivals whom the Corinthians have embraced have troubled him.

Κόπω<sup>244</sup> καὶ μόθῳ heads the list in v. 27, beginning a pattern of a single term modified by πολλάκις, followed by a pair,<sup>245</sup> with all but the heading introduced anaphorically by ἐν:

<sup>243</sup> *II Corinthians*, 183

<sup>244</sup> Cf. 1 Thess 2.9; 1 Cor. 4.12

<sup>245</sup> noted by Peterson, *Eloquence*, 120 n. 249

κόπω καὶ μόχθῳ, ἐν ἀγρυπνίαις πολλάκις,  
 ἐν λιμῶ καὶ δίψει, ἐν νηστείαις πολλάκις,  
 ἐν ψύχει καὶ γυμνότητι·

This sub-unit ends with “without enough clothing,” which by its position receives natural stress. The list describes Paul’s lifestyle, supported largely by his own labor,<sup>246</sup> occasionally supplemented by gifts from others apparently, and visualizes his life in marked contrast to the wealth that characterized successful sophists. Peterson notes that the term, in the Hebrew tradition, connotes the shame of the defeated, those taken prisoner and led away (Isa 20.2–4; 2 Macc 11.12).<sup>247</sup> It may also describe those who “are defeated by God and come under condemnation . . . . Thus v. 27 reaches its climax with a term that emphasizes the loss of dignity and status that Paul willingly accepted for the sake of his apostolic ministry.”<sup>248</sup>

Verses 28–29 conclude the list under the heading of Paul’s care for the churches, and both vv. increase the *pathos* of the list. Unmentioned, but surely implied, is the special burden the Corinthian church is. Two rhetorical questions fulfill the function of a short list under the heading and exert their special force of eliciting from hearers the implied answer (rather than having Paul assert them). Both express Paul’s solidarity with members of the churches under his care.

### Rhetorical Effects

Interpreters who take vv. 23b–29 as ironic parody but not as responding in kind to a similar hardship list offered by Paul’s opponents either do not consider the likely effect of such irony on its recipients, or they indicate that the implied recipients would have responded negatively. Most do not speculate about its effect on either the implied audience or the earliest historical audience. Forbes says more than most of these interpreters about the rhetorical effect of the hardship list as parody:

The list of sufferings that follows . . . is hardly likely to have inspired confidence in Paul’s position among the status-conscious leaders of the Corinthian church. ‘Labours’ is of course an entirely respectable topic, but imprisonments and beatings by both the Jewish and Roman authorities, not to mention stonings, are hardly calculated to inspire

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Ronald Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry*, 84 n. 94; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 519. True philosophers are commonly described as ill-clad in Hellenistic writings; and Furnish notes Epictetus, *Disc.*, 3.22.45–47; Lucian *The Cock* 9 and *The Downward Journey* 20.

<sup>247</sup> Peterson, *Eloquence*, 121, who also cites Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 380

<sup>248</sup> Peterson, *Eloquence*, 121; cf. Ezek 23.29; Hos 2.3; Amos 2.16; Mic 1.8; Heb 4.13; Rev 3.17; 16.15; 17.16.

confidence in the respectability of anyone's position. . . . And yet it is clear that these particular events have been deliberately chosen by Paul, and are seen as being 'for Christ's sake' (1 Corinthians 4.10) and are intended for the imitation of the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4.16) as an expression of the dying and rising of Christ (2 Corinthians 4.7–12).<sup>249</sup>

Forbes' comment focuses on how Paul's critics would have interpreted his hardships as indicators of his low status. While the discourse indicates that critics looked down on Paul because he was of his low status, in their eyes, they would not have interpreted his hardships in that way if, as this study argues, Paul's opponents had first boasted through their own list of hardships experienced and overcome in their activities as *διάκονοι Χριστοῦ*. Instead, because they initiated this boasting contest, Paul would respond to their list, and his act is twofold: first, he adopts the dramatic role of the fool, in which role he offers the whole discourse; second, he makes clear in v. 23b that he will demonstrate that he is more a *διάκονος Χριστοῦ* than they. But what effect does he seek through this combination of adopted role and specific goal? As Welborn has shown, the loose form of a fool's discourse often parodies, ridiculing to absurdity by imitation that may exaggerate the original.<sup>250</sup> This is the effect that the FS seeks to achieve. An effective foolish discourse and an effective parody may be able to be read on two levels: It may be able to be taken straightforwardly, on one level; then it is taken in its comic and parodistic intent by those who "get it."<sup>251</sup> Thus the effect of this portion of the FS would be twofold: On one level, readers would acknowledge that Paul had outdone the rivals. He proved that he had been far more a servant of Christ by his greater endurance through diverse difficulties. But he does this on a second level, signaled in two ways: (1) Paul lists no positive results of his greater endurance, and surely his rivals would have. So even as Paul boasts, he limits his boasting only to the adversities he endured. (2) Paul consciously adopts the role of a fool, perhaps here a braggart warrior; and instead of boasting alone on stage, in this case Paul is performing in the stage of the mind alongside the boastful performance of his rivals. He plays the

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<sup>249</sup> Forbes, "Paul's Boasting," 19

<sup>250</sup> "Parody," "Satire," in *A Handbook to Literature*, William F. Thrall, Addison Hibbard, and C. Hugh Holman (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960, rev. & enlarged ed.; 1936, orig.). Under the heading "Refutation by Wit," Edward P. J. Corbett quotes Gorgias' advice that we should "kill our opponent's seriousness with our ridicule and his ridicule with our seriousness." But then Corbett advises that "we can sometimes destroy the effectiveness of a soberly presented argument by wittily reducing the argument to absurdity. Writers must be cautioned however; they risk the dissipation of their ethical appeal if their wit is merely a cloak for weak or specious arguments" (*Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, with Robert Connors, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1999] 281).

actor secundum partium who, as a clown or fool, raises laughter by taking the boasts of his archimimus—here the group of his rivals—too literally: While seriously listing his acts of greater service, he is at the same time imitating, exaggerating, and mocking their boasting. At the least, such parody would plant doubt about the rivals’ boasting and judgment; at most, it would so discredit the rivals that Corinthians’ bond to the rivals would weaken seriously. Paul their beleaguered founder has exceeded the rivals’ accomplishments by such a degree and without boasting of his great successes that their boasting seems puny and a little less (or a great deal less) impressive.

### **Paul Boasts of His Weaknesses (11.30–12.10)**

#### *Text*

30 Εἰ καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μου καυχῆσομαι. 31 ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ οἶδεν, ὃ ὧν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι. 32 ἐν Δαμασκῶ ὁ ἐθνάρχης Ἀρέτα τοῦ βασιλέως ἐφρούρει τὴν πόλιν Δαμασκηνῶν πιάσαι με, 33 καὶ διὰ θυρίδος ἐν σαργάνῃ ἐχαλάσθην διὰ τοῦ τείχους καὶ ἐξέφυγον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ. 12:1 Καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, οὐ συμφέρον μὲν, ἐλεύσομαι δὲ εἰς ὀπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου. 2 οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῶ πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων, εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν, ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ. 3 καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον, εἴτε ἐν σώματι εἴτε χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν, 4 ὅτι ἠρπάγη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι. 5 ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοιούτου καυχῆσομαι, ὑπὲρ δὲ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐ καυχῆσομαι εἰ μὴ ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις. 6 ἐὰν γὰρ θελήσω καυχῆσασθαι, οὐκ ἔσομαι ἄφρων, ἀλήθειαν γὰρ ἐρῶ· φείδομαι δέ, μή τις εἰς ἐμὲ λογίσηται ὑπὲρ ὃ βλέπει με ἢ ἀκούει [τι] ἐξ ἐμοῦ 7 καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων. διό ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ, ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι. 8 ὑπὲρ τούτου τρὶς τὸν κύριον παρεκάλεσα ἵνα ἀποστῆ ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ. 9 καὶ εἴρηκέν μοι· Ἄρκει σοι ἡ χάρις μου, ἡ γὰρ δύναμις ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελεῖται. ἥδιστα οὖν μᾶλλον καυχῆσομαι ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου, ἵνα ἐπισκηνώσῃ ἐπ’ ἐμὲ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

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<sup>251</sup> John Arthur Hanson points out that fool’s speeches (such as Sosia’s long announcement of victory in the *Amphitruo* and Sir John Falstaff’s in Shakespeare) may be both serious and comic parody simultaneously (“The Glorious Military,” 67, 72).

10 διὸ εὐδοκῶ ἐν ἀσθενείαις, ἐν ὕβρεσιν, ἐν ἀνάγκαις, ἐν διωγμοῖς καὶ στενοχωρίαις, ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ· ὅταν γὰρ ἀσθενῶ, τότε δυνατός εἰμι.

### ***Translation***

(11.30) If I must boast, I will boast of the things [pertaining to] my weakness. (31) The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. (32) At Damascus the ethnarch of King Aretas was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to capture me, (33) and I was lowered in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.

(12.1) Boasting is necessary; [although] not beneficial, I shall move on to visions and revelations of the Lord. (2) I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. (3) Indeed, I know such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know; God knows— (4) that he was caught up into Paradise and he heard unspeakable speech, which no one is permitted to speak. (5) On behalf of this one I will boast, but on behalf of myself I will not boast, except of weaknesses. (6) For even if I should boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain [from boasting], so that no one may think more of me than what he sees in me or hears from me, (7) even the extraordinary revelations. In order to keep me from being conceited, [there was] given to me a thorn [*or* stake] in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to beat me, so that I would not become conceited. (8) Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me. (9) And he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for [my] power is fulfilled in weakness.” All the more gladly, therefore, will I boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) For this reason I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in catastrophes, in persecutions and distress, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong!

### ***Analysis***

#### ***Speech Acts***

Paul boasts of his weakness, parodies the opponents’ boasting in conceited strength, and proves by an oracle of the Lord that he and his weakness are commended by the Lord.

11.30      Qualification: Paul limits boasting to weakness only

- 11.31 Quasi-oath affirming Paul's truthfulness.
- 11.32–33 Narration: Paul runs away from Damascus ethnarch
- 12.1a Acknowledgment: Paul must boast
- 12.1b,c Qualification and transition to new topic: visions and revelations.
- 12.2–5a Boast on behalf of anonymous ascender to Paradise whose ascent results in nothing to be shared.
- 12.5b,c Repetition: Paul limits boasting about himself to weaknesses
- 12.6a-c Assertion of Paul's truthfulness, not being a fool if he boasts otherwise
- 12.6d–7a Assertion of the criterion of firsthand witness for evaluating Paul, despite his abundant revelations
- 12.7b Narration: messenger of Satan given to keep Paul from being conceited.
- 12.8 Paul's prayer for deliverance.
- 12.9a-c The Lord's oracle: His grace is sufficient; power fulfilled in weakness.
- 12.9d-e Consequence: Paul boasts in weakness so Christ's power may rest on him.
- 12.10 Amplification, restatement, and assertion of purpose: Paul delights in weakness, etc., for Christ, because when he is weak, he is strong.

### Coherence

Beyond the obvious connection by juxtaposition to the preceding portion of the FS, this passage coheres with every other in chs. 10–13 because it takes up into itself and relates decisively the key terms of the discourse, both those injected by the opponents and those rejoined by Paul. From 10.1 through the beginning of the FS, the disparaging evaluation of Paul that Paul must counter in the larger interest of regaining the loyalty of the church to him and to his gospel centers on Paul's alleged unfitness, in a word, in his weakness. In this discourse, "weakness" carries the sense, socially, of being evaluated by others as of having such low status as to be excluded from leadership; christologically, it carries the sense of the rejection, suffering, and humiliation of the earthly Jesus, whom Paul understands his ministry to continue (2 Cor 4.10–11). This concluding section of the FS shows three brief episodes of such weakness, none of which would persuade an apathetic or antipathetic audience to leave its embrace of conventional notions of weakness and strength in order to embrace the weakness Paul boasts of ironically and paradoxically. But it concludes with a divine oracle that suddenly rebukes the conventional notions



of weakness and strength and commends the weak Paul as the one on whom the power of Christ resides. In that oracle and Paul's brief deduction from it, all the major issues of this discourse regarding Paul's apostolate to the Corinthians are settled by authority, not the art of rhetoric.

### Rhetorical Structure and Development

While in the preceding section (11.21b–29), the boasting would be approved by contemporary standards,<sup>252</sup> Paul considers it foolish and performs it as a fool. In this section, Paul boasts in ways contemporary judges would label foolish, and Paul stays “in character” as a fool; but he considers this boasting of weakness to be not only a fool's boast but also a boasting of/in the Lord, and he is approved by the Lord in the weakness itself and in his boasting of weakness (12.9) This section parodies the boasting one would expect in corresponding portions of his opponents' self-commendations, because it seems likely that they boasted of their visions, revelations, healings, and other signs and wonders.<sup>253</sup> If Paul overwhelmed his rivals in vv. 21b–29, he underwhelms them in 11.32—12.8. Only at 12.9 does the oracle again overwhelm their judgment.

The section proceeds in these movements and sub-units:

- 11.30 Qualification: Paul limits boasting to weakness only
- 11.31 Quasi-oath affirming Paul's truthfulness

These vv. perform an important transition in the FS. Interpreters divide over the function of v. 30, alone. Some see it as signaling that Paul has been boasting of his weaknesses and continues to do so until the end of the speech,<sup>254</sup> while others stress the signposting value of this bit of meta-discourse.<sup>255</sup> The former cite, or may cite, Paul's conclusion to the speech, in which he expresses his delight in a wide range of circumstances that include weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and distress listed serially, implying their common function in this discourse as types or variations of “weakness.” After listing all of these, Paul immediately asserts

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<sup>252</sup> See the above discussion of Plutarch's essay, “On Praising Oneself Inoffensively.”

<sup>253</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 12.12. Andrew T. Lincoln, “Paul the Visionary: The Setting and Significance of the Rapture to Paradise in II Corinthians XII. 1–10,” *NTS* 25 (1979), 207–208, agrees that “the Corinthians, with their interest in the more sensational manifestations of the Spirit,” made such experiences some of their criteria for testing claims to apostleship, “and the intruding ‘false apostles’ had been all too willing to accommodate themselves and were making great claims for themselves in these areas.”

<sup>254</sup> e.g., Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 362; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 217–218; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 539; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 383; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 302; Forbes, “Comparison,” 20.

<sup>255</sup> e.g., Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle*, 418; Bruce, *I & II Corinthians*, 244; Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 122; Peterson, *Eloquence*, 122; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 458; Holland, “Speaking Like a Fool,” 260

that he is strong when he is weak (12.10). The juxtaposition of these terms with ἀσθενείαις and ἀθνεω in 12.10 suggests their roughly synonymous relation, with “weakness” being the umbrella term for all of them (although it should be noted that none of the other terms in the short hardship list of 12.10 occurs in 11.21b–29).

Those, on the other hand, who distinguish the contents of 11.30—12.9 as boasting in weakness from the hardship catalog of 11.21b–29 cite, or may cite, parallel signposting in 12.1:

11.30 Εἰ καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μου καυχῆσομαι.

12.1 Καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, οὐ συμφέρον μὲν, ἐλεύσομαι δὲ εἰς ὀπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου.

Paul progresses from the conditional of 11.1a to the simple declarative in 12.1a. In 12.1c, he names the topic that follows immediately (visions and revelations) and that had not occurred before in the FS. Does he do the same in 11.30b? His rivals would not understand their boasting through their hardship list as a boasting in their weakness, but in their strength. Paul in 11.30 explicitly names his boasting as boasting in weakness, but not before 11.30; and in this naming he departs from the discourse of the opponents. What follows 11.30, through the end of the FS, is properly considered, from Paul’s view, a boasting in weaknesses.

In emphasizing the linearity of the experience of rhetorical discourse, it may be best to suggest that 11.30 announces that Paul’s boasting henceforward highlights his weakness. The boasting of 11.21b–29 highlights his surpassing the claim of his rivals to be special representatives of Christ, not his weakness. In 11.30—12.7 Paul does not highlight how his service has, in quantity or quality, superceded that of his rivals, even as 11.21b–29 did not highlight Paul’s weaknesses. Perhaps, from the vantage point of the Lord’s word that reveals his evaluation, 12.10 may express that, in retrospect, all that Paul has mentioned in 11.23c—12.7 may be seen also as weakness. But this reading favors the other view and finds additional support in the listing of “weaknesses” at the beginning of three other syntactically parallel terms in 12.10. These terms, “insults, persecutions, and distress,” summarize the contents of the hardship list of 11.23–28 without including “weaknesses,” allowing for Paul to use this last term to apply to the discourse from 11.30 forward (including 11.29 as well, in which Paul concedes his solidarity with the weak of the church).

But we should ask about the best interpretation of v. 30 in close connection with v. 31. Why the solemn oath of v. 31, to which the oath of 11.10 (ἔστιν ἀλήθεια Χριστοῦ ἐν ἐμοί) is mild?

Keeping in mind that the whole of the FS is Paul's performance as a fool, we may ask in what ways the shift from boasting in things that prove Paul's greater service to things that show his weakness are or appear to be foolish. Paul, playing the role of a fool, may appear to have deserted the field of competition when he commences what his rivals would consider unthinkable: "Paul will now boast of the very thing we find to be his most glaring disqualification!" Paul not only hereby acknowledges his weaknesses, he not only submits to rivals' criticisms of him, but instead of merely acknowledging and minimizing them, he revels in them! This *is* madness, pure foolishness (from the rivals' perspective)! Both to emphasize his decision and shift in the discourse as well as to evince more comedic foolery, Paul follows his announcement of the new object of boasting, weakness, with a solemn oath, to be delivered seriously, but also capable of being taken in its context as comedic.<sup>256</sup> From Paul's perspective, boasting in weakness is both serious (it alone is shown to be boasting ἐν κερδίῳ) and fully within dramatic character. But appreciation of the dramatic structure of the FS and of the larger discourse and its implied situation urges interpreters to recognize the shock of Paul's announcement in v. 30.

11.32–33      Narration: Paul runs away from Damascus ethnarch

Paul runs away from the Damascus ethnarch. Many interpreters have puzzled over this sub-unit, wondering if it was dislocated, an interpolation, a response to Paul's being accused of cowardice,<sup>257</sup> or an afterthought by Paul to add yet one more adversity to the preceding list of hardships.<sup>258</sup> But in view of what vv. 30–31 accomplish, this incident should be seen as the first of the three concrete weaknesses of which Paul boasts.<sup>259</sup> E. A. Judge first suggested that Paul's weakness inheres in situational irony: While the Roman army awarded the *corona muralis* to the first soldier to scale up the wall of a city under attack, Paul gets the crown for being the first down the wall.<sup>260</sup> Because contemporary Corinth was settled in part by Roman military veterans and a statue from the late first to early second century C.E. shows such a crown, Paul's audience

<sup>256</sup> The comedic effect arises from the abutting of the mad statement with the solemn oath.

<sup>257</sup> Welborn, "The Runaway Paul," 121, citing Heinrici, *Zweite Sendschreiben*, 482, and Bousset, *Zweite Brief*, 214.

<sup>258</sup> Peterson, *Eloquence*, 123, citing Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 218; Hans Lietzmann, *An die Korinther*, 151

<sup>259</sup> Peterson, *Eloquence* 123; Furnish, *II Corinthians* 541; *contra* Martin, *2 Corinthians* 383, who views vv. 32–33 as concluding or continuing the hardship list of vv. 22–29, and *contra* Forbes, "Comparison and Self-Praise" 20 and Sampley, "Paul's Opponents" 169, who view these vv. as providing a specific, slightly extended, example to go with the general list of vv. 22–29.

would have been familiar with the award.<sup>261</sup> This use of military imagery reverses the portrait of Paul at the beginning of chapter 10, where he is, in Welborn's words, "a man at war demolishing fortresses, taking captives, and punishing insubordination."<sup>262</sup> There he threatened to sack the sophists' city; here he escapes in a basket.

Welborn judges such previous interpretations as only partly successful. Citing this incident as illustrating Paul's weakness is itself weakened because the text says nothing about weakness or humiliation; and the parallel account in Acts 9.23–25 highlights the courage and cleverness of Paul and his disciples.<sup>263</sup> Interpreting it ironically as the descent down the wall places emphasis other than where the text does: namely, on the success of Paul's flight.<sup>264</sup> And neither in biblical<sup>265</sup> nor ancient secular accounts "is there any suggestion that flight under such circumstances was viewed as cowardly, or the means of escape disgraceful."<sup>266</sup> The account reveals no discernible tendency to defend against the accusation of cowardice or other dishonorable behavior; and the textual tradition offers no support for dislocation or interpolation.<sup>267</sup>

Welborn proposes instead that Paul here adopts the figure of the runaway fool.<sup>268</sup> His survey of this figure in ancient mime and literature<sup>269</sup> concludes with Lucian's "The Runaways"

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<sup>260</sup> "Paul's Boasting," 47; interpreters endorsing this view: Peterson, *Eloquence*, 123; Forbes, "Comparison," 20–21; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 542; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 372; Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 123; Travis, *Paul's Boasting*, 530.

<sup>261</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 542.

<sup>262</sup> Welborn, "The Runaway Paul" 118–119, who cites Abraham J. Malherbe, "Antisthenes and Odysseus, and Paul at War," *HTR* 76 (1983) 143–173. See also Furnish, *II Corinthians* 542; Martin, *2 Corinthians* 384–385; Peterson, *Eloquence* 124; Witherington, *Conflict & Community* 459 n. 79.

<sup>263</sup> And other ancient accounts of flight similarly highlight courage, daring, cleverness, and expediency ("The Runaway Paul" 117). Welborn notes that Aretas is the only political figure mentioned in an authentic letter of Paul and that this account parallels the Acts 9.23–25 account closely verbally (115), the only such correspondence between Acts and letters of Paul (116).

<sup>264</sup> Welborn 119.

<sup>265</sup> Josh. 2.15 LXX; 1 Sam. 19.11 LXX.

<sup>266</sup> Welborn, 119.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.* 121–122.90

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.* 152

<sup>269</sup> Welborn surveys the following appearances of the figure of the runaway fool: The comic character usually appears as a runaway slave (152). Such figures appear on Corinthian vases depicting Dorian mime. One portrays a Dionysius, who is chasing a group of slaves stealing some of his wine jars. Spartan mime portrayed fruit thieves, and Aristophanes alludes to such thievish slaves in the beginning of *Wasps*. Odysseus, "a type of the runaway fool in general," appears on a Phylax vase as a thief in flight, mantled, sword in right hand, but wearing a *pilos*, or peaked hat, "the habitual headgear of the mimic fool" (152–153); also in Epicharmus's play, 'Odysseus the Runaway,' a burlesque based on the *Odyssey* 4.240–264, Odysseus deserts for safety and later, through an extravagant speech, pretends to have spied in Troy. Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium* insists that he is so shamed by being enslaved to Socrates that he must 'play the runaway slave' and escapes temporarily a number of times, although he remains in lifelong bondage and abject subjection to Socrates (153). The mime writer Herodas appears to combine "features of

(Δραπέται), which uses the figure of runaway slaves to attack Cynic philosophers. In this satire, the slaves-turned-philosophers are described in terms used for mimic fools: having sallow complexion, close-cropped hair, long beards, and short cloaks; they “are thievish and cunning . . . [.] have kidnapped a man’s wife, and have filled their purses with gold.” Once caught, the “philosophers” suffer the fate of runaways, and Cantharus, the chief slave, is pitch plastered, taken to a snow-covered mountaintop, and left standing, feet tied together, naked.<sup>270</sup> “It is as such a fool, a runaway,” Welborn argues

that Paul presents himself at the center of the speech in 2 Cor. 11.32–33: Sought by the ethnarch of the Nabataean king, who had garrisoned the city of Damascus in order to arrest him, Paul hid in a basket and was let down through a window in the wall, so making his escape. His concise portrait of himself as a runaway contains all the features of a fool of this type: trickery, concealment, awkward predicaments, and flight. The picture takes its place in the gallery of fools, fitting well between the anxious old man and the learned impostor. Marked off by interjections (in 2 Cor 11:30; 12:1a), and prefaced by an oath (2 Cor 11:31), the apostle’s self-portrait as a runaway fool stands at the center of the speech proper (2 Cor 11:21b–12:10). . . . Paul’s presentation of himself in this way is the climax of the speech from the standpoint of irony, for the runaway is a fool of the basest sort—thievish, clownish, and recreant.<sup>271</sup>

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the thievish slave and the runaway buffoon—trickery, theft, and flight—” in a sketch of a truant boy. His mother narrates the boy’s theft, gambling, and days absent from home, asking the teacher to beat him. The teacher inflicts a beating, aided by other students, but the truant escapes, rejoicing (153–154). Plautus in the *Curculio* satirizes “runaway slave[s] turned philosopher[s],” who don the cloak of the Greek philosopher and stand around philosophizing or drink together to drunkenness after they have stolen something (154). From Atellan farce, the fragments of “Maccus the Exile” include Maccus’s bidding farewell to his door, on whose threshold and lintel he has often broken toes and banged his head in flight (154–155). Several mimes by Catullus of the middle first century C.E. portray runaway slaves and fools. Juvenal remembers a chief actor who “plays a part, like the runaway buffoon (*fugitivus scurra*) of the witty Catullus.” And “a scholiast informs us that ‘this is a mime in which a fugitive slave (*servus fugitives*) distracts his master” (155). The figure of the runaway fool influenced Suetonius, who portrays Nero at his end, fleeing for his life, with “many of the features of this stock character,” including being barefooted, wearing a tunic with a faded cloak covering his head, escaping through narrow passageways, some lined with thorny brambles, en route to a villa, where he lies down in the first room, a *cella*, for the use of slaves, on a common mattress (155–156).

<sup>270</sup> Ibid. 156–157.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. 157. Other features of vv. 32–33 Welborn identifies as being illuminated by recognizing that Paul shaped the account to conventions of mime include these: (1) the asyndetic beginning, ἐν Δαμασκῶ, that has troubled interpreters [including Heinrici, *Zweite Brief* 383; Plummer, *Second Epistle* 332; Allo, *Seconde épître aux Corinthiens* 300; Zmijewski, *Stil der paoulinischen “Narrenrede”* 282–283]. It functions to set the stage for the scene much as the emblem panels that would be seen once the curtain was removed; (2) The reference to escaping “through the window . . . through the wall” (literally, v. 33) may refer to the set used in ancient mime, comedy, and farce. The *angiportum*, a narrow passageway, ran behind the stage façade and allowed characters to move without being seen by the audience and had them re-enter the stage proper through one or more openings. (3) The term for the fish-basket (v. 33), σαργάνη, fits the theatrical context of Paul’s statements, because fish names were popular in comedy and mime, especially as terms of abuse and because the old fisherman was a favorite type of mimic fool; (3) The abrupt conclusion “imitates the denouements of the mimes” (157–159).

Not only does this interpretation of this incident combine the well-established figure of a fool with the text's emphasis on successful flight, but it also expresses what it surely must, following Paul's announcement in v. 30 that he will boast in weakness, namely, a sense in which the incident shows Paul's weakness. Despite Welborn's rejecting previous efforts to construe this incident as an example of weakness without recognizing Paul's adopting the role of a fool, his interpretation integrates the features of the fool, of weakness, and of successful flight in this way: The incident in vv. 32–33 “belongs to the ἀσθένεια of which [Paul] boasts in 2 Cor. 11:30, not merely as the antithesis of human pride or prowess, but as an instance of the παθήματα Χριστοῦ which he has made his own.”<sup>272</sup> Paul's weakness includes the self-humiliation of playing the fool (cf. 11.1, 16; 12.1) because critics and rivals already see him as a fool and have, by their wrong judgment, forced the part on him (12.11; 12.1). His flight was successful, but it was the flight of a runaway fool, whose low status and self-humiliating behaviors amuse an audience. Paul plays this role in the discourse but more than that in his life as apostle to pretentious critics and rivals. In that knowledge lays Paul's experience of weakness that cannot be left on stage at the end of the mime.

12.1a Acknowledgment: Paul must boast

This transition emphasizes that Paul must boast but that boasting benefits nothing. It must be viewed on two levels: On the first, more apparent, level, boasting is foolish for all the reasons we have discussed before. But on a second level, the claim is ironic, because Paul overcomes great reluctance to give himself to this monologue of a fool because of his ultimate purpose: to show the bankruptcy of the competitive boasting into which he feels compelled and of the activities about which his rivals and now he boast. If effective, Paul's boasting as a fool will benefit those who will receive its serious correction.

12.1b,c Qualification and transition to new topic: visions and revelations

12.2–5a Boast on behalf of anonymous ascender to Paradise whose ascent results in nothing to be shared

12.5b,c Repetition: Paul limits boasting about himself to weaknesses

12.6a-c Assertion of Paul's truthfulness, not being a fool if he boasts otherwise

12.6d–7a Assertion of the criterion of firsthand witness for evaluating Paul, despite his abundant revelations

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid. 161, citing Heinrici, *Zweite Brief* 382.

Paul's account of visions and revelations of the Lord both undercuts conventional expectations and, as much as any item or incident in the FS, displays features of fool's discourse. This incident occurs as the next to last item in the FS, so it receives stress because of its placement. Moreover, the Corinthians have already demonstrated their great interest in matters of supernatural revelation, evidenced by Paul's corrective in 1 Corinthians 12–14, covering various *χαρίσματα* as well as behavior in worship, including the sharing of an *ἀποκάλυψιν* (14.26). As a result, it is reasonable to assume that Paul includes this incident because (1) the Corinthians continued to be interested in such experiences and (2) his rivals commended themselves, at least in part, on the basis of their charismatic religious experiences, which they and the Corinthians viewed as strong credentials for their identity as apostles.<sup>273</sup>

Paul's hesitation at launching into boasting of visions and revelations evinces the rhetorical practice *ἐπιδιόρθωσις*, a cautionary hedging that fits here where Paul wants all to know that he indulges in distasteful conduct only because circumstances require it of him.<sup>274</sup> The technique of distancing, third-person narration—"I know a man"—when the narrators are telling their own stories occurs often enough in Jewish and non-Jewish Hellenistic sources to make it conventional. Rhetoricians<sup>275</sup> Paul narrates this way here in order to get around boasting of his charismatic experiences. But the irony is soon apparent: The experience yields nothing worth boasting about anyway. The verbal repetitions are notable:

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<sup>273</sup> Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 219; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 532, 543 (Paul includes the account of the vision "ostensibly, to give his readers what they have been wanting to hear about him—or what his rivals have prompted them to require of him. In fact, however, Paul describes his experience in a way that only accentuates how useless it is as proof for anything . . . , and he specifically declines to boast about it."); Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 459; Martin ("Paul feels he must take his opponents head-on if he is to convince the Corinthians that he remains the true apostle. . . . Paul's opponents could have leveled the charge against Paul that his lack of 'visions' was proof that he was not a true apostle. . . . It may be assumed that the opponents gloried in their transcendental experiences of 'visions and revelations.'), *2 Corinthians*, 394, 396–397; Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 281–282: "ecstasy in particular must have belonged to the repertory of the opponents' boasting ἐν προσώπῳ . . . The phrase ἐλεύσομαι δὲ εἰς ὄπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου proves that Paul has now reached a certain point in the series of questions the opponents had raised."). But Danker denies that pneumatic experiences, or their lack, are at issue here (*II Corinthians*, 12). Kolenkow concurs, arguing that Paul and his rivals share the experience of the miraculous, as well as the experiences of similar lineage and hardships. They conflict not over these things but over how spiritual authority is to be expressed, how one's followers are to behave, and how money is to be handled between leader and followers ("Paul's Opponents," 366, *passim*). It is puzzling that Peterson, whose analysis is consistently rhetorical, does not discuss either the Corinthians' predilection for the pneumatic or the opponents' criticizing Paul's alleged lack of sufficient charismatic experience as the purpose for Paul's inclusion of the vision to Paradise vis-à-vis the corresponding boasting of his rivals (*Eloquence*, 124–125).

<sup>274</sup> Danker, *II Corinthians*, 187; Lanham, *Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, s.v. "Correctio," #1; Anderson, *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms*, s.v. αἰτιολογία, #2.

<sup>275</sup> Danker, *II Corinthians*, 187–191

- 12.2 οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῷ πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων, εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε  
ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν,
- 12.3 καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον, εἴτε ἐν σώματι εἴτε  
χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν,

As discussed earlier, fool’s discourse allows for reading on more than one level. One may read such discourse straightforwardly and seriously and receive coherent meaning; or one may pick up the cues and clues that invite the foolish, often parodistic or satirical, reading. These two vv. provide a good case in point. One may see in the repetition Paul’s desire to emphasize—to amplify and communicate effectively—the fact that he, the narrator, does not know. But one may also interpret the repetition as a characteristic of a fool, because it is not at all necessary to repeat such information because it is hard to grasp, nor is the structure of this section such that such repetition fits into a straightforward convention of repetition as one would have in a litany or antiphonal chant or in order to amplify a point. Instead, it is easy to imagine the performance of these lines with the comedic touch of a prolix fool and, at the same time, to imagine the point of the fool’s performance being both comedic and serious, as parody often is.

The text inviting a fool’s performance continues in v. 4: After the fantastic transport into the third heaven, Paradise, when all would expect the blessed man to disclose knowledge of what he saw and heard, expectations are abruptly frustrated: what he heard cannot be told, cannot be uttered. So if the hearers cannot learn anything about Paradise, why write about it? As Paul said in 12.1, such boasting is not beneficial; and he crafts this incident to support that claim. More repetition that invites a fool’s interpretation occurs in vv. 5–6: Three times within these two vv. Paul uses forms of the same verb—*καυχῆσομαι* twice and *καυχῆσασθαι* once. Paul elides frequently, but here is prolixity that could be performed comically. After saying nothing in comparatively many words about the fantastic journey to Paradise, Paul either steps out of character briefly or speaks an aside to the audience and emphasizes straightforwardly his aim of boasting only of his weaknesses; and he states the criterion by which, if the Corinthians would adopt it, the foolishness would cease: Assess leaders on the basis of what one may witness firsthand (cf. 10.7a). The first clause of v. 7 concludes the sentence, emphasizing that this criterion applies especially to such revelations. But it evinces irony: Paul, whose fantastic journey to Paradise yields nothing he can communicate to others, has received other such extraordinary revelations (12.7a). Surely some hearers, unless granite in their opposition to Paul,



would recognize the empty and restrained boast as more comedic fool’s talk. The criterion, however, appears in this discourse as a serious instruction to and correction of the Corinthians, although Paul phrases it indirectly, using himself as the example: that others think of him only what they witness firsthand (12.6). This way of instructing and correcting avoids a more accusatory direct address and involves the hearers in contemplating this example at a reasonable distance and then deciding how that example relates to themselves.

Welborn views Paul’s performance as a fool in these vv. as that of the learned impostor. Foolish discourses in antiquity included similar heavenly journeys.<sup>276</sup> The reason this motif recurs in portraits of the learned impostor is the hubris, or ἀλαζονεία, it expresses. For example, in *Icaromenippus*, Lucian’s Menippus seeks knowledge of the heavenlies and turns to philosophers, whom he satirizes in expressing disappointment at their offerings. To a friend he says, “You will laugh when you hear their boasting (ἀλαζονεία) and wonder-working (τερατουργία) in words.” He observes them to be “not a bit better than the rest of us who walk the earth,” including some who “were actually purblind through age or idleness.” Yet they claimed vast and detailed knowledge of Heaven: “the measured the sun, they visited the spheres beyond the moon, and you would have thought they had fallen from the stars from the way they told about their magnitudes . . . and presumed to measure out the cubic content of Heaven.”<sup>277</sup> Menippus acquires wings and begins his own fantastic, three-day journey<sup>278</sup> through the spheres to heaven. He is allowed into the assembly of the gods, where he hears the philosophers “condemned as a useless and insolent race of men, and learns of the resolve of Zeus to annihilate them” and their logic.<sup>279</sup> Paul’s foolish tale of his heavenly visit aims likewise at piercing the pretensions of his rivals by showing that such visions and revelations have limited value that does not extend to credentialing a genuine διάκονος Χριστοῦ.<sup>280</sup>

<sup>276</sup> Welborn cites as examples the journeys of Claudius “to press his claim to be a god”; Lucian’s heavenly deities surrounding a ranting Zeus, observing earthly philosophers debating, in order to decide their fate; Plato’s likely allusion in the *Symposium* to such a journey in Alcibiades’ describing Socrates the valiant soldier-hero, who stood still, perhaps in a trance, from sunrise to sunrise; similarly, Socrates in Aristophanes’ *Clouds* speculates in heaven about weather and “dispenses mysterious doctrines” (147–148).

<sup>277</sup> Welborn 148; Lucian, *Icaromenippus* 6.

<sup>278</sup> Welborn, 149 n. 278, notes the similar terms used by Paul for his ascent—ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ (12.2)—and Menippus for his—ἀνάρπαστος used with ἀνέλθοιμι εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν.

<sup>279</sup> Welborn 148–149; Lucian, *Icar.* 10–33.

<sup>280</sup> Paul does not deny that such charismatic experiences have some value, only that it does not have the value for which his opponents use them.

Paul's hearing words he could not utter (12.4b) may be illuminated similarly by another feature of fools' discourses. "The learned impostor typically confirms his identity as a charlatan by adding to his foolishness an act of impiety: he exposes the secrets and mysteries."<sup>281</sup> After Menippus has not only ascended into Heaven but also descended into Hades, a friend asks if he heard there anything beneficial to life on earth. Menippus answers that he has heard a great deal that is useful, "but it is not right (θέμις) to publish, broadcast, and expose the secrets (τὰ ἀπόρρητα). Someone might indict me for impiety." The friend persists, because he is himself already initiated into the mysteries, and Menippus relents: "it is a perilous demand that you are imposing on me, and one not wholly consistent with piety. However, for your sake I must be bold."<sup>282</sup> Paul's inability to tell what he heard in Paradise participates in this characteristic of the learned impostor, although Paul stops short of committing the impiety of disclosing the things "one is not allowed to utter" (12.4b).

- 12.7b                    Narration: messenger of Satan given to keep Paul from being conceited  
 12.8                     Paul's prayer for deliverance  
 12.9a-c                 The Lord's oracle: His grace is sufficient; power fulfilled in weakness.

The irony of v. 7a is extended in v. 7bff. The "extraordinary" revelations, of which Paul related only one in the preceding vv., resulted in Paul's being afflicted by God (so the divine passive, ἐδόθη)<sup>283</sup> with the buffeting thorn or stake, which is itself an ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ. The poles of experience and beings compressed in a single sentence are themselves fantastic: God, Satan, extraordinary revelations, painful piercing and beating. The parodistic performance might prompt reactions such as this: Who would want their own revelations, if Paul's result would be theirs?

This incident concludes the FS and therefore occupies the position receiving natural rhetorical end-stress. Despite myriads of differences in interpretation and theoretical and ideological perspectives, interpreters of Paul's letters agree that it is the high point of these chapters, of the FS, indeed of canonical 2 Corinthians.<sup>284</sup> It contains, appropriately, the content that causes it also to conclude the most important argumentation throughout these chapters, namely, the argument concerning Paul's qualifications as the apostle of Christ to the Corinthians.

<sup>281</sup> Welborn 149, citing Otto Ribbeck, *Alazon. Ein Beitrag zur antiken Ethologie* (Leipzig : Teubner, 1882) 14–15, on the μάντις as ἀλαζόνες, and Beare, *Roman Stage* 156–157, on the ridicule of the Pythagoreans, "exponents of secret wisdom," by mime writers.

<sup>282</sup> Welborn 149, citing Lucian, *Menippus* 2, E. C. Mackie, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904).

<sup>283</sup> Danker, *II Corinthians*, 193; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 225; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 412, 416–417

<sup>284</sup> Hughes, *Second Epistle*, 471, calls this portion "the summit of the epistle."

As in the preceding incident, this one frustrates conventional expectations. Welborn sees this passage as parodying “a motif that appears in portraits of the learned impostor,” namely, “the pseudophilosopher or quack holy man [who seeks] to enhance his reputation by relating miracles, often healings effected by supernatural means.”<sup>285</sup> Betz and David Aune consider 12.7–9 to be a healing oracle (*Heilungsorakel*), formally similar to other ancient Mediterranean oracles.<sup>286</sup> But it varies from the stock oracle, firstly, in naming a purpose for the affliction and its source. The identity of the affliction itself has been conjectured endlessly, with proposals over the history of exegesis settling into the following classes: (1) spiritual or psychological distress,<sup>287</sup> (2) physical disability or illness;<sup>288</sup> (3) adversaries of Paul;<sup>289</sup> (4) and the “stake in the flesh” as Paul’s stiff, rhetorically deficient delivery—as if he had swallowed a stick.<sup>290</sup> While the

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<sup>285</sup> Welborn 150. He summarizes as a single extended example of this parody Lucian’s *Philopseudes*. In it, philosophers gather and offer various remedies for the chronic illness of one Eucrates. Lucian’s alter ego, the narrator Tychiades, remains steadfastly skeptical, stimulating one story after another of marvelous cures. Cleodemus the Peripatetic relates his own cure of a seven-day raging fever. On the final day, a young man in a white cloak appears at his bed, raises him to his feet, and takes him to Hades. Appearing before Pluto, Cleodemus hears “the god say: ‘His thread is not yet fully spun, so let him be off.’” Cleodemus concludes: ‘I hastened back with a joyful heart, and from that time was free from fever’ (Lucian, *Philopseudes* 25). It is such a story of miraculous healing, the stock tale of the *alazon doctus* that Paul parodies in 2 Cor 12.7–9. The form of the *τερατολογία* may still be recognized, though it is shattered and transfigured by the profundity of Paul’s insight in to the paradox of existence ‘in Christ’ (151). This study endorses Welborn’s chief thesis, that Paul was aware of the stock character of the fool derived from the mime, that 2 Cor. 11.21b—12.10 is a (kind of) “fool’s discourse,” and that knowledge of the various expressions of that character illuminates features of the FS, including, but not limited to, expressions that could be received as comic. His article focuses on 11.32–33, and it is a feature of his thorough scholarship that he sketches how the role of the fool is expressed through all the other passages of the FS; and his sketches are summarized and excerpted throughout this study’s treatment of the FS. But this treatment of 12.7–9 needs more apropos examples, unless Welborn wishes to advance the thesis that Paul thought all stories of miraculous healing told by his opponents exemplified what he says Lucian’s *Philopseudes* illustrates: “how pretense and credulity conspired to undermine reason and the love of truth.” That interpretation of Paul and of the present parody of his opponents’ pretensions in their boasting of miracles disagrees with Paul’s own endorsements of signs, wonders, and miracles elsewhere (Gal. 3.5 and Rom. 5.18–19, where such occurrences are not the subject of polemics), as well as his specific purpose in the present passage of dramatizing the error of his opponents in using testimonies of such works of power as important credentials for a genuine apostle of Christ.

<sup>286</sup> Betz, “Paul’s Apology,” 10; *Der Apostel*, 92–94; Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 249–250

<sup>287</sup> Charles Talbert, *Reading Corinthians* 124, cites numerous representatives, including the Vulgate (*stimulus carnis*) and Luther (temptations of despair and doubt; *Table Talk* 24.7); cited by Peterson, *Eloquence* 125, n. 281.

<sup>288</sup> Tertullian, *On Modesty* 13; Irenaeus, *Against Heresy* 5.3.1; Barrett, *Second Epistle* 314–315; Bruce, *I & II Corinthians* 248; Furnish, *II Corinthians* 549–550; Danker, *II Corinthians* 193; Witherington, *Conflict & Community* 462; cited in Peterson, *Eloquence* 125–126, nn. 283–287.

<sup>289</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 2 Corinthians* 26.2, 29.2; Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* 186, n. 1; Michael L. Barré, “Qumran and the Weakness of Paul,” *CBQ* 42 (1980) 216–227; Loubser, “A New Look” 515; Forbes, “Comparison and Self-Praise” 21; Murphy-O’Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* 119; Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth* 76; cited by Peterson, *Eloquence* 126, nn. 289–295.

<sup>290</sup> Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 315; Verena Jegher-Bucher, “‘The Thorn in the Flesh’ / ‘Der Pfahl im Fleisch’: Considerations about 2 Corinthians 12.7–10 in Connection with 12.1–3,” in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, eds.; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1997), 388–397. Jegher-Bucher summarizes his view concisely: Paul’s “argumentation is the following: ‘It is true, I am a weak orator. Some of you take this as pretext for denying me competence as an apostle, others would be glad,

identity of Paul's "thorn" is probably lost to today's reader, we can nevertheless discern further dimensions of the rhetoric of this passage without that knowledge.

Paul prays fully and refers to it as prayer he no longer offers.<sup>291</sup> The conventional healing oracle would offer the deity's response pronouncing or announcing healing. Paul receives a word from the Lord, but it pronounces no healing. Instead, the oracle speaks first to him and then to the core presenting issue—who is (or are) the genuine apostle(s) of Christ to the Corinthians, and by what means may they be discerned? The Lord promises Paul grace to endure,<sup>292</sup> and the unmistakable linkage of weakness and power, *deus ex machina*, ends the dispute over the marks of an apostle.

In such few words, Paul has delivered a coup de grâce that follows all his verbal efforts throughout this discourse. He has appealed, warned, threatened, denied, and contrasted in acts of direct communication to the Corinthians. Then he has played the part of the fool in parodying the rivals' self-commendation in an act of indirect communication through the FS. Now, this divine word exceeds all the foregoing in its likely force. Aune says that throughout the Mediterranean world, people believed oracles they received by traditionally approved means.<sup>293</sup> Similarly, earliest Christianity, with its Jewish roots, including the varieties of prophecy, and its distinct experience of charismata, including prophecy, was disposed to believe such dominical words.<sup>294</sup> The Corinthians would not be exceptions to this characteristic of primitive Christianity; they exist through the two canonical books addressed to them as the most memorable witness to belief in and practice of charismata. Thus the audience implied in this discourse as well as through the remainder of 2 Corinthians and 1 Corinthians would accept the oracle of 12.9 as genuine.

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particularly in this competitive situation, if I *were* as good as the others. But among them, there are some who use their lofty oratory [their boasting] only to distinguish *themselves*. Precisely this I am unable to do and experience thereby the grace of God.” It will be immediately evident how congenial such a view of the thorn is to the thesis of this study that Paul's rivals were sophistic Christian leaders who pilloried Paul for his rhetorical incompetence as one dimension of his weakness as a leader.

<sup>291</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 550; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 418. “Three times” may signify fullness of prayer.

<sup>292</sup> cohering with Paul's demonstrated endurance in the hardship list and with his description of apostolic ministry in 12.12.

<sup>293</sup> David Aune reports that “most ancient Greeks firmly believed that the oracular responses to their inquiries, whether conveyed through lot, sign, dream, or human language, were truly messages from the gods. This conviction was so deeply rooted in the Greek outlook that only rarely do we find attempts to test the validity of oracular responses,” in *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 32. One can imagine the Corinthians' warming momentarily to the thought that Paul was giving a charismatic utterance—at least until they recognized that the oracle approved the weakness they despised.

<sup>294</sup> although believers were not to approve all allegedly prophetic utterances uncritically, from Paul's perspective: 1 Thess. 5.19–21.

By accepting the oracle as genuine, the critics would be directed by the Lord to embrace Paul, in all his weaknesses, including characteristics of him the critics did not like, as the genuine δικάκιος Χριστοῦ. It answers the question implied in 10.18, namely, “Whom does the Lord commend?” This inference from the Lord’s word raises anew the question of the propriety and value of rhetoric for Paul. Following the lead of Winter,<sup>295</sup> this study has agreed that in 1 Corinthians Paul rejects sophistic rhetoric as unsuitable for proclaiming the gospel, essentially because such rhetoric emphasizes the performance of the rhetor and invites self-promotion and the related values and behaviors of sophistic culture, all of which are inimical to the gospel of the crucified Messiah. Here at the conclusion of the FS, the strongest proof Paul uses is not a proof of art but instead a proof from outside rhetorical art.<sup>296</sup> Paul’s strongest proof is the invoking of authority, not argument per se—“The Lord says”—in a way that invites comparison with the Hebrew prophets. As Paul rejected rhetoric for proclamation, so he relies in these chapters ultimately not on rhetorical art, which is ἡ σοφία ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλ’ ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ (1 Cor. 2.5), which is, here, both his weaknesses and the revelatory word of the Lord. This reliance upon authority, and especially on a divine oracle, for the strongest proof in a discourse is alien to the mainstream of Hellenistic rhetoric (not including, of course, discourse from or directly about other Hellenistic religions).<sup>297</sup>

But Paul’s relation to rhetoric is not that simple. If he rejected rhetoric absolutely, we would not have these four chapters of suasive discourse. Instead, we could expect Paul to answer the charge that he is ταπεινός καὶ ἀσθεινής with a terse letter that declared the divine oracle and directed the Corinthians to dismiss the opponents and otherwise repent of their wandering from his gospel. But chapters 10–12 show Paul’s decision to craft a response that maximizes the force of the oracle by arranging it at the conclusion of the highly parodistic FS. However absolutely these chapters may confirm that Paul rejected sophistic rhetoric, he nevertheless employs a kind of rhetoric through the

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<sup>295</sup>Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*, passim; see in ch. 1 of this study “Paul’s Rivals Are Sophists: Rhetoric in the Situation at Corinth.”

<sup>296</sup>Aristotle defines each; *Rhet.* 1.2.2: “As for proofs, some are inartificial, others artificial. [τῶν δὲ πείστεων αἱ μὲν ἄτεχνοί εἰσιν αἱ δ’ ἔτεχνοι]. By the former I understand all those which have not been furnished by ourselves but were already in existence, such as witnesses, tortures, contracts, and the like; by the latter, all that can be constructed by system and by our own efforts. thus we have only to make use of the former, whereas we must invent the latter.”

<sup>297</sup>Despite their importance in the Greco-Roman world, divine oracles are not treated as a topic in the rhetoric handbooks. I was not able to find any study exploring the use of oracles in ancient rhetoric. David Potter’s *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994) deals with the ubiquity of oracles and their influence on matters private and public in various media, but it does not study the rhetoric of oracles.

various speech acts this discourse performs. This study will consider Paul's relation to rhetoric further in the final chapter.

12.9d-e                      Consequence: Paul boasts in weakness so Christ's power may rest on him.  
12.10                        Amplification, restatement, and assertion of purpose: Paul delights in weakness, etc., for Christ, because when he is weak, he is strong.

With these vv. Paul applies the Lord's word specifically to his situation, amplifying the oracle itself and giving it greater effect on the discourse recipients. While the oracle and these vv. are still within the FS, Paul's boasting and delight in weaknesses is not foolish in Paul's eyes (although it might be in the eyes of critics and rivals; however, the oracle of the Lord would likely confound their standards of evaluation). It is not boasting *κατὰ σάρκα* (what Paul considers the competitive boasting of hardships and of visions and revelations to be) but boasting *ἐν κυρίῳ* (10.17).

This section of the FS, along with the rest of the discourse, points to a chief sense in which Paul uses "weakness." In this sense, "weakness" refers chiefly to other's evaluation of oneself, rather than to any more or less objective reality, such as physical sickness or general human frailty, or to a subjective sense of one's inadequacy apart from God. Forbes comments that weakness and strength in this discourse "never indicate simply psychological states . . . [nor Paul's] awareness of his own inadequacy for God. Usage of the terms both in a wide cross-section of Hellenistic writers and in Paul himself indicates rather that the terms carry strong social connotations. 'Weakness' is the state of those without power or status, and 'strength' is the state of those who do have status. 'Weakness' connotes humiliation in the eyes of others, rather than inadequacy in one's own."<sup>298</sup> More specifically for this discourse, "weakness" extends to Paul's inferior oral rhetoric; his rejection of "strong" authoritarian leadership among the Corinthians in favor of authority expressed "weakly" *διὰ τῆς πραύτητος καὶ ἐπεικειίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ*; his identifying with the abused, humiliated, even sinful believers; his voluntary self-abasement in supporting himself; and his socially stigmatizing thorn in the flesh (if it is distinct from all the foregoing expressions of weakness) mark him in the eyes of higher status critics and rivals as an ineffective leader and certainly no legitimate apostle of Christ.

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<sup>298</sup> Forbes, "Comparison," 19

### Rhetorical Style

This section of the FS leaves the list behind in favor of three concrete incidents, all of which are presented under the thesis of Paul's boasting in his weakness. Notable features of style exerting a likely effect include the following:

1. The verb for Paul's visit to Paradise is passive in both occurrences, ἀρπαγέντα, v. 2, and ἠρπάγη, v. 4, perhaps signaling in this telling that the incident happened to him without his seeking it. The verb forms could also be the divine passive. In either case, the diction points to Paul's passivity in the journey, which minimizes the extent to which he could boast about his activity.
2. Although the beginning phrase appears to belong with the thought begun in 12.6, 12.7, including that phrase, displays a balanced inversion that would emphasize the central elements, C and C':<sup>299</sup>

A	διό <u>ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι</u>
B	ἐδόθη <u>μοι</u>
C	σκόλοψ τῆ σαρκί
C'	ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ
B'	ἵνα <u>μὲ</u> κολαφίζῃ
A'	<u>ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι</u>

A and A' form an *inclusio*, marking the limits of this structure and emphasizing the purpose of the σκόλοψ. Taken as a foolish discourse, this repetition invites an ironic interpretation, and the context helps provide it: If Paul's abundance of revelations were anything like the one he related in 12.2–5, he hardly had a need for a thorn to deflate an inflated sense of self. More seriously, the repetition in A and A' could also function as an example challenging his rivals: Paul resists hubris from his visions and revelations, what of the rivals?

3. Εἴρηκέυ in 12.9 is a true perfect tense, which C. F. D. Moule interprets as meaning that Paul considers the divine oracle to have continuing force in his ministry. Even as the verb for his praying three times is an aorist, denoting the conclusion of his praying for deliverance, or

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<sup>299</sup> John D. Harvey, *Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 204, who cites Zmijewski, *Narrenrede* 366; Martin, *2 Corinthians* 393.

healing, from the thorn, εἰρηκέν marks the ongoing sufficiency of God's grace that Paul experiences throughout agonistic apostleship.<sup>300</sup>

### Implications and Rhetorical Effects

1. The whole FS implies that Paul did not believe that the direct argumentation performed in 10.12—11.21a was sufficient to accomplish the purposes of these four chapters. However effective he may have thought that the argumentation by direct contrast was, the discourse shows that he believed a different mode of proof was either necessary or at least beneficial. The reluctance Paul expresses in assuming the role of the fool suggests that he concedes “I must boast” seriously. Despite wishing it were otherwise, Paul feels compelled by the growing influence of his rivals on the Corinthians to present credentials for his apostleship to the Corinthians. In an earlier portion of canonical 2 Corinthians he had offered perhaps the strongest direct argumentation for his apostleship. Rather than giving the Corinthians letters commending him to them, they *are* his letter of recommendation (2 Cor. 3.1–3). But the story of their origin and the manner of their origin as a Christian community seems not to be enough, even though Paul uses it for sharp contrasts between himself and his opponents (10.12–18; 11.1–6; 11.7–11; 11.12–15; 11.16–21). As a result, Paul turns to the very different mode of parodying his rivals through a fool's discourse, in which he revels in his allegedly most glaring defect: his weakness.

Paul's turn to a different mode of rhetoric with the FS conforms in most general way to the need not only to inform or argue but also to move an audience emotionally so that their will is changed.<sup>301</sup> The chief function of the FS is not to arouse simple and strong emotion in favor of Paul; as a discourse using the stock character of the fool to parody rivals, the FS is too complex to arouse an immediate and simple emotional response. But effective parody ridicules its object such that it weakens the bonds of an audience to that object, in this case, Paul's opponents. As the FS unfolds, its earlier section, 11.23–29, has Paul superseding the accomplishments of his rivals while performing characteristics of the mimic fool, thereby

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<sup>300</sup> *Idiom Book 15*, cited by Peterson, *Eloquence* 127.

<sup>301</sup> While people today seem somewhat squeamish about appeals to emotion, ancient rhetoricians thought otherwise. Aristotle devotes chapters 2–17 of Book 2 in his *Rhetoric* to an early psychology of emotion for the purpose of aiding the orator in constructing effective emotional appeals. Augustine in Book 4 of *On Christian Doctrine* adapts Ciceronian rhetorical doctrine to the needs of Christian preachers and discusses the use of emotion in moving an audience through the grand style.



parodying the convention of such boasting and rendering it pointless. From 11.30 onward, Paul's accounts switch from overwhelming the corresponding boasts of his rivals to an inverted, ironic "underwhelming" of them, again while performing as a mimic fool. It is perhaps easier to see how that these episodes of boasting in weakness ridicule the inflated importance Paul's rivals, and presumably at least some of the Corinthians, have attached to visions, revelations, and signs and wonders. Betz discerns a potentially powerful reasoning that the ascent to heaven and thorn in the flesh episodes perform. Presuming that rivals and the Corinthians include in their prerequisites for a legitimate apostle such supernatural signs as visions, revelations, and miracles, Paul demonstrates that he has precisely these signs, but they prove or certify nothing.<sup>302</sup> The vision results in no knowledge or communication beneficial to the church; the abundance of revelations results in the stigmatizing thorn necessary to prevent Paul's becoming arrogant; and the fervent prayer for healing receives strength for continued apostolic ministry while carrying the thorn, not a healing or deliverance from it.

2. Closely tied to the preceding is Paul's use of the divine oracle how and where within the discourse he uses it. That choice is among the most rhetorical of acts Paul performs in these chapters. We could imagine any of a number of ways he could use the divine oracle because its rhetorical force is, on one level, constant, because the Corinthians believed in prophecy and believed that God or the Lord communicated through such oracles. As suggested elsewhere in this study, Paul might have begun this discourse briefly, focused immediately on the criticism of him as too weak to lead, then refuted it with the authoritative oracle, and concluded the discourse by amplifying on the topic of his identity as apostle, his authority, and the non-negotiable demand that the Corinthians rid themselves of the rivals and reconcile with Paul immediately. But the discourse shows that Paul decided that it was beneficial, if not necessary, for him to appeal along with his threatening and to argue directly and, through parody, indirectly before invoking the revelation of 12.9. Paul created a somewhat elaborate rhetorical discourse within which the revelation functions, surely as the most important proof within the whole, but nevertheless as only one proof among others. Although his is not strictly the rhetoric of the Greco-Roman schools or handbooks, Paul's rhetoric in this discourse does not ride roughshod over the human need for a kind of reasoning and evidence;

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<sup>302</sup> *Der Apostel*, 93; "Paul's Apology," 10

nor does it ignore the practical limits of direct argumentation when attempting to loosen the attachments that arise from pleasure, in this case, the pleasure Paul's critics derived from being served by rival ministers more to their cultural tastes. Paul argues directly and by parody and, when he has performed these forms of rhetorical argumentation, he judges that now is the time to deploy his potentially most powerful proof, the revelatory oracle.

3. From the perspective of this discourse, Paul's argument by direct contrast and by parody climaxed by the divine oracle constitutes the war he threatened in 10.4–5.<sup>303</sup> The oracle of 12.9, if accepted, devastates the rivals' critique of Paul, both by itself and in concert with the previous argumentation; and the critique of Paul consists of arguments (λογισμοὺς), lofty notions that (from Paul's view) oppose the knowledge of God (καὶ πᾶν ὑψωμα ἐπαιρόμενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ), and thoughts (νόημα) not yet obedient to Christ (10.4–5). The remainder of chs. 12 and 13 will again state Paul's resolve to confront and discipline in person during his upcoming third visit, but they also express his desire that this discourse elicit obedience from the Corinthians so that he will not have to be severe in his use of authority while in person. As an example, Paul threatens audacious boldness (τολμησαί) when he visits, if the Corinthians have not obeyed him (10.2, 6); then he performs such audacity (τολμῶ κἀγώ; 11.21) in the FS, presumably with the desire not to have to fulfill his threat in person. This discourse could be seen, then, as at least a major act of Paul's warfare.

#### Recapitulation of Rhetorical Performance

At this point in chaps. 10–13, Paul has proven most of what will be proven; the remainder of chaps. 12 and 13 infer from and apply what Paul has already argued. At a bird's-eye level, 10.1–12.10 perform four major acts, two with sustained argument, although in very different modes. “Acts” here involves some notion of drama, certainly of rhetorical language and symbolic drama,

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<sup>303</sup> A view arrived at independently but also asserted by Betz, who comments: “How did Paul go about defending himself? . . . [Paul] realized that the task amounted to a full-blown warfare with words, as in 10.3–6 he vividly describes what he needs to do. . . . Paul was convinced that he had at his disposal a divine weaponry capable of destroying the rhetorical and theological fortifications of his opponents. Of course, Paul was not a Cynic philosopher, so his weaponry cannot be the same. What then was Paul's armament? In general, it was the “word of the cross” as he preached it and as he represented it in his performance and conduct of the apostleship of Christ. But how does he fight this battle on paper, in this letter? . . . Within the present letter context it can only be an announcement of the demolition strategy carried through in the main section, the foll's speech (11.1–12.10 or 13).” “The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology According to the Apostle Paul,” in *L'apôtre Paul: Personnalité, Style et Conception du Ministère* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 73; A. Vanhoye, ed.; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 42–43; idem *Der Apostel*, 75–77.

but refers chiefly to the major communication, or speech, act accomplished (at least intended to be accomplished) within that passage. The first act introduces the discourse, the situation to which it responds, its specific purpose, and the core message and appeal that will unify all four chapters. In this act, Paul appeals, through the forbearance and gentleness of Christ, to the Corinthians to obey him so that he will not have to punish. With his appeal, he accepts the negative evaluation of critics; but he also threatens spiritual war, should the Corinthians not obey him.

The second act is transitional and tied closely to acts three and four. In the second act, 10.7–11, Paul directs the Corinthians to examine the evidence for three claims: (1) Paul belongs to Christ in as much a specially commissioned role (διάκονος Χριστοῦ) as anyone does; (2) Paul will not be discredited in his claims to belong to Christ and to possess authority; (3) Paul will act with integrity and consistency, whether by letter or in person.

Acts three and four prove these claims in quite different ways. Act three, 10.12—11.21a, proves by contrasting Paul and his rivals sharply on five topics. While proving rhetorically the above claims, it proves most clearly and directly the claim that heads the section (10.12): that the differences between Paul and the rivals are so great as to make it impossible for him to compare himself with them. By the end of this direct proof, hearers know the unique ways Paul has served the Corinthians and caused them to become a community of believers in Christ; and why they cannot be reconciled to Paul and continue their loyalties to his rivals: They must choose one or the other as their leader.

Act four shifts the axis of the discourse from direct to indirect, dramatic proof. Paul dramatizes the negative judgment of his critics and rivals that he has already accepted (10.1, 10; 11.21a) by adopting a well-established role from Greco-Roman mime, drama, and literature, the role of the fool. He presents a fool's speech from 11.21b through 12.10 that continues, in a different mode of discourse, the contrasting he performed in the third act. The FS divides into a first portion that (a) shows Paul to be a better διάκονος Χριστοῦ by boasting that he has endured more, and more serious, difficulties in serving Christ (and the Corinthians) than have his rivals. His outdoing his rivals, point by point, without boasting of any positive results from his endurance of hardships would have a double effect: taken straightforwardly, it would show Paul to have greatly outdone his rivals; while taken as a fool's parody, Paul's superlative, unmatched performance—but without any tokens of successful results—render this whole line of boasting

pointless. (b) The second portion begins at 11.30, where Paul again shifts the discourse by announcing that he will now boast of that which his rivals have seized as his greatest disqualifying feature: his weakness. Paul the fool boasts of three concrete weaknesses: the flight of a runaway, the heavenly revelation that forbids the telling, which is only one of an abundance of such revelations that earn Paul a chronic, painful thorn, for which repeated prayer brings no relief but, finally(!), revelation from the Lord that he may share. The divine oracle announces the ultimate reversal of the discourse and conflict between Paul and rivals: The Lord promises Paul sufficient grace and valorizes Paul's weakness as the medium in and through which divine power is fulfilled and expressed: Whenever and however Paul experiences humiliation for the sake of Christ—that is, whenever he is weak—he experiences the Lord's empowering, sustaining grace—he is strong. Paul's direct argument (10.12—11.21a) and indirect argument by a foolish discourse that parodied his rivals (11.21b—12.7) would exert significant persuasive force. That force becomes irrefutable not by further argument or mimic foolishness but by the divine oracle. Accepted as genuine, the oracle ends the criticism that Paul is unfit to be an apostle because he is weak, because Paul receives the ultimate endorsement, the commendation and approval of the Lord (10.17–18; 10.8).

## CHAPTER IV

### AFTER THE “FOOL’S SPEECH”: A SELECTIVE RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF 2 CORINTHIANS 12.11—13.14

It is clear with Paul’s exclamation of 12.11 that the FS has ended and the discourse is now both looking back and moving forward. But interpreters diverge in identifying the limits and rhetorical form of the next unit. Most interpreters sensitive to rhetorical form perceive that from 12.11 forward the discourse transits from the FS to something else;<sup>1</sup> and most discern a significant change in the discourse at 12.19, in which Paul addresses the matter of whether or not this discourse is his apology. But few keep together 12.11–18 as a unit as this study does for two chief reasons: (1) The topic most developed within this unit is Paul’s financial policies, including self-support (vv. 13–15) and the new issue of Paul’s alleged cunning in presumably diverting funds from the collection to supplement his self-support (vv. 16–18). This topic unites the subunits others wish to divide, and they do so primarily because of Paul’s announcement of his upcoming visit (12.14a), which they take as firmly marking the beginning of a new unit. But (2) this announcement functions in the same way as Paul’s earlier announcements of upcoming foolishness and boasting in 11.1 and 11.16. In those cases, the central act of boasting did not begin until 11.21b, and the previous announcements served the rhetorical purpose of προδιόρθωσις, preparing hearers for a potentially unpleasant bit of discourse to come, in this case for the major act of the discourse, the FS. At 12.14a, as discussed below, Paul’s

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<sup>1</sup> Interpreters who preserve 12.11–18 as a unit include R. Martin (“Paul’s Apostolate Justified,” *2 Corinthians*, 425–429) and Bultmann (“Conclusion to the *καυχᾶσθαι*,” *Second Letter*, 230). Bultmann notes that Paul both refers back to his performance as a fool and also continues it in a way comparable to 11.7–15, motivated not by literary form (context) but by the “reproaches and incitements” of the rivals, which description is rhetorical because it connects the action of the discourse to a dimension of the rhetorical situation (*Second Letter*, 230). Peterson notes that the issue of Paul’s self-support has come up earlier and offers this as the rhetorical value of the present treatment (vv. 13–18): that “the treatment [of self-support] has not been entirely adequate,” without further comment (*Eloquence*, 130). Danker labels vv. 11–13 “Transition,” as does this study, and he adduces Hellenistic parallels to illustrate various expressions from the discourse, but he does not discuss rhetorical form for 12.11–13 or 12.14–18 (*II Corinthians*, 197–203). Furnish treats 12.11–13 as “Epilogue” to the FS and identifies it as an epidiorthosis that corresponds to the prodiorthosis of 11.1–21a. But he includes 12.14–18 within the unit “Expressions of Concern,” 12.14–21 (*II Corinthians*, 552–563). Lambrecht treats 12.11–21 as the unit (“Self-Defense and Apostolic Concern,” *Second Corinthians*, 210–211), divided into three subunits, vv. 11–13, vv. 14–18, vv. 19–21. Witherington labels 12.11–13.4 “Closing Arguments” and notes that Paul repeats earlier arguments and amplifies them, seeking now to turn the tables and put the Corinthians on the defensive (*Conflict and Community*, 465–468). Other commentators who treat the 12.11–18 without attempting to apprehend its rhetorical form include Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 322–326; Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 581–590; Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 231–249.

announcement aids his argument about his financial policies as much as it foreshadows the more substantive rhetorical use of the certainty and nearness of his visit, which begins at 13.1. But it is not strong enough or otherwise purposeful enough to break the topical coherence that v. 13 manifests with vv. 14b–18 and therefore break the present unit into two. Having established the limits of the present unit, 12.11–18, what is its rhetorical form and function? The answer is implied through Paul’s assertions in 12.11b-c: The Corinthians forced him to boast, and they should have commended him instead of leaving him to commend himself. What audience need do such assertions attempt to satisfy? McCant describes this unit as an ἐπιδιόρθωσις, a subsequent justification intended to ameliorate the potential offense of the preceding portions of the discourse.<sup>2</sup>

### PAUL JUSTIFIES HIS ‘FOOL’S SPEECH’ (12.11–18; a Transition)

#### *Text*

11 Γέγονα ἄφρων, ὑμεῖς με ἠναγκάσατε. ἐγὼ γὰρ ὄφειλον ὑφ’ ὑμῶν συνίστασθαι· οὐδὲν γὰρ ὑστέρησα τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων εἰ καὶ οὐδέν εἰμι. 12 τὰ μὲν σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου κατειργάσθη ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν πάσῃ ὑπομονῇ, σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν. 13 τί γάρ ἐστιν ὃ ἠσώθητε ὑπὲρ τὰς λοιπὰς ἐκκλησίας, εἰ μὴ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ οὐ κατενάρκησα ὑμῶν; χαρίσασθέ μοι τὴν ἀδικίαν ταύτην.

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<sup>2</sup> McCant’s commentary came to my attention too late to incorporate it fully into this study. It is conversant with most of the recent studies with which this study interacts; however, it does not seem familiar with the Kolenkow challenge (“Paul’s Opponents”) to the dominant Georgi thesis that the rivals were miracle-working, triumphalist pneumatics (but not necessarily θεῖοι ἄνδρες, as Georgi insisted) opposing the miracle-minimizing, suffering Paul. As a result, McCant finds the parody of the FS to continue in 12.11–18, in which Paul’s assertion of the signs of the apostle (v. 12) is itself parody. Because it fits this majority view of the rivals, McCant’s view is worth quoting here: The Corinthians “want an apostle who is heroic (*corona muralis* [11.33]), ecstatic (rapture [12.2–4]), and performs miracles (miracle story [12.7–10]). Paul characterizes his ministry as one of sincerity and holiness. . . . The ‘sign of a true apostle’ is suffering triumphantly (cf. 4.8–9; 6.4–10; 11.23–29; 12.11). The Corinthians have seen the ‘signs of an apostle’ when God demonstrated ‘extraordinary power’ (4.7) through a slave who can only boast in weakness. His suffering authenticates his apostleship. To proclaim himself a miracle worker would be promoting himself, a practice he disdains (4.5). Paul subordinates miracles to the proclamation of the gospel (Rom. 15.18–19; Gal. 3.5, possibly 1 Cor. 2.4),” (*2 Corinthians*, 154). This study argues that Paul’s rivals fundamentally agreed with him on various criteria of apostolicity in earliest Christianity, among them the necessity of enduring hardships and suffering, as well as performing miracles as part of gospel ministry. They differ chiefly over Paul’s weakness, which is not his unique suffering in service but which is his more lenient exercise of authority in governing the church, along with his failure to practice oral eloquence (strong rhetoric) in person. Both of these major dimensions of Paul’s weakness cohere with the profile this study argues fits the rivals—that of Christian leaders emulating key aspects of contemporary sophists. So this study agrees with McCant’s identification of the rhetorical act the present unit

14 Ἴδου τρίτον τοῦτο ἐτοίμως ἔχω ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ οὐ καταναρκήσω· οὐ γὰρ ζητῶ τὰ ὑμῶν ἀλλὰ ὑμᾶς. οὐ γὰρ ὀφείλει τὰ τέκνα τοῖς γονεῦσιν θησαυρίζειν ἀλλὰ οἱ γονεῖς τοῖς τέκνοις. 15 ἐγὼ δὲ ἥδιστα δαπανήσω καὶ ἐκδαπανηθήσομαι ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν. εἰ περισσοτέρως ὑμᾶς ἀγαπῶ[ν], ἦσσοι ἀγαπῶμαι; 16 ἔστω δέ, ἐγὼ οὐ κατεβάρησα ὑμᾶς· ἀλλὰ ὑπάρχων πανοῦργος δόλω ὑμᾶς ἔλαβον. 17 μή τινα ὦν ἀπέσταλκα πρὸς ὑμᾶς, δι' αὐτοῦ ἐπλεονέκτησα ὑμᾶς; 18 παρεκάλεσα Τίτον καὶ συναπέστειλα τὸν ἀδελφόν· μήτι ἐπλεονέκτησεν ὑμᾶς Τίτος; οὐ τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι περιεπατήσαμεν; οὐ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἴχνεσιν;

### ***Translation***

(11) I have been a fool! You yourselves compelled me, for *I* ought to be commended by *you*; for in no way am I inferior to the “super-apostles,” even though I am nothing. (12) The signs of an apostle were performed among you with greatest steadfastness—signs and wonders and powerful deeds. (13) For in what were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself was not a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

(14) Now I am ready to come to you this third time, and I will not be a burden; for I do not seek your things but you. For the children ought not save up for the parents, but the parents for the children. (15) But I will most gladly spend and be spent for your sakes. If I love you the more, am I to be loved less?

(16) Now, it is agreed that I myself did not burden you, but (you say) I am crafty and took you in by deceit. (17) I did not take advantage of you through anyone whom I sent to you, did I? (18) I urged Titus (to go), and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not behave in the same spirit and in the same steps?

### ***Analysis***

#### *Speech Acts*

12.11a Exclamatory naming of preceding performance

12.11b-e Justification for Paul’s boasting: Corinthians compelled him

Reason: γαρ Corinthians should have commended Paul

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performs, ἐπιδιόρθωσις, but it does not view it as parody, while also not denying the irony and other rhetorical tactics occurring through the unit.

- Reason: γὰρ Paul not inferior to “super-apostles”
- 12.12 Evidence, observable: The signs of an apostle were performed among the Corinthians
- 12.13 Reason expressed in question: Corinthians not treated as inferiors  
Exception, ironic: Paul did not burden the Corinthians  
Sarcastic request to ridicule the criticism: Forgive Paul for not burdening them
- 12.14a-b Pledge to continue not burdening
- c Reason: Paul seeks them, not their things
- d Warrant, cultural: Parents should save for children, not the reverse
- 12.15a Restatement of 14b *and*  
Conclusion from 14d: Paul gladly spends and is spent for Corinthians
- b Implication from conclusion: Does Paul’s love for the Corinthians deserve less love from them?
- 12.16a Statement of agreement: Paul did not burden Corinthians
- b [Hypothetical] criticism: But Paul took advantage of Corinthians
- 12.17 Evidence: Paul did not take advantage through delegates, did he?
- 12.18a-b Evidence from specific example: Titus did not take advantage, did he?
- c Evidence from comparison: Paul’s team behaved similarly, did they not?  
[Warrant, implied: The one sending (Paul) is as trustworthy as the one sent (Titus); the “like master, like servant” warrant]  
[Conclusion, implied: Criticism is false; Paul did not take advantage of Corinthians]

### Coherence

Following the FS, as this section does, numerous expressions refer back to or develop earlier expressions, including these:

1. Γέγονα ἄφρων, in v. 11a, coheres with similar expressions in 11.1, 16–17, 21; also οὐδὲν γὰρ ὑστέρησα τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων of 12.11 coheres with the similar expression in 11.5: μηδὲν ὑστερηκεῖναι τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων.



2. As will be discussed below, “the signs of an apostle” may cohere with Paul’s hardship list, 11.23–29, and his boast of weakness, 11.30–12.10; but it also alludes back to the first expression of perhaps the most serious criticism of Paul, namely, that he does not belong to Christ, that presumably he is not a διάκονος Χριστοῦ (10.7–8) on par with the opponents.
3. Χαρίσασθέ μοι τὴν ἀδικίαν ταύτην of v. 13 recalls the related expression in 11.7: Ἡ ἀμαρτίαν ἐποίησα ἑμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε; and the topic of Paul’s refusal of support from the Corinthians was first addressed within these chapters in 11.7–12 and, as suggested earlier, alluded to only slightly in the hardship list at 11.27.

### Intertextuality

1. Paul queries the Corinthians in 2 Cor 3.1–3 by means of rhetorical questions (e.g., “do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you?”) about the same issue of their commending him that appears now in 12.11–13. That querying in chap. 3 introduces a *synkrisis* between ministries under the dispensations of Moses, on the one hand, and of Christ, on the other. That comparison leads, in chap. 4, to a description of ministry of the gospel of Christ that includes a short hardship list in vv. 8–12. Assertions from this discussion pertain to the conflict Paul addresses in chs.10–13. For example, 2 Cor 4.10–12 describe Paul’s apostolic service as manifesting the death of Jesus in an ongoing way: “So death is at work in us, but life in you” (v. 12); and then at v. 15, “For it [Paul’s ministry, including the sufferings of vv. 8–10] is all for your sake.” As discussed with 13.3–4 below, chs.10–13 by themselves do not explicate and argue directly and fully the relation between the suffering and death of Jesus and Paul’s apostolate. Either of two consequences of this fact may be inferred: (1) that this crucial topic is disputed but has been addressed elsewhere outside chs.10–13, allowing Paul to mention it in these chs. only briefly. This view seems implied by interpretations of this discourse as a “theology of the cross” opposing a “theology of glory” espoused by Paul’s pneumatic rivals. If this view is correct, it may provide some evidence for the literary unity of canonical 2 Cor because chs.10–13 would presume the exposition of earlier chs. on this topic, and 2 Cor 3 and 4 could in fact be that exposition. (2) A second inference is that this topic is not disputed, that the Corinthians and the rivals agree that apostles are expected to suffer, as Jesus did. Paul’s brief mention of the weakness of

Jesus thus rehearses and puts to perhaps new use an article of faith common to all parties, so little, if any, argumentation is needed. This study adopts this view.

2. Second Corinthians 12.16–18 echoes Paul’s boast at the beginning of canonical 2 Cor “that we have behaved in the world, and still more toward you, with holiness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God” (1.12).

### Rhetorical Structure

As the analysis of speech acts above shows, after the exclamation of 12.11a, the remainder of this section analyzes into three arguments, with notable statements causing the three to cohere into one fundamental act, that of justifying the FS for any disturbed by it.

*Argument 1:* The Corinthians compelled Paul to boast (12.11–13):

- 12.11a Exclamatory naming of preceding performance
- b Justification for Paul’s boasting: Corinthians compelled him
- c Reason: γὰρ Corinthians should have commended Paul
- d-e Reason: γὰρ Paul not inferior to “super-apostles,” although nothing

Paul names his performance in the FS (12.11a), then justifies it (12.11b–13). The key claim occurs in 12.11b. Paul emphasizes the Corinthians’ obligation to have commended him, through emphatic pronouns for him (ἐγὼ) and them (ὑμῶν; 12.11c). This claim is at the same time a supporting reason for v. 11a. This claim, 12.11b, is itself then supported by two reasons, each introduced by γὰρ. The first, v. 11c, advances an ethical claim (ὄφειλον), and it is supported by another, factual, claim, v. 11d-e. Paul emphasizes that in no way (οὐδέν) is he inferior to his rivals, and he appears to borrow a self-deprecating but polemical formula from the longstanding feud between philosophers and sophists in describing himself—καὶ οὐδέν ἐίμι.<sup>3</sup> Verse 11 offers a textbook example of rhetorical argument, argument that depends for its success on the audience’s possessing and supplying one or more key premises or the conclusion. In this case, Paul’s two assertions, or premises (12.11d-e), leave unstated—yet clearly imply—a particularly sharp putdown of his rivals: If Paul is nothing and in no way inferior to the “super-apostles,” what are they, as less than nothing? In an effective oral performance of this discourse, this attack on the opponents would exert a force comparable to, if not greater than, Paul’s calling them false

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<sup>3</sup> Betz, *Der Apostel*, 122–128, cites Plato’s *Phaedrus* 234 C-D and Epictetus 3.9; 4.8.22ff. He argues that the idea is rooted in the Delphic teaching that humans are nothing in comparison with the divine. Cf. also 1 Cor. 13.2; 3.7;

apostles and deceitful workmen (11.13). The Corinthians know that Paul is not nothing, they detect the irony in that claim but also the assertion of humility. It is the rivals who make the most of their accomplishments; Paul insists on boasting only of his weaknesses, not his strengths; and by now Paul's weaknesses have been fully approved of by the Lord (12.9–11). The audience must (and would) supply the conclusion v. 11e points toward, and in doing so, they would ratiocinate the judgment, giving it presence in their minds by their action, even if, on further thought, they might reject it.<sup>4</sup>

The claim v. 11d-e introduces Paul's response to criticism of his self-support (12.13–18), recalling the same language in 11.5—λογίζομαι γὰρ μηδὲν ὑστερηκέναι τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων—which likewise introduced Paul's response to the same criticism of his self-support (11.7–13). The repetition of not only the topic but of the construction by which the topic is introduced marks strongly the relation between criticism of his alleged inferiority and of his self-support.

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|-------|---|
| 12.12 | Evidence, observable: The signs of an apostle were performed among the Corinthians  |
| 12.13 | Reason expressed in question: Corinthians not treated as inferiors<br>Exception, ironic: Paul did not burden the Corinthians<br>Sarcastic request to ridicule the criticism: Forgive Paul |

Second Corinthians 12.12 offers observable evidence supporting the claim in 12.11d: The Corinthians would know of the signs Paul displayed, or performed, in his ministry among them.<sup>5</sup>

15.9–10; 2 Cor. 3.5. In “Paul’s Apology,” Betz cites the parodies of the ecstatic ascension into heaven and of the healing miracle as evidence that Paul is nothing (14).

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.11.27: “to supply things that are lacking [e.g., in a discourse as it is performed] is pleasurable; for it [what is supplied] becomes their [the audience’s] own doing.” Various kinds of humor produce pleasure by counting on hearers to supply the unstated, but obvious, statement, and the same process accounts for some of the power of parables.

<sup>5</sup> Betz insists that 12.12 appears without any connection to what precedes or follows, but he misses the way its assertion counts as further support for Paul’s claim that his ministry among the Corinthians has lacked nothing (*Der Apostel*, 70). Danker finds the relation between 12.12 and the preceding to be an intimate link between Paul’s display of weakness in 12.1–10 and the present “display of extraordinary deeds” (*II Corinthians*, 198–199). Betz (93–96) further insists that the reference to signs in 12.12 refer back to the two parodies, 12.2–4 and 12.7–10. His argument is intriguing that by the parodies Paul has performed apostolic signs but failed to provide through them evidence of legitimacy, thus undercutting the claims of rivals that such signs prove one to be a legitimate apostle. That said, Paul’s assertion in 12.12 does not express the irony that Betz’s interpretation of it requires. Betz claims that “Paul never says clearly that he does miracles (only Acts says this); he talks rather of spreading the gospel” (“Paul’s Apology,” 28). With this perspective, Betz falls prey to an unjustified opposition between miracle-working on the one hand and proclamation on the other. Betz would keep Paul pure in his proclamation and apparently spare him being sullied with the impostors or lesser leaders who boast of their miracles. But this relation between the two is not the only nor the best one may posit. Taking 12.12 as the mild assertion of common knowledge that it appears to be acknowledges that in earliest Christianity, Pauline and otherwise, proclamation and the miraculous were

Paul simply asserts without providing further evidence that these occurred. If rivals or critics had made Paul's lack of apostolic signs in the sense of "signs, wonders, and mighty works" an issue as major as that of his self-support, we would expect the discourse to deal with it at similar length. But this mention is the only one, lending credence to Kolenkow's claim that Paul and his rivals share, as acts of their ministries, suffering and miracles, and differ (only) in their approach to exercising authority within the church, whether severely (cf. 11.20; 13.10) or mildly (cf. 10.1, 8; 13.10).<sup>6</sup> Here Paul affirms that such works of power<sup>7</sup> are part of his ministry. Whether the series of three nouns at the end of the v. is construed as a series of datives of means<sup>8</sup> or of accompaniment,<sup>9</sup> the rhetorical significance of the v. is the same. Paul acknowledges that this part of an apostle's ministry has occurred in his ministry and is no reason for the Corinthians to think him inferior. Paul's affirmation of these signs only here in this discourse shows that they do not pertain greatly to the chief conflict underlying the discourse. Put simply, the conflict this discourse expresses is not the pneumatic, wonder-working rivals versus the non-pneumatic, suffering Paul who alone experiences and acknowledges suffering as part of his apostolic service for Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

The second reason why the Corinthians should have commended Paul occurs in 12.13. The question of how Paul has treated them in an inferior manner comes after he has boasted of the adversities he has endured in their service (cf. the FS) and has now acknowledged the miracles that went with his ministry. Paul does not bring up again his deficiency as a speaker, having simply conceded that he is not eloquent (11.6); but he returns to their complaint that he has not loved the Corinthians as much he has others (11.7–11). The use of six vv. here to deal with the dispute over money indicates that, in Paul's mind, this dispute was and could continue to be serious. As noted above, it is introduced here by the same denial of Paul's inferiority to the

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believed to relate complementarily, as texts throughout the NT indicate: throughout Acts cf. 2.22); Luke 10; Matt 10; Mark 6 and the longer ending of 16; Gal 3.3–5; Rom 15.18–21 (which knits the *δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων* and the *δυνάμει πνεύματος* with proclamation); Heb 2.4.

<sup>6</sup> Kolenkow, "Paul's Opponents," 359–366

<sup>7</sup> *σημείους τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν* are probably roughly synonymous in this occurrence. So Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 553

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 553

<sup>9</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 436.

<sup>10</sup> The position adopted, with significant variations in other aspects of their portraits of Paul's rivals, by these representative interpreters: Betz, "Rhetoric and Theology," 43–44; "Paul's Apology," 8, 10, 28; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 191, 203–204; G. Friedrich, "Gegner," 192–193, 199–200, 205–208; Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 277–283; Käsemann, "Legitimität," 34–52; Sumney, "Paul's Opponents: A Method for Determining Their Identity and a

super-apostles that introduced the earlier treatment of the same topic (11.5; 12.11). “Except that I was not a burden to you” phrases the matter from Paul’s perspective, emphasizing the benefit to them of his self-support (supplemented by offerings from elsewhere) and also the absurdity, to him, of their objecting to this act of his greater service. Paul does not phrase the money dispute any other way in this discourse: His self-support allowed him to give the gospel as a gift (11.7) and distinguishes him from rivals who claim to work on the same basis but do not (11.12–13).<sup>11</sup> Paul ends 12.13 with the ironic exclamatory request (including the emphatic αὐτὸς ἐγώ) that the Corinthians forgive him.<sup>12</sup> This v. functions as a pivot: It both supports the claim expressed in 12.11c and nearly expresses, in interrogative form, the claim that heads the next argument.

*Argument 2:* The Corinthians should appreciate Paul’s not burdening them (12.14–15):<sup>13</sup>

- 12.14a-b      Pledge to continue not burdening
- c            Reason: Paul seeks them, not their things
- d            Warrant, cultural: Parents should save for children, not the reverse
- 12.15a            Restatement of 14b *and*
- Conclusion from 14d: Paul gladly spends and is spent for  
                    Corinthians

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Proposal for the Identity of the Opponents of 2 Corinthians” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 1987), 367–372.

<sup>11</sup> See the discussion in chap. three of this study, at 11.7–11.

<sup>12</sup> Barrett, *II Corinthians*, 323; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 554; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 439

<sup>13</sup> Specifically, Peterson identifies 12.14–18, “Paul’s Upcoming Visit,” as the argument that corresponds to the assertion of 10.11 that Paul will be in person by deed what he is through letters while absent (*Eloquence*, 93, 130). 12.14–18 thus constitutes the third of the arguments throughout the discourse that corresponds to these key claims in 10.7–11. This study has agreed with Peterson that the discourse supports these claims, but it has disagreed that it is clear that the discourse supports them only or primarily in the portions he has specified, and that disagreement extends to his so naming 12.14–18. The assertion of 10.11 concerns integrity between Paul’s words in letters and his deeds in person among the Corinthians, and the chief topic of 12.14–18 does not correspond to that assertion. The chief topic is, generally, Paul’s financial policies. These divide into his continuing defense of not burdening the Corinthians (vv. 14–15) and his defense against the (hypothetical?) allegation of his embezzling from the collection (vv. 16–18). The latter is not an argument that directly supports Paul’s assertion of the integrity of his words and deeds. The former supports the assertion only indirectly, with Paul’s past performance being a rational basis for presuming that his future performance will prove to be consistent. But (1) the consistency is not between word-in-letter and deed-in-person, as 10.11 asserts; and (2) the more important point of vv. 14–16 is the motivation for Paul’s continuing practice of supporting himself, his parental love for the Corinthians, not consistency between word and deed. That vv. 14–16 support the assertion of 10.11 indirectly should not be dismissed or discounted, but if indirect support is sufficient to meet the threshold of an argument’s corresponding to the 10.11 claim, then other arguments in the discourse likewise qualify as support for the claim that is as strong as that exerted by vv. 14–16. This study has urged that Paul’s integrity in word and deed is likewise supported in 10.13–16 and 11.7–12, where Paul’s irrefutable past performance is a rational basis for believing he will do as he says he will in the future. But in neither these units nor the present one, 12.14–18, is Paul’s integrity in word and deed the clear topic. Perhaps a better portion of the discourse to cite as corresponding to the 10.11 claim is 13.1–4, in which the major topic is Paul’s past and present warnings that he will not spare unrepentant sinners when he next visits. This portion asserts that Paul’s words (warnings) will be matched by his deeds (not sparing) when he is in person.

- b                      Implication from conclusion: Does Paul’s love for the Corinthians deserve less love from them?

The claim of this argument (stated in heading above) is implied, rather than expressed, and inferred from 12.15b. While 12.14a announces Paul’s third visit, previewing his development of this topic at 13.1,<sup>14</sup> it functions at this point as a marker of time in Paul’s ongoing and unchanging habit of not burdening the Corinthians by supporting himself. It connects his visit with the dispute over his supporting himself and thereby makes the dispute (or acknowledges it to be) a topic with nearly palpable presence and close proximity, properties that make it a topic to deal with now. Paul introduces this dispute in an assertion (12.14b) that is also a claim supported by the following vv. Verse 14c consists of a reason that justifies Paul’s not burdening the Corinthians financially. It exerts a significant ethical force by concisely distinguishing what he is doing—seeking them and their well being—from what they may have been thinking he is doing and what his rivals have been doing—seeking their things. This effective reason is then supported not by evidence but by the cultural warrant of how parents provide for their children, not the reverse. The warrant, by its very nature, requires no further support, so 12.15a applies the warrant to his ministry among them using monetary language of spending figuratively (δαπανήσω καὶ ἐκδαπανηθήσομαι) and puts them on the defensive by drawing out the reasonable conclusion that they should not only stop criticizing his practice of supporting himself but also express gratitude as children should to parents. But instead of stating the conclusion, Paul calls on them to state it by applying the warrant—which they would surely accept apart from this context—to this situation with the rhetorical question of 12.15b-c. The question does not speak of money or of the saving of treasure (as θησαυρίζειν in 12.14d) but instead of love, and it rests upon an implied appeal to justice. This language of esteem repeats Paul’s exasperated conclusion to the same topic earlier in this discourse (11.11); and it again asserts what is Paul’s motive and again counters allegations that Paul is selfishly motivated. Moreover, with the comparative terms περισσοτέρως and ἥσσον, 12.15b-c also contrasts Paul and his rivals—both what the behavior of each toward the Corinthians shows and how the Corinthians have responded to each. In this way, this argument also supports Paul’s claim not to be inferior to his rivals (12.11.d-e). Also, its variation on a conditional form gives the question a rhetorically effective edge. Where one might expect “If I love you more, should I not be loved more?” we receive instead an inversion of the

second clause—“am I to be loved less?” This choice seizes the power of concise contrast to grasp one’s attention and to direct it more to the presence of inequity by focusing on the instantly perceived chasm between giving more but receiving in turn less. The Corinthians have complained about being treated inequitably, as inferiors; now Paul reverses the table and confronts them with the inferior way they have treated him. But unlike 12.11c—“*I ought to be commended by you*”—here Paul elicits the similar judgment by means of an artful rhetorical question. The question expects a negative answer, and it is hard to imagine the Corinthians giving any other—an advantage of the way the question has been composed. When hearers respond with the denial, they will at the same time support the chief claim implied throughout 12.13b–15: The Corinthians should appreciate Paul’s not burdening them and more: They should hold him in the high esteem that ἀγάπη denotes.

*Argument 3:* Paul did not take advantage of the Corinthians financially (12.16–18):

- 12.16a Statement of agreement: Paul did not burden Corinthians
- b [Hypothetical] criticism: But Paul took advantage of Corinthians
- 12.17 Evidence: Paul did not take advantage through delegates, did he?
- 12.18a-b Evidence from specific example: Titus did not take advantage, did he?
- c Evidence from comparison: Paul’s team behaved similarly, did they not?  
[Warrant, implied: The one sending (Paul) is as trustworthy as the one sent (Titus); the “like master, like servant” warrant]  
[Conclusion, implied: Criticism is false; Paul did not take advantage of Corinthians]

Verse 16a proceeds from agreement and then states the charge that Paul used some money from the collection for the poor in Judea for himself. While Paul attributes this criticism to an individual, ὁμᾶς ἔλαβον (12.16c), because this criticism has not been expressed at all earlier, its location at the very end of proof responding to criticisms of Paul suggests that he might offer it hypothetically,<sup>15</sup> similar to the hypothetical defense he offers in 1 Cor 9.<sup>16</sup> This example both of *procatlepsis*, anticipating an objection and preventing it, and of *sermocinatio*, answering the remarks or questions of a pretended interlocutor, expresses Paul’s intention to lay to rest all question of his financial policies, from self-support to the collection discussed in 2 Cor 8–9.

<sup>14</sup> An example of προδιόρθωσις, similar to the way Paul previews his major boasting with two announcements (11.1, 16) before he begins boasting (11.21b).

<sup>15</sup> Danker concurs with this identification of the speech act in this v. He says that “Paul imagines to himself a dialog with the Corinthians,” *II Corinthians*, 202.

<sup>16</sup> See Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 243–250

The argument is performed through three rhetorical questions and one narrative statement. The first question asks generally—did anyone take advantage of them? Then comes the narrative detail about whom Paul sent, followed by the second question, now specific—did Titus take advantage of them? (12.17). Paul asks with the confidence of one who knows that the expected answers will also be genuine answers: The Corinthians seem to esteem Titus more than they do Paul. Proceeding by the method of elimination, Paul now moves from exonerating answers to the first two questions to phrase the question about himself. It artfully points to the delegates of which they have approved and asks the Corinthians, in a way that solicits an exonerating affirmative answer, to confirm that he himself behaved similarly to Titus. Beyond the use of rhetorical questions that guide the response, this sequence of questions draws upon another warrant to elicit a sincere response. Widespread in the ancient Mediterranean world is the belief that legitimate disciples imitate and re-present their teacher-leader.<sup>17</sup> By focusing on Titus' exemplary behavior rather than arguing first about his own behavior, Paul is able to transfer the positive evaluation from Titus to himself via this cultural warrant.

### *Rhetorical Effects*

This brief section performs rhetorical argument as well as any section in the whole discourse. It holds the Corinthians accountable for not commending Paul based on his documented service to them, and then it deals with the apparently most nagging issue yet unresolved: Paul's refusing financial support. Paul phrases the issue in the way that potentially benefits the Corinthians the most—and in the way that one can believe Paul truly meant it. He warrants his argument with a nearly universal warrant of parental responsibility, applies it to his willingness to spend all he has and is for them, and then concludes with a rhetorical question that asserts his motivation for his action in the most honorable of terms—love for them. That argument leaves one rumor to be addressed, perhaps anticipated by Paul before he has even heard it expressed: that despite supporting himself, Paul still used the collection for the poor for himself. Paul reasons from the Corinthians' experience with his delegates to the warranted, implied conclusion that he, the leader, would behave at least as well as would his delegate, who as an assistant and follower imitates his teacher-leader. Throughout these eight vv., Paul uses rhetorical questions five times to elicit responses grounded in culturally legitimate warrants. Located as this sub-section is late

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<sup>17</sup> See the use of the “like master, like servant” warrant above at 11.15.



in the discourse, it is likely that it would win substantial agreement with each of its arguments; and it would likely elicit awareness of the debt of gratitude the Corinthians' owed, but have yet to pay, Paul.

### Implications

The most significant implication of this unit derives from the contrast between the quantity of discourse devoted to two claims: the signs of an apostle performed through Paul's ministry and Paul's not burdening the Corinthians financially. The latter topic gets six verses' treatment in 11.7–13 and another six verses' treatment in 12.13–18, while the former receives only one verse. Quantity of discourse alone does not always express the emphasis or the urgency of a topic in a discourse, but in this case, two inferences from this contrast deserve mention. First, because of the large amount of attention the discourse gives it, criticism of Paul's financial behavior appears to be second in intensity only to the more general criticism of Paul's weakness, and Paul's self-support may be a part of the other criticism anyway. Second, as discussed before, the almost matter-of-fact way in which 12.12 asserts without further argument that τὰ μὲν σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου were performed in Paul's ministry among the Corinthians indicates that this assertion is not expected to be contested, that, in fact, Paul expects this assertion to be instantly agreed with once the Corinthians are reminded.

### Recapitulation of Rhetorical Performance

This brief unit both looks backward and forward: backward in justifying Paul's foolish boasting (12.11–15), forward in anticipating a third visit to Corinth (12.14). Its chief accomplishment is in calling the Corinthians to acknowledge their unpaid debt of unalloyed gratitude to Paul, whose expression has become especially overdue after he has had to resort to self-defensive boasting as a fool in response to the boasting of his rivals. His reasons for appealing to their sense of gratitude and justice would be especially effective, following immediately after the Lord's words of approval and endorsement of Paul (12.9): He is in no way inferior to the rivals; τὰ μὲν σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου were performed among them; they were treated as well as other churches, except, in their eyes, by Paul's supporting himself. For this only outstanding basis for charging Paul with treating Corinth differently (at least only from the perspective of this discourse), Paul does not merely repeat appeals from his earlier treatment of this topic. Instead he now appeals to the deep

warrant of the inequity motivated by love, between how parents ought to provide for children and how children ought not provide for parents, and then to acknowledged trustworthiness of associates he sent to them for the purpose of the collection. This unit thus attempts to justify the FS and ameliorate its offensiveness by pinning responsibility for it onto the Corinthians. In this way, this unit prepares the Corinthians to change their opinion also on a related matter—whether Paul has been performing an apology of his ministry.

### PAUL CHALLENGES THE CORINTHIANS DIRECTLY (12.19–13.10; a *Peroratio*)

#### *Text*

19 Πάλαι δοκεῖτε ὅτι ὑμῖν ἀπολογούμεθα. κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν· τὰ δὲ πάντα, ἀγαπητοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑμῶν οἰκοδομῆς. 20 φοβοῦμαι γὰρ μή πως ἐλθὼν οὐχ οἴους θέλω εὔρω ὑμᾶς κἀγὼ εὔρεθῶ ὑμῖν οἶον οὐ θέλετε· μή πως ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθείαι, καταλαλιαί, ψιθυρισμοί, φυσιώσεις, ἀκαταστασίαι· 21 μὴ πάλιν ἐλθόντος μου ταπεινώσῃ με ὁ θεός μου πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ πενθήσω πολλοὺς τῶν προημαρτηκότων καὶ μὴ μετανοησάντων ἐπὶ τῇ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ καὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ ἀσελείᾳ ἣ ἔπραξαν.

13:1 Τρίτον τοῦτο ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς· ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων καὶ τριῶν σταθήσεται πᾶν ῥῆμα. 2 προεῖρηκα καὶ προλέγω, ὡς παρῶν τὸ δεύτερον καὶ ἀπὼν νῦν, τοῖς προημαρτηκόσιν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πᾶσιν, ὅτι ἐὰν ἔλθω εἰς τὸ πάλιν οὐ φείσομαι, 3 ἐπεὶ δοκιμὴν ζητεῖτε τοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ λαλοῦντος Χριστοῦ, ὃς εἰς ὑμᾶς οὐκ ἀσθενεῖ ἀλλὰ δυνατεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν. 4 καὶ γὰρ ἐσταυρώθη ἐξ ἀσθενείας, ἀλλὰ ζῆ ἐκ δυνάμεως θεοῦ. καὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἀσθενοῦμεν ἐν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ ζήσομεν σὺν αὐτῷ ἐκ δυνάμεως θεοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς. 5 Ἐαυτοὺς πειράζετε εἰ ἐστὲ ἐν τῇ πίστει, ἑαυτοὺς δοκιμάζετε· ἢ οὐκ ἐπιγινώσκετε ἑαυτοὺς ὅτι Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν; εἰ μήτι ἀδόκιμοί ἐστε. 6 ἐλπίζω δὲ ὅτι γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἐσμέν ἀδόκιμοι. 7 εὐχόμεθα δὲ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν μὴ ποιῆσαι ὑμᾶς κακὸν μηδέν, οὐχ ἵνα ἡμεῖς δόκιμοι φανῶμεν, ἀλλ' ἵνα ὑμεῖς τὸ καλὸν ποιῆτε, ἡμεῖς δὲ ὡς ἀδόκιμοι ὦμεν. 8 οὐ γὰρ δυνάμεθά τι κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀληθείας. 9 χαίρομεν γὰρ ὅταν ἡμεῖς ἀσθενῶμεν, ὑμεῖς δὲ δυνατοὶ ᾗτε· τοῦτο καὶ εὐχόμεθα, τὴν ὑμῶν κατάρτισιν. 10 διὰ τοῦτο ταῦτα ἀπὼν γράφω, ἵνα παρῶν μὴ ἀποτόμως χρήσωμαι κατὰ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἣν ὁ κύριος ἔδωκέν μοι εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν.

### ***Translation***

(19) Have you have been thinking all along that we are defending ourselves before you? We are speaking before God in Christ. Everything, beloved, is for your upbuilding. (20) For I fear that perhaps when I come I may not find you as I wish and I may not be found by you as you wish: that perhaps [there may be] strife, jealousy, angry outbursts, rivalry, slander, gossiping, conceit and disorder. (21) When I come again, my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn many of those who have sinned in the past and have not repented of the impurity, immorality, and lustful indulgence that they have practiced.

(13.1) This is the third time I am coming to you. “By the word of two or three witnesses, let every matter be established.” (2) As I said when I was present the second time, I now say, while I am away, that if I come to you again I will not spare those who have sinned in the past and all the rest, (3) Since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me—[Christ,] who is not weak toward you but powerful in you. (4) For indeed he was crucified because of weakness, but he lives because of the power of God. So also we are weak in him, but toward you we will live with him because of the power of God. (5) Examine *yourselves* [to see] if you are in the faith. Test *yourselves!* Or do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail to meet the test? (6) For I hope that you recognize that we ourselves do not fail the test. (7) Yet we pray to God that you may do no wrong, not in order that we ourselves may appear to have passed the test , but that you may do what is right, even if we may appear to have failed. (8) For we cannot do anything against the truth but only for the truth. (9) For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak and you yourselves are strong; this is what we pray for, your restoration. (10) For this reason I am writing these things while [I am] away, so that when [I am] present I might not have to be severe in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.

### ***Analysis***

#### *Speech Acts*

- 12.19a Claim (statement or rhetorical question): Corinthians think Paul has been defending himself
- b Counterclaim: Paul has spoken in Christ for upbuilding, not for defense

- 12.20 Result feared: that he (with vice list) and Corinthians (no list) would not like what they find in the other when he visits
- 12.21 Result Paul wishes to avoid: God will humiliate Paul, and he will mourn the past and present sins among the Corinthians (with vice list).
- 13.1a Announcement of 12.14 restated
- b Citation of sacred legal warrant (needing no further justification)
- 13.2 Citation of two witnesses: Paul said before (1<sup>st</sup> witness) and now (2<sup>nd</sup> witness): he will not spare unrepentant sinners
- 13.3a-b Justification: Corinthians seek proof Christ speaks in Paul
- c-d Qualification and amplification of Christ: Christ is not weak toward, but powerful among, Corinthians
- 13.4a-b Evidence and explanation from example: Christ was weak and is powerful
- c Conclusion drawn from example *and* warranted by implied claim that Paul parallels Christ in function: Paul is weak in Christ but acts toward Corinthians by God's power.
- 13.5a-b Emphatic direction, returning to 13.3a (reciprocal challenge, warranted by implied appeal to equity): Corinthians to test *themselves* (to lead to the proof they demand from Paul [cf. 10.7])
- c-d Question to elicit affirmative response to v. 5a-b
- 13.6 Conclusion by inference from v. 5: Corinthians to recognize Christ is in Paul (implied, speaking in him)
- 13.7 Wish (via prayer) for Corinthians' right response more than for their judgment that Paul passed the test
- 13.8 Claim: However Paul may appear, he cannot act against the truth
- 13.9a-b Claim: Paul rejoices when weak (i.e., may appear not to pass test) and when Corinthians are morally strong
- c-d Claim: Paul prays for Corinthians' restoration
- 13.10 Claim: Paul writes for their restoration; not to use authority severely but to build them up (cf. 13.7-9; 12.19; 10.2)

### Coherence

1. Φοβοῦμαι γὰρ μή πως in 12.20a coheres with Paul’s earlier fear for the Corinthians, 11.3 (φοβοῦμαι δὲ μή πως).
2. These clauses of 13.3–4, “Christ . . . who is not weak toward you. . . . who was crucified out of weakness,” cohere with by similar syntax and related assertion with 10.1, especially with τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ὑμῖν. As noted in chap. two, the relative phrase in 10.1 could first be taken as referring to Christ, before the final clause of v. 1 is spoken. Similarly in 13.3–4, the clause introduced by the relative pronoun ὃς—ὃς εἰς ὑμᾶς οὐκ ἄσθενει (v. 3c)—in this case clearly refers to Christ in an assertion of his power. While the assertion in 13.3c might seem opposite that of 10.1, this discourse has insisted that a dimension of Christ’s power is expressed through being humble, and it is continuing to develop such semantic relations.
3. Τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἣν ὁ κύριος ἔδωκέν μοι εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν of 13.10 coheres with τῆς ἐξουσίας ἡμῶν ἣς ἔδωκεν ὁ κύριος εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν ὑμῶν in 10.8 and stresses how Paul desires to express his authority, while at the same time acknowledging how he may have to express it severely.
4. Μὴ ἀποτόμως χρήσωμαι of 13.10 coheres with τὸ μὴ παρῶν θαρρῆσαι τῇ πεποιθήσει ἣ λογίζομαι τολμῆσαι of 10.2 in expressing, at both the beginning and ending of the discourse, the way Paul does not wish to manifest his authority.

### Rhetorical Structure and Development

Paul has proven most of what the discourse will prove by this point, and the previous unit effectively justified the unusual proof performed by the FS. With the present unit, Paul challenges the Corinthians to perceive and act in accordance with what the discourse has established. Furnish characterizes the challenge Paul presents “a stern warning and an earnest admonition.”<sup>18</sup> In this unit Paul (1) denies defending himself and affirms building up the Corinthians (12.19–21); (2) previews outcomes in his upcoming visit (12.20–13.3, 7–11); and (3) challenges the Corinthians to discern Christ in him (13.3–4, 5–6). From the references displayed, it is apparent that these acts overlap and interpenetrate within this unit. The following analysis of

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<sup>18</sup> *II Corinthians*, 574

rhetorical structure, then, will treat the major speech acts in the order in which they appear in the section.

*Argument:* Paul is not and has not been defending himself but has instead written these chapters to build up the Corinthians (12.19–21)

12.19a Claim (statement or rhetorical question): Corinthians think Paul has been defending himself.

b Counterclaim: Paul has spoken in Christ for upbuilding, not for defense.

The chief claim appears in 12.9b, following the statement of what Paul thinks the Corinthians have been thinking—that Paul has been defending himself. The claim emphasizes that Paul speaks before not the Corinthians, but God. This language evokes a legal setting in which Paul visualizes himself appearing before a judge. But God alone is the judge to which Paul submits, not the Corinthians. Because Paul takes seriously his accountability for his ministry to God, he has exerted extraordinary efforts in this discourse, in especially his foolish boasting, in his unceasing effort to help the Corinthians return to their pure devotion to Christ (11.3). For this reason, Paul’s claim that he has not been defending himself is credible. Although one might label any number of speech acts in this discourse as acts of self-defense, Paul would maintain that only his desire to retrieve the Corinthians from their wandering astray has motivated all he has said. This desire is born not merely of affection for them but also of Paul’s strong sense of divine commission and of his responsibility to fulfill the measure God has measured to him (10.13–16). So he speaks before God “in Christ,” as part of the new creation, as one sent by God to the Corinthians. This is itself a sub-claim in 12.19b, elided into a prepositional phrase. While syntactically minor in this sentence, it is nevertheless one of the major claims that Paul makes in these chs. because his rivals and critics have disputed it. (Paul returns to this dispute in 13.3a.)

The claim is followed by two statements of results (12.20–21), both of which Paul hopes to forestall through this discourse of building up the Corinthians. At this point, the discourse is also previewing the options before the Corinthians with Paul’s impending visit.

*Claim:* How Paul exercises his authority during his third visit depends on the Corinthians' response to this discourse of upbuilding (12.20–13.3, 7–11):

- 12.20 Result feared: that he (with vice list) and Corinthians (no list) would not like what they find in the other when he visits
- 12.21 Result Paul wishes to avoid: God will humiliate Paul, and Paul will mourn past and present sins among the Corinthians (with vice list).
- 13.1a Announcement of 12.14 restated
- b Citation of sacred legal warrant (needing no further justification)
- 13.2 Citation of two witnesses: Paul said before (1<sup>st</sup> witness) and now (2<sup>nd</sup> witness):  
He will not spare unrepentant sinners.
- 13.3a-b Justification: Corinthians seek proof Christ speaks in Paul

Even before Paul announces the visit (13.1), 12.20–21 cause the hearers to visualize Paul's arrival in a way deeply disappointing to them and him. Such previewing of outcomes exerts significant rhetorical force. It endows the current communication with presence, proximity, and the need to respond, either to embrace the option or to avoid it. It proves rhetorically not by logic but by emotion, or pathos, arising from hearers' visualizing the unpleasant future event and believing<sup>19</sup> it likely will occur, unless they act to prevent its occurring (which is what Paul began the discourse requesting; 10.2).

Paul expresses his apostolic weakness without naming it when he fears that he will find the Corinthians yet sinning and unrepentant and that God may humiliate him before them (12.21). The sense of “weakness” most pertinent in this final section of the discourse is not his suffering from the items listed in 12.10 (except for the broadest category, “weaknesses”). Those surely are part of the most inclusive semantic range that “weakness” has for Paul in this discourse. But here Paul expresses the weakness that has characterized his ministry toward the Corinthians διὰ τῆς πραύτητος καὶ ἐπιεικειᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ (10.1). This is the manner of ministry that prompted him to admit, ironically but truly, “To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!” (11.21a). This weakness contrasts with rivals who have related to them in power—with arrogance and harshness, from Paul's perspective. These have demanded, or have happily received, financial support from their followers and abused them in other ways (11.12–21). In this weakness, Paul has never burdened the Corinthians and, to the point of these vv., he has treated with gentleness and forbearance the sinning of believers, apparently trusting that the goodness of God would lead

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<sup>19</sup> or not, based upon their opinion of Paul's willingness and ability to act as he asserts he will, a question of whether or not he is exerting ethical proof. Paul's ability to discipline with strength in person has been questioned by critics or rivals (cf. 10.1–3, 10; also 1.17–18).

to godly sorrow and repentance (Rom. 2.4; 2 Cor. 7.10). But despite the benefits such a ministry of weakness extends, the Corinthians as a whole (from the perspective of this discourse) have rejected and despised it and Paul and have embraced instead the ministry of abusive power offered by Paul's rivals.

This understanding of weakness illuminates Paul's fears: He fears that his kindness has not effected the Corinthians' repentance (12.20–21); that they have been led astray from the Christ and gospel and spirit he delivered to them (11.4); and that, as a result, God will humiliate him before them<sup>20</sup> (12.21) because he will appear to have failed to fulfill his commission as Christ's apostle: namely, to oversee the purity of their devotion to Christ, so that at the *parousia* he might present them as a pure bride to Christ (11.2–4). But beyond being humiliated by God, Paul exhibits his weakness in yet another way. Cohering with his cry in 11.29 that with the weak he is weak, in his imagining the upcoming visit, Paul sees himself mourning those who continue in their sinfulness. He mourns before God in his humiliation; he mourns because they have not repented; and he mourns with these whom God will discipline through him should they not repent. Kolenkow suggests that "Paul sees both himself and Christ as having abased themselves in order that the Corinthians may be made rich (2 Cor 8:9, 11:7). The leader-redeemer participates in both the life and the actual punishment of sinners while interceding on their behalf. Humility and mourning are the forecasted fate and role-reward of the failed [spiritual] guide as well as of the sinner. In combination with repentance these qualities may induce the mercy of God."<sup>21</sup>

Because in his ministry of weakness he appears to have failed, Paul warns that he will come this time in power, not in weakness (13.1–3), although this manner of coming is, like his boasting, something he will feel compelled to do, not something he otherwise chooses, and he will participate in the discipline along with them (12.21). Paul hopes that this letter—both its valorization of his weak ministry and his threat to act severely if he has to—will prompt the Corinthians to so act that when he comes he will not act with such effrontery as he can (10.2), so that he will not have to be severe (13.10). But the choice is up to the Corinthians, who may obey and continue to benefit from the weakness they have not understood or valued, or who may continue to disobey and face severe discipline. Paul has now done all that he can before visiting,

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<sup>20</sup> This possibility also evokes God's similar action of sending an angel of Satan to Paul (12.7)—all of these being acts that further elicit pathos, the form of proof especially appropriate to the ending, or peroration, of a discourse.



putting up with ridicule and rejection the way Christ did—with meekness and gentleness—and even consciously playing the part of the fool. This letter constitutes their last chance to heed his appeals (13.11).

Paul announces his impending visit (13.1) in a way that extends the legal motif, by citing the biblical warrant of multiple witnesses (13.1b). His announcement twice in the same part of the discourse but developing it only with the latter mention parallels his similar announcement that he will boast as a fool. He first announced “a little foolishness” in 11.1, specified foolish boasting in 11.16, but began the boasting only at 11.21b. He first announced the visit only most generally at the beginning of the discourse, 10.2, then specifically at 12.14, but develops the topic beginning with 13.1. The biblical citation of LXX Deut 19.15 in 13.1b is an argumentative warrant because Scripture functions authoritatively, requiring no further support, if all parties agree to the interpretation offered. Paul does not discuss his interpretation, indicating that, from his view, hearers would agree with it. Instead, he applies the citation to his two communications, separated by an indefinite amount of time. The invoking of a biblical and legal warrant expresses a measure of gravity, which coheres with the action Paul threatens in 13.2.

The first clause of v. 3 bears the form of a reason fully justifying the discipline promised in 13.2. It may seem absurd that Paul would threaten such discipline solely for the reason of satisfying the Corinthians’ demand for proof that Christ speaks in Paul. Surely he should mean that the unrepentant sinning deserves, on its own merits, the discipline it shall receive. But construing the meaning in this way adopts unwittingly the Corinthians’ flawed view of weakness. Had the sinners and the rest of the church recognized the “meekness and gentleness of Christ” in Paul’s “weak” treatment of sins and had the sinners repented then, Paul would not have to deal with them more severely now. The Corinthians’ failure to recognize Christ’s speaking in Paul through his weakness results in Paul’s having to be more severe now, because severity is the only proof the Corinthians have so far been willing to acknowledge. So Paul has to be severe in order to prove—to the Corinthians—that Christ speaks in him.<sup>22</sup> The Corinthians recognize that severity as Christ’s power, a characteristic of their perception that made them vulnerable to the abuse of the rivals (11.20–21). This demand for proof from Paul points again to

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<sup>21</sup> Kolenkow, “Paul and Opponents in 2 Cor 10–13,” 372–373.

<sup>22</sup> One hopes that the oracle of 12.9 and the discourse to this point have changed the Corinthians’ minds; but Paul writes at 13.3 from the perspective of the Corinthians’ beliefs before they received this discourse.

the chief issue underlying this discourse: the legitimacy of Paul’s apostolate and the illegitimacy of the criticisms of it by some Corinthians and the rivals.

*Challenge in argument:* The Corinthians are to see Christ in Paul, speaking and otherwise acting in and through him, confirming that he is their legitimate leader (13.3–4, 5–6).

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|---------|---|
| 13.3c   | Qualification and amplification of Christ: Christ is not weak toward, but powerful among, Corinthians   |
| 13.4a-b | Evidence and explanation from example: Christ was weak and is powerful  |
| c       | Conclusion drawn from example <i>and</i> warranted by implied claim that Paul parallels Christ in function: Paul is weak in Christ but acts toward Corinthians by God’s power.                      |
| 13.5a-b | Emphatic direction, returning to 13.3a (reciprocal challenge, warranted by implied appeal to equity): Corinthians to test <i>themselves</i> (to lead to the proof they demand from Paul [cf. 10.7]) |
| c-d     | Question to elicit affirmative response to v. 5a-b  |
| 13.6    | Conclusion by inference from v. 5: Corinthians to recognize Christ is in Paul   |

The above reading of 13.3a-b makes 13.3c explicable. It serves three functions: (1) It elicits agreement from the Corinthians, who endorse Christ as powerful. (2) It expresses in christological language the firm discipline<sup>23</sup> Paul will perform during the visit if they do not complete their obedience to him (10.6) and heed his appeals (13.11c) while he is still weak toward them—that is, while he is still appealing to them *διὰ τῆς πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ* (10.1) and not exercising his authority with severity (13.10). (3) Finally, 13.3c sets up Paul’s final justification of his weakness in 13.4 by bringing together the two key terms in one v., “weak” and “Christ.”

Verse 4 assumes the form of a supporting reason but actually explains and evinces evidence for 13.3c. Its assertion “For indeed Christ was crucified *ἐξ* weakness” (v. 4a) invites examination. Does Paul emphasize the assertion (*καὶ γὰρ*) because the Corinthians resisted the notion of Christ as weak, minimizing the cross and preferring only Christ as strong and powerful?<sup>24</sup> With this reading, Paul emphasizes that the heavenly Christ who commends Paul in

<sup>23</sup> εἰς ὑμᾶς οὐκ ἀσθενεῖ ἀλλὰ δυνατεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν

<sup>24</sup> Martin observes that “Paul is polemicizing here against a *theologia gloriae*, ‘a theology of glory,’ that viewed Christ as a powerful figure *in his own right*,” *2 Corinthians*, 475. McCant concurs, *2 Corinthians*, 162, as does Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 604: “because they [the Corinthians] held such a triumphalist view of the risen and ascended Christ that they minimized both the earthly ministry and more particularly the death of Christ.” While a common view, this study suggests that the theology of glory vs. the theology of the cross is here imposed on the text. Paul, the Corinthians, and his rivals can fundamentally agree on the theological facts of Christ’s weakness and

his weakness (12.9) was himself weak.<sup>25</sup> Or may Paul instead emphasize another agreement<sup>26</sup> that he now wishes to amplify to make his case about the legitimacy of his apostolic weakness? Given the Corinthians' resistance to Paul as an apostle of weakness, one might think that the Corinthians would embrace only a strong Christ. But if this is the case, Paul misses the opportunity to argue more effectively for the truth of the weak Christ. He simply does not argue the point but asserts it as if he could expect the Corinthians to agree. This lack of argumentation on this point coheres with the thesis this study has been advancing: namely, that Paul, rivals, and Corinthians would agree that apostles endure hardship and suffer and in this respect follow the example of Jesus. All parties would likewise acknowledge the weak and strong dimensions of Christ. They would differ only in what the cross-weakness of Christ implies about the behavior and attitudes of leaders following in his steps. Paul relates this dimension of Christ's weakness to Christ's humility apart from his crucifixion in weakness, and this is why Paul opens the discourse appealing on the basis of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Paul's rivals, on the other hand, appear not to relate Christ's weakness to their manner of leading. Christ's weakness appears to be for them simply a passing phase of his earthly career. They do not deny it as theological truth; they simply do not view it as in any sense a model for Christian existence and behavior. Paul does, and his weak, lenient leadership seems to have left the Corinthians as somewhat easy prey for harder driving leaders who gilded their presentation of Christ with attitudes and behaviors of sophistic success, in which meekness and gentleness do not play a part.

The following clause of 13.4, “ἀλλὰ (adversative)<sup>27</sup> he lives ἐκ God's power” contrasts Christ crucified against Christ living ἐκ God's power, and it also stresses the present activity—Christ's living—over against Christ's past activity. Some interpreters want to make this v. also speak of Christ as weak in the present. While such an assertion would weigh against a “theology of glory,”<sup>28</sup> the present text does not fulfill these interpreters' desires and thus raises the question whether or not the concern of a theology of the cross vs. a theology of glory is a thought form

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strength, which Paul seems here to rehearse more than to argue, while still differing seriously on the significance of each, the ways in which each is to be manifested in the behavior of leaders.

<sup>25</sup> The cross is mentioned only here in all of canonical 2 Corinthians.

<sup>26</sup> Presuming that the Corinthians agreed with the characterization of Christ in 13.3c.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. BDF § 448.5

<sup>28</sup> So Martin, *2 Corinthians* 475; Barrett, *II Corinthians* 336

pertinent to this text.<sup>29</sup> Paul is content to stress Christ’s weakness in his crucifixion, using an aorist verb (ἔσταυρώθη) and thus not defining the duration of the action beyond asserting its occurrence. It may benefit more to ask the sense in which Christ may have been crucified “ἐξ weakness.” Plummer and Martin interpret the preposition as indicating source, thus literally “from” or “out of” weakness.<sup>30</sup> “Weakness” could be such a source if it shares the sense expressed by “the ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ” in 10.1.<sup>31</sup> Following Leivestad, I urged that that phrase signifies “a humble, patient steadfastness, which is able to submit to injustice, disgrace and maltreatment without hatred and malice, trusting God in spite of it all.”<sup>32</sup> Christ’s being crucified ἐξ weakness in 13.4a may express this combination of qualities and actions. While such a meaning might appear to differ from that in the assertion “Christ is not weak” in 13.3b, on one level the two may be synonymous, because the weakness of 13.4—steadfastness in and submission to maltreatment without hatred but in trust to God—is a complex action evincing strength.

Paul does not seem to worry about expressing a single, univocal sense for all occurrences of “weak” or “weakness” in this passage. The diction and syntax of 13.4 contrast Christ as weak and Christ as now living ἐκ God’s power, with the emphasis falling on the latter. Paul might have joined the two with a non-adversative καὶ, had he wished to merge the two into one and to emphasize Christ’s continuing, present weakness. It seems to be enough for Paul to assert that Christ was weak in order for Paul to parallel his meek and gentle ministry with Christ functionally. Thus “So also we are weak in him” (13.4c) asserts Paul’s participation in the Christ who was weak, thereby justifying Paul’s weakness as a dimension of his being, or identity, in Christ. If the divine oracle of 12.9 were not enough to valorize Paul’s weakness, Paul now

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<sup>29</sup> Anitra Bingham Kolenkow argues that Paul and his rivals alike experienced suffering, hardship, and miracles and that what distinguished them was not a theology of the cross vs. a theology of glory but Paul’s untraditional way of governing his churches. Paul treated believers and sinners among them with the “meekness and gentleness of Christ” and did not accept financial support from (at least some of) them in contrast to rivals, who treated followers more roughly (cf. 11.19–20) and demanded, or at least happily accepted, their financial support. Paul’s gentler, self-supporting approach to governing his churches renders him vulnerable to the criticism that he and his followers will prove to be ἄδοκίμοι, that is, his leadership is not rigorous enough to achieve the goals of the faith. At the end of these chapters, Paul is having to face the possibility that he may have to do more than “write tough” (the criticism expressed at 10.10); he may have to discipline firmly on this third visit. “Paul and Opponents in 2 Corinthians 10—13: *Theioi Andres* and Spiritual Guides” in Lukas Bormann, Kelly del Tredici, Angela Standhartinger, eds., *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World*, Supplement 74 to Novum Testamentum (Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1994) 351–374.

<sup>30</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians* 475; Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 375.

<sup>31</sup> See discussion about 2 Cor 10.1 in chap. two of this study.

<sup>32</sup> Ragnar Leivestad, “‘The Meekness and Gentleness of Christ’ II Cor. X.1,” *NTS* 13 (1966) 158.

locates his own weakness in Christ, both in Christ’s own (past) weakness and in Paul’s present being in Christ. But Paul is writing to believers who may have not yet accepted his apostolic weakness, and he is closing this discourse, so the stress in 13.4c-d falls, as it did in the parallel 13.4a-b, not on weakness but on power: “we will live with him out of (ἐκ) the power of God toward you.” Throughout this discourse, Paul has attempted to rehabilitate the Corinthians’ notion of weakness, and in 13.4c he does not back down from boasting in his weakness (12.9); but, writing here as if he has failed to change their minds, he expresses his intention to demonstrate the proof they demand.

The major speech act performed in 13.3–4 then is that of Paul’s announcing, even warning, that he will give the Corinthians the proof they have said that they want. But the announcement accumulates the quality of rhetorical proof by Paul’s asserting that he derives both his weakness and power from the Christ who is powerful among the Corinthians but who was weak and whose weakness and power is the source of Paul’s, as both are expressed among the Corinthians. This act announces, with the tenor of a warning, Paul’s upcoming visit in power, and it also justifies again Paul’s apostolic weakness by locating it in Christ himself. The extent to which these vv. would persuade would depend on the extent to which hearers would grant the tacit warrant: namely, that Paul’s ministry parallels Christ’s.

Paul acts more assertively in 13.5–6 in responding to the demand for proof of Christ’s speaking in him. Drawing upon a tacit warrant of equity, he returns the challenge to the Corinthians: If they want proof of Christ in him, they should demand the same proof of themselves!<sup>33</sup> Paul emphasizes the challenge by repeating it<sup>34</sup> and by twice using the emphatic ἐαυτοὺς in the same v. Then follows a pair of sentences with significant parallels:

ἢ οὐκ ἐπιγινώσκετε ἐαυτοὺς ὅτι Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν; εἰ μήτι ἀδόκιμοί ἐστε.  
ἐπίζω δὲ ὅτι γινώσεσθε<sup>35</sup> ὅτι ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἐσμέν ἀδόκιμοι.

<sup>33</sup> The relation of this direction to v. 3a may seem to be punitive: “Take care of *yourselves* before worrying about proof in anybody else.” But a causal sense exerts greater argumentative force: “If you want proof that Christ speaks in me, first ‘look at what is before you’ (10.7), and see if Christ is in you. Once you confirm that he is and that you are in the faith, then you should be able to recognize that we pass the same test.” Implied: “How did Christ come to be in you? What human means did God use to bring you into the faith—if not us and our mission to you at the beginning?” (cf. 10.13f.) Moreover, it is possible that both senses inhere in the same statement and likely that only its oral performance would stress one sense more than the other.

<sup>34</sup> although occurring in two words, πειράζετε and δοκιμάζετε.

<sup>35</sup> Barrett: *ginōskein* in sense of *epiginōskein* in v. 5. See Moulton i. 115. Compound first, then simpler form bears same sense, 338

This arrangement highlights Paul’s aim not only to shift the burden of proof from his shoulders to the Corinthians’ but also to benefit from the results of their self-examination. The move from their result—“yes, we pass the test”—to the same judgment toward Paul—“yes, he passes the test”—rests on their inferring what the discourse may imply: (from their perspective) How could we be “in the faith” apart from Paul’s transmitting or helping us come to be in it? The implication is more likely<sup>36</sup> if γνώσεσθε carries the force of “recognize” here, as Barrett suggests.<sup>37</sup> Yet with this sense of “recognize,” Paul may intend instead that the Corinthians recognize his unique role as an insight arising from looking at what is before them more than as the result of consciously inferring from their status in the faith first to Paul’s similar status and then to his causality for that status.<sup>38</sup> In either event, Paul hopes that his christological explanation (vv. 3–4) along with their self-examination will strengthen their belief that Christ speaks in him, that he is Christ’s apostle to them.

*Resumption of argument* (from 12.19): Paul is not defending himself but instead building up the Corinthians. (13.7–10)

- 13.7       Wish (via prayer) for Corinthians’ right response more than for their judgment that Paul passed the test (supports 12.19b)
- 13.8       Claim: However Paul may appear, he cannot act against the truth
- 13.9a-b    Claim: Paul rejoices when weak (i.e., may appear not to pass test) and when Corinthians are morally strong
- c-d     Claim: Paul prays for Corinthians’ restoration

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<sup>36</sup> as opposed only to being invented or discerned by close readers while not having crossed Paul’s mind

<sup>37</sup> Barrett’s translation, *II Corinthians* 338. He comments: “If however the Corinthians were convinced that they were Christians, that Christ was in them, they must draw the necessary conclusion. . . . [I]f the Corinthians are Christians, it is through Paul’s ministry. To throw doubt on his apostleship and apostolic message is to throw doubt on their own being as Christians; to affirm their own faith is to vindicate the preacher through whom they become believers.”

<sup>38</sup>The argument that the Corinthians should and would *infer* Paul’s similar status in the faith and his unique role of progenitor of them as believers rests completely here on their grasping an implication present in the discourse. But it is possible and perhaps sounder for interpreters today to argue that Paul did not construct these sentences with an implication in them as much as he hoped that the Corinthians would look adequately at themselves and at Paul and experience the *insight* of his key role apart from the rational process of inferring. Establishing what a text implies is at times difficult, and I doubt that the implication Barrett and others find here would be discerned in the short time this portion of the discourse would be performed orally. It suggests itself to me only after sustained, close reading aided by the results of the close readings of other interpreters. But insights, by their very nature, occur quickly—the penny drops—and exert force even before one consciously reasons about what prompted them, if one ever does. But to argue that an audience is likely to experience insight X from speech act, or discourse portion, Y is itself difficult because of the same non- or supra-rational aesthetic character of insights. Yet insights are a ubiquitous human experience, and they exert suasive force, so a rhetorical reading should consider them along with argument. The effect of example in discourse may rest on the insight one experiences while considering the example as much as it does on the inferences one scrutinizes consciously and critically in order to confirm (or deny) the value of that example as support for a given claim.

13.10 Claim: Paul writes for their restoration; not to use authority severely but to build them up (cf. 13.7–9; 12.19; 10.2)

The speech acts of 13.3–6 may seem to defend Paul before the Corinthians again, which he has denied to be his purpose (12.19), rather than to build them up. With 13.7–10, Paul leaves any appearance of self-defense and instead speaks only for their upbuilding. Verse 7 indicates this turn from apparent defense to upbuilding by the mildly adversative force of δὲ and by clauses 13.7c-e (indicated by superscript characters).

<sup>a</sup>εὐχόμεθα δὲ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν

<sup>b</sup>μὴ ποιῆσαι ὑμᾶς κακὸν μηδέν, <sup>c</sup>οὐχ ἵνα ἡμεῖς δόκιμοι φανῶμεν,  
<sup>d</sup>ἀλλ' ἵνα ὑμεῖς τὸ καλὸν ποιῆτε, <sup>e</sup>ἡμεῖς δὲ ὡς ἀδόκιμοι ὦμεν.

The contents of Paul's prayer (13.7b,d) express his greater desire that the Corinthians avoid evil, or wrong (v. 7b), and do good (v. 7d) than that they recognize his success or legitimacy (13.7c,e). Paul's asserting concern for their well-being over his in this way is forceful<sup>39</sup> and would encourage the Corinthians to accept as sincere his claim not to be defending himself but instead building them up.

Verses 8–10 each occur in the form of a reason supporting the claims of v. 7, with vv. 8–9 connected to the preceding by γὰρ and v. 10 with διὰ. Verses 8–9 offer three supporting reasons for Paul's strong desire expressed in v. 7. Verse 8 keys off of Paul's weakness, his apparent failure (v. 7e): Serving διὰ τῆς πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ (10.1), Paul is too weak to do other than proclaim the Jesus, the Spirit, and the gospel the Corinthians received from him (11.4), even if the Corinthians' continuing sinfulness without repentance causes him to appear to have failed his commission;<sup>40</sup> and he will continue in this ministry "for the truth" and on the same terms as before (11.12). This assertion in v. 8 is not an absolute theoretical statement about what Paul can and cannot do in any and all circumstances; rather, it is a practical statement that expresses the stability of Paul's fundamental identity as one who is contentedly weak in Christ (12.9–10; 13.4; although able to express Christ's power in discipline when necessary). Not acting

<sup>39</sup> reminiscent of a similar but stronger statement in Rom. 9.9

<sup>40</sup> Interpreters offer many readings for this v. Martin sees it as affirming that in whatever way Paul comes, in weakness or in power, his coming will be in line with the truth (*2 Corinthians*, 483). Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 248, and McCant, *2 Corinthians*, 166, seem to concur. Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 611, sees Paul as controlled by truth such that he will not (not cannot) express himself otherwise, a view quite close to Barrett's: Paul "could not preach a different Gospel without becoming a different person," *Second Epistle*, 341. The reading offered in this study attempts only to express a meaning one may derive from the semantic universe of the near context.

against but only for this truth thus supports Paul's desiring the well-being of the Corinthians more than his appearing to succeed in his apostleship to them.

Verse 9 provides two claims supporting the claim of v. 7. First, Paul continues to express his greater desire for the Corinthians' well-being than his own by rejoicing when he appears not to succeed if they are, at the same time, strong—that is, not doing evil but doing good, as v.7 says. Second, Paul restates the contents of his prayer (v. 7), now expressed as a prayer for their restoration.<sup>41</sup> This request not only reinforces the request in v. 7, but it also reminds the Corinthians, again gently, of what Paul expects from them by the time he comes.

With 13.10, Paul again supports his claim in 12.19b by expressing in the clearest terms in the discourse why he writes and what benefit the Corinthians will gain by completing their obedience to him (10.6). Not only does Paul support the prior claim, but he also repeats almost completely the statement of purpose of his authority from the Lord (cf. 10.8). The chief differences are that in 13.10 Paul adds *μοι* as the indirect object of *ἔδωκέν*, and he does not include a pronoun referring to the Corinthians, which occurred in 10.8 (*ὑμῶν*). If these changes signify a difference, it would be in nuance and would be Paul's final, slightly stronger assertion that the Lord has given him authority, the primary goal of which is the Corinthians' building up, not tearing down.

This brief section, 13.7–10, functions to support Paul's claim in 12.19 that he does not defend himself before the Corinthians but that he speaks in Christ before God to build up the Corinthians. The chief claim of this section is expressed as strong desire in the form of a prayer that begins in 13.7b, continues in 13.7d, and concludes in 13.9c-d. The remaining clauses in 13.7–9 reinforce and amplify this desire, the ways they exert a kind of rhetorical proof. None of the claims offers either evidence or a reason to support the prayer claims beyond earnestly asserting support for those claims. But these clauses could increase the Corinthians' trust in what Paul expresses in his prayer-claims if they received them as earnest, sincere expressions from Paul. Verse 10 exerts a kind of seriousness in its expression of good will toward the Corinthians. Their restoration and his ability to use his authority to build them up occupy most of v. 10, but Paul ends on a muted warning: Although the purpose of his authority is to build up, he is prepared to do some tearing down, if he must (cf. 10.4–6).

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<sup>41</sup> *κατάρτισις* derives from the verb *καταρτίζειν* in 13.11. While it may mean “to prepare” (cf. Rom. 9.22) “restoration” fits the present context better.



### Rhetorical Effects

Paul goes on the offensive in this unit, and hearers would again experience the sense of threat evinced in 10.2–6, except attenuated slightly to firm warning: Paul is coming to Corinth soon, he is prepared to match his tough writing with tough acting in person if unrepentant believers do not change. He visualizes an unhappy meeting when he arrives, and, if he has to, he will manifest proof that Christ speaks through him. So the Corinthians are on trial, not Paul. They need to examine themselves. But with all this warning, Paul's affection for the Corinthians exerts significant force as well. If he has to discipline the unrepentant, he will mourn over and with them. Although he would like his ministry to appear fully approved in the eyes of the Corinthians, he prays more that they reform and do what is right, even if in so doing he continues to appear to be weak, because their repentance removes his need to act tough. Their well doing matters more than his appearing to do well. He can manifest his authority in tearing down, but he wants to keep using it only to build up.

Compared with the opening threat to divine warfare in 10.3–6, this unit is sober, with sufficient gravity, but also with a hope-filled affection that strikes a balance, or nearly so, between the insistence that the Corinthians change or face Paul's severity, on the one hand, and the potential for a pleasant reunion, on the other hand. Which it will be depends on the Corinthians' response to this discourse.

### Relation to Ancient Rhetoric

This unit has Paul clarify what the discourse is, not an apology, but an upbuilding. It pictures a sad reunion with Paul having to discipline unrepentant believers, mourning over them, and being himself humiliated by God. It develops a legal basis for his coming to Corinth ready to discipline and ready to show the stubborn that Christ endorses and speaks through him. Then it challenges the Corinthians to stop examining Paul and to start examining themselves, with the prayer that, whatever their opinion of him and his leadership will be, they will be restored fully to the Jesus, gospel, and Spirit he first gave to them. In short, this unit draws out from the preceding portions of the discourse the attitudes and actions the hearers should now possess and perform, and it urges them to act, using appeals to emotion and justice to motivate them.

Accomplishing these acts places this unit within the description of the oration part known as the *peroratio*. Cicero identified the three parts of a typical *peroratio* as (1) the *enumeratio* or *recapitulatio*, which summarizes the preceding proofs; (2) the *indignatio*, or the exciting of ill-will against one's opponents; and (3) the *conquestio*, or the eliciting of strong pity or sympathy for the speaker (*De Inv.* 1.52.98). Earlier Paul has aroused emotion against the rivals (esp. 11.20–21). But in the present unit, Paul's imagining the unhappy meeting on his arrival at Corinth, including God's humiliating him, and his expressing concern for the Corinthians, that they do right regardless of how he looks, would succeed in arousing some positive emotion toward him. While this unit does not truly summarize the preceding arguments, it does induce from the preceding portions the issues that have to be resolved: the Corinthians' faithfulness to the gospel and their proper evaluation of Paul and his ministry. This unit is not anywhere near an ideal example of the textbook *peroratio*, but it accomplishes the key purpose of eliciting the appropriate decision and action from hearers, so it is properly considered as a *peroratio*.<sup>42</sup>

### LETTER CLOSING (13.11–13)

#### *Text*

11 Λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί, χαίρετε,<sup>43</sup> καταρτίζεσθε, παρακαλεῖσθε, τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖτε, εἰρηνεύετε, καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν. 12 ἀσπάσασθε ἀλλήλους ἐν ἀγίῳ φιλήματι. ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ ἅγιοι πάντες. 13 Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.

<sup>42</sup> Peterson, *Eloquence*, 132–139, and Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 471–473, concur.

<sup>43</sup> The major exegetical question this v. raises is how to understand and translate the series of imperatives, some of which have identical imperative and middle forms. χαίρετε may be translated “goodbye” or “rejoice.” The translation results from observing its position as the first in a series of imperatives and not standing more or less alone as a typical salutation at the beginning of a letter. Further, the same verb occurs in 13.9 as “rejoice,” and a similar use in 1 Thess. 5.16 can only mean “rejoice” there (Furnish, *II Corinthians* 581). καταρτίζεσθε as a middle voice verb would yield “mend your ways” or “Pull yourselves together” (Barrett 342). But its cognate noun occurs also in 13.9 with the clear sense of restoration, which warrants slightly its similar rendering here as a passive. παρακαλεῖσθε may similarly be translated as a middle: “exhort, comfort, or encourage one another,” but translating it as a passive coheres better with the opening of these chs., παρακαλῶ (10.10), and it also coheres with the advice ch. 13 offers. The following two passive verbs are not also in middle form and do not therefore require a similar judgment for their translation.

### *Translation*

11 Finally, brothers, rejoice, be restored, heed my appeals, be of the same mind, be at peace—and the God of love and of peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. [13] All the saints greet you. 13[14] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

### *Analysis*

#### *Speech Acts*

This closing of the discourse accomplishes three main acts: First, it offers final directions (13.11a-e, 12a) and pronounces a blessing to those who obey (13.11f). Second, it delivers greetings most briefly; and third, it pronounces a final blessing (13.13). With this translation, the most important feature of these vv. are the calls to restoration and to heeding Paul's appeals, which together constitute Paul's final appeal that the Corinthians act in such a way that he will not have to be severe toward them when he visits.

#### *Recapitulate Rhetorical Performance*

At a bird's-eye level, 10.1—12.10 perform five major acts, three with sustained argument, although in different modes. In the first act (10.1–6), Paul appeals, through the forbearance and gentleness of Christ, to the Corinthians to obey him so that he will not have to punish. With his appeal, he accepts the negative evaluation of critics; but he also threatens spiritual war, should the Corinthians not obey him.

In the second act (10.7–11), Paul directs the Corinthians to examine the evidence for three claims: (1) Paul belongs to Christ in as much a specially commissioned role (*διάκονος Χριστοῦ*) as anyone does; (2) Paul will not be discredited in his claims to belong to Christ and to possess authority; (3) Paul will act with integrity and consistency, whether by letter or in person.

Acts three and four prove these claims in quite different ways. Act three (10.12—11.21a), proves by contrasting Paul and his rivals sharply on five topics. These contrasts demonstrate differences between Paul and the rivals so great as to make it impossible for him to compare himself with them. Paul uses the final comparison—between the rivals' abusiveness and his meeker, gentler approach to governing the congregation—to take the epithet that he is too weak

to lead and to make it his badge of honor (11.19–21a), a well-placed foreshadowing of a key assertion of the next act. By the end of this direct proof, hearers should have sufficient evidence to support all three of the claims from the second act. And they will know that they must choose one or the other as their leader.

Act four presents indirect, dramatic proof. Paul dramatizes the negative judgment of his critics and rivals that he has already accepted (10.1) by adopting the role of the fool. The FS (11.21b—12.10) (a) shows Paul to commend himself, foolishly, as a better διάκονος Χριστου. His outdoing his rivals, point by point, without boasting of any positive results from his endurance of hardships would have a double effect: taken straightforwardly, it would show Paul to have greatly outdone his rivals; while taken as a fool's parody, Paul's superlative, unmatched performance—but without any tokens of successful results—render this whole line of boasting pointless. (b) At 11.30, Paul begins boasting of that badge of shame his rivals have stitched upon his persona *in absentia*: his multi-dimensioned weakness in ministry among the Corinthians. As a fool whose words may often make sense on two levels at the same time, straightforwardly and parodically, Paul boasts of three concrete weaknesses. The last receives divine attention in the form of a healing denied with a revelation that overrides the criticisms against Paul by pronouncing his weakness to be the medium through which God fulfills and expresses divine power. The congregation would be disposed to accept the oracle, which renders powerless the very assumption by which rivals opposed Paul's ministry.

Act five (12.11—13.13) directs the force of the great reversal of 12.9 toward outstanding issues between the Corinthians and Paul. The root issue is their failure to appreciate Paul's ministry among them in the "weakness" of Christ's meekness and gentleness. This failure is expressed through these specific failures: the failure (1) to commend and defend Paul to his critics and rivals; (2) to repent from ongoing sin and live according to Paul's example; (3) to accept the sincerity of purpose with which he supports himself while giving the gospel freely to them, without their resorting to pernicious suspicion and rumor; and finally, (4) to recognize Christ in Paul's greater concern for their well being than for his appearing to have succeeded as Christ's apostle to them. The act and the discourse ends with Paul's desiring to continue to express his authority weakly rather than severely. He remains weak in Christ, but he performs ministry among the Corinthians by God's power, even while ministering "weakly." That power

can express itself in further gentleness or in severity, and their response to this four-chapter appeal determines which it shall be.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

For its methodological thesis, this study has sought to discern the rhetorical, or subsuming, form, or logic, of 2 Cor 10–13. In the process of completing this task, it has also supported the six topical theses stated in ch. I. This chapter summarizes the contributions of chs. I–IV.

#### **METHODOLOGICAL THESIS: THE RHETORICAL FORM OF 2 CORINTHIANS 10–13**

By rhetorical, or subsuming, form, this study refers to a form originating in the rhetor’s mind and expressed in the discourse. This form is, in Ronald S. Crane’s words, “a synthesizing idea [that] is more than a general intention, more than a ‘theme,’ and more than an outline in the usual sense of the word.” It is “a shaping or directing cause,” immanent throughout the discourse; “a form sufficiently coherent and intelligible” that the rhetor knows how to order and emphasize the parts of the discourse, including what arguments to include and in what style, with the result that every part of the discourse contributes toward the fulfillment of its purpose(s).<sup>1</sup> When we discern this form, we are able offer an account for the rhetoric of the discourse—why what is said is said when it is said and in the way it is said.

This study has argued that the criticism that Paul is too weak to lead is a major cause for this discourse and that the discourse is dedicated to responding to this criticism. It is expressed in the discourse most unambiguously at 2 Cor 10.10 but also in 10.1, perhaps in language of Paul’s choosing. The other major criticism, which at first glance may appear to differ from the criticism of weakness, targets Paul’s practice of supporting himself in order truly to give the gospel wherever he establishes churches (11.7–13; 12.13–16). This criticism too pertains to the criticism of weakness. Critics appear to have alleged one (or perhaps both) of the following possible reasons for Paul’s refusal of Corinthian support: (1) By supporting himself, Paul acts as a person of low status, who is therefore perceived by society to be weak and slavish and disqualified to

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<sup>1</sup> *The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry* (The Alexander Lectures, 1951–1952; Toronto: University of Toronto Press), cited by Edward P. J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 300–301.

lead.<sup>2</sup> (2) By refusing support, Paul concedes that he is inferior to his rivals, that he knows that he is not fully qualified and competent as an apostle, that his inferior sophistic “wisdom” does not merit support (accounting therefore also for his mishandling the collection).<sup>3</sup>

This proposal of the cause for the discourse enables the reader to discern its rhetorical form, here summarized.

### ***Exordium: 10.1–6***

Paul responds to the charge that he is weak<sup>4</sup> immediately and forcefully. He opens by asserting his authority strongly, then appealing to the Corinthians on the basis of the moderating virtues of the meekness and gentleness of Christ (10.1), which functions to anchor the discourse in the kind of leader Paul wishes to be—one who re-presents Christ to the Corinthians—if only they will act in the way that will allow him to continue to govern the church in this way. The rest of the *Exordium* threatens bold, divine war against Paul’s sophistic rivals (10.2–6), because of their seriously harmful influence in the church.<sup>5</sup> Paul the conqueror threatens to tear down their arguments, proud conceits, disobedient thoughts, and acts of disobedience. How much of this offensive action is reserved to his upcoming visit is uncertain; but this discourse itself prosecutes this divine war. This unit’s appeal and threats include also the assurance that Paul does not target the Corinthians believers themselves with this war, and the final clause of the unit makes clear what Paul expects of them—their obedience—but in language subdued in comparison with the language of war. This unit certainly captures the attention of hearers, impresses them with Paul’s serious threat, and offers the way they may side with Paul and avoid the promised war—by completing their obedience to him. It does not argue rationally—it appeals and threatens—nor does it evince much effort to elicit the good will of the Corinthians toward Paul. It portrays Paul as exerting his authority firmly, and also with the good will of the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> This same reason applies whether or not critics thought Paul was refusing a Corinthian offer of friendship through a proffered gift.

<sup>3</sup> See discussion of 11.7–11 in ch. III of this study and discussion of 12.13–16 in ch. IV.

<sup>4</sup> expressed in this unit in 10.1, perhaps in Paul’s own paraphrase: ὃς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀπὼν δὲ θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς. See discussion of Betz’ proposal in ch. II of this study.

<sup>5</sup> criticizing Paul as unfit to lead (or endorsing that criticism made first by others, namely, critics among the Corinthians themselves), claiming their jurisdiction at Corinth falsely (10.13–16), leading believers astray from devotion to Christ (11.3–4), and abusing believers (11.20)

### **Propositio: 10.7–11**

Where would one expect the discourse to go with the opening of 10.1–6? One could imagine a discourse considerably briefer than four chs., one that spells out immediately what Paul wants the Corinthians to do<sup>6</sup> before he arrives to prosecute the divine war and then concludes. But this unit shows that the discourse develops much further to fulfill its purposes. It first calls the Corinthians to examine the evidence pertaining to the criticisms (10.7). This appeal to evidence establishes a criterion for the whole discourse, indicating that Paul’s rhetoric is not radically religious in the sense that it appeals to secret religious knowledge for evidence and to esoteric warrants for argument. The Corinthians are asked—and helped—to review evidence that will help them judge the matter for themselves, although Paul does not in any way suggest that their judgment will affect at all his conviction that he is Christ’s legitimate apostle to them.<sup>7</sup> With this appeal to evidence, the discourse expresses the criticisms more clearly<sup>8</sup> and gives to each a brief initial response: To the criticism that Paul is not a true apostle,<sup>9</sup> Paul responds that he can match any of their claims (10.7).<sup>10</sup> To the criticism that he boasts too much of his apostolic relation with Christ and of his authority, he responds that, in the end, the results of his ministry will not discredit him (10.8). His response in this v. also underlines the punitive potential of his authority, although it was given for building them up, not for tearing them down. And to the directly quoted and perhaps central criticism that he writes powerfully (without meaning to frighten) but is weak in person and contemptible in his speech,<sup>11</sup> he responds that what he says while away, in person he does (10.10–11).

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<sup>6</sup> fulfilling 10.2, *έομαι δέ τὸ μὴ παρῶν θαρρησαι τῆ πεποιθήσει ἢ λογίζομαι τολμησαι*, and 10.6, *ὅταν πληρωθῆ ὑμῶν ἡ ὑπακοή*

<sup>7</sup> He will urge later that this discourse is not self-defense but edification for them (12.19), and that urging coheres with his stance throughout the discourse. His adequacy as apostle may be up for debate in their minds, but not in his; and whatever they decide, he will return to Corinth and proceed with his apostolic work among them—all those who confirm that they are truly in the faith (13.5).

<sup>8</sup> although this expressing of the criticisms is less explicit than one could want. Only the final criticism, vv. 10–11, is fully explicit by means of the direct quotation of the criticism. The others are not introduced straightforwardly, with metadiscourse helping, such as: “Now to the criticisms against me . . .” This lack of explicitness on such points contrasts Paul’s rhetoric from that of model Hellenistic orations, such as *De Corona* by Demosthenes, where the hearer (or reader) is much clearer about when the main points are being expressed.

<sup>9</sup> See discussion on 10.7 in ch. II.

<sup>10</sup> One may describe the rest of the discourse as supporting this claim: not only in the rehearsal of Paul’s history among the Corinthians (10.13–11.21), but also and especially in the FS, of which 11.23 restates the present claim with an argumentative edge: *διάκονοι Χριστοῦ εἰσιν; παραφρονῶν λαλῶ, ὑπὲρ ἐγώ*.

<sup>11</sup> This criticism targets both Paul’s unsatisfactory oral rhetoric and his character, because the criticism focuses on the character implications of the inconsistency between Paul’s strong letters and weak speech.



### ***Probatio*, Part I: 10.12–11.21a**

One might expect the stressing of evidence and expressing of criticisms to lead immediately to proof of the rebutting claims, in the order in which they are expressed. The discourse does prove, rhetorically, these claims in the *Probatio*, but the first unit of this new section clarifies that the discourse is responding to more than the criticisms. With the criticisms of Paul's weakness has come information about Paul's rivals at Corinth and some kind of request, or even demand, that Paul commend his own ministry, just as his rivals have done, perhaps using that discourse of self-commendation as the vehicle for his response to the criticisms.<sup>12</sup> This request and the criticisms have impressed Paul in a way that induces him to respond to them jointly.

This section of the discourse thus begins by denying that Paul can, or would dare to, compare or classify his ministry with the activities of his rivals, because their intramural self-commendation lacks any objective basis (10.12) and is itself not boasting in the Lord (10.17). The discourse from 10.13 through 11.21a supports this denial. It demonstrates, in an ongoing σύγκρισις, five reasons why Paul cannot compare his work with that of his rivals; these are enumerated below. The units constituting this section also perform other functions while supporting this denial and contrasting Paul against his rivals. They support the three claims expressed in the *Probatio*, and they prove all these claims—the denial of 10.12 and the three from 10.8–11—through a recital of Paul's activities among the Corinthians, through review of their history. Neither the *Exordium* nor the *Probatio* rehearses any of the history of Paul and the Corinthians; likewise, neither does the FS. This mode of argument (denying that Paul is weak in any truly disqualifying way and affirming the four claims of 10.8–12) exerts unique and valuable force because (1) it exhibits evidence to which the Corinthians are firsthand witnesses (cf. 10.7), increasing the force of implications and conclusions drawn skillfully from the evidence; (2) while proving claims, this mode also prepares hearers for the different mode the FS presents. By the time the FS begins, with its lack of information about the location and time of each event it recites, Corinthian hearers have been reminded in several ways of the unique, longer-standing relationship Paul has had with them. This section is directly about Paul and the Corinthian believers, while the FS, while it pertains to their issues with Paul, is not directly about him and

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<sup>12</sup> We do not know what information Paul has about the rivals—its amount or accuracy. But we do know from the FS itself that he has apparently received a sample of their self-commendation or of some kind of outline of their commendations, because the FS indicates that Paul is following a pattern given to him, that he is answering the rivals in kind (esp. 11.21b–23).

them but rather about the pertinent events and character of his ministry, unqualified by reference to any specific places and times. The mode of proof of this section, then, benefits from the weightier presence that proximity provides. The discourse exerts greater rhetorical force by placing this section before the FS. To move directly from the *Probatio* and 10.12 to 11.21b (beginning the FS), deleting or relocating 10.13–11.21a after the FS, has Paul respond quickly enough within the discourse to the demand that he join the self-comparison game, but it loses the advantage he gains by rehearsing his unique relationship with the rivals. In the discourse as it stands, the results of that rehearsal and contrast against the rivals carries a kind of rhetorical momentum into the FS.

The first unit within this section asserts and supports Paul's jurisdiction over the Corinthians because he reached them with the gospel, not the rivals (10.13–16). It makes rhetorical sense to begin this historical recital with the beginning of the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians, not only because a chronological sequence is easy to follow but also because Paul's pioneering the church among the Corinthians is itself a substantive topic. The rivals contrast against Paul because they were not the founders, yet they boast in Paul's labors, beyond the limit of what God has apportioned them, as if the Corinthian church results from their work. In contrast, Paul wants Corinth not as his final possession but as a base for pioneering other churches where others have not gone. The unit ends by expressing a second criterion: Boast in, or of, the Lord, and value only his commendation (10.17–18).

The second unit (11.1–6) progresses chronologically and topically. After forecasting boasting to come,<sup>13</sup> Paul recounts his ministry in the conversion of the Corinthians to Christ as his betrothing them, a metaphor that expresses a serious, intimate, absoluteness, to which nothing can be added before the marriage at the *parousia*. This action and the unique relationship it expresses between Paul and the Corinthians contrasts with the action of the rivals. They have deceived and led the Corinthians astray by bringing, through their hubristic, strong, sophistic manner of ministry and leadership a *de facto* different Jesus, Spirit, and gospel. To these rivals, Paul explicitly denies that he is at all inferior, his lack of oratory notwithstanding.

The third unit (combining two sub-units, 11.7–11 and 11.12–15) may progress chronologically because it refers not only to Paul's supporting himself when he began ministry among the Corinthians but also to his continuing practice up to the writing of the present

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<sup>13</sup> indicating that Paul has planned the FS and the discourse overall and not written utterly spontaneously

discourse and his intention for the future. Its first main claim is clear: Paul gave the gospel as a gift, working to support himself, while the rivals have not given the gospel but, like sophists, have received Corinthian support. His working manually makes him look like a person of low status, illuminating at least in part the criticism that his personal presence is weak (10.10).<sup>14</sup> After detailing in emotive language the severity of his want while ministering among them (11.9) and the steps he took to supplement his earnings (11.8–9), he celebrates his boast of giving the gospel and dares the Corinthians to see his sacrifice as motivated by anything other than his love for them.

The second sub-unit (11.12–15) contrasts Paul and his record of giving the gospel with the rivals who falsely claim to work on the same terms that Paul does (11.12). From this exposure of their false claim, Paul unleashes his invective against them: They are false apostles, servants of Satan whose ability to disguise themselves as Christ’s apostles is the unsurprising practice of servants who emulate their master. With this name-calling, the discourse proceeds a significant step. It is now out of the question that the Corinthians can divide their loyalties between Paul and the rivals. They and he are beyond comparing (10.12), and the discourse implies that the Corinthians must sever their ties with the rivals and complete their obedience to Paul (10.6).

The fourth unit (11.16–21a) again forecasts the soon-to-begin boasting and completes its preparation of the Corinthians for the FS. It argues (again, as 11.1–4 does) that the Corinthians should receive Paul, even if they think him a fool, because they put up with fools. The following citation of rivals’ abuse of the Corinthians not only proves what the Corinthians have already put up with, but it also warrants the demonizing of the rivals in the previous unit. Having described the activities of his “strong” rivals, Paul concedes that, as his critics have said, he is weak (11.21a). The contrast between the incomparable rivals and Paul extends to their behavior toward the Corinthians: Paul loved them, while the rivals abused them.

### ***Probatio, Part II: 11.21b–12.10***

In the preceding section, the discourse has demonstrated the essential incomparability of Paul and the rivals, fulfilling the claim of 10.12. Throughout the section, the other key claims of 10.8–11 have also been supported. Paul has given rhetorical proof that he is not weak, in the sense that

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<sup>14</sup> While Paul uses *ταπεινῶν*, not a form of *ἀσθενῶ*, here, the close relation between the two in this discourse is indicated by the relation between Paul’s restatement of the criticism against him in 10.1 (*ταπεινός ἐν ὕμῳ*) and the

he pioneered the church in Corinth and is humanly responsible for the Corinthians' being Christians. He has a unique history of ministry without abuse with the Corinthians, which his rivals cannot claim. Why does the discourse not conclude at this point, with Paul's having demonstrated why he cannot compare himself with the rivals? We have to infer the answer from what Paul goes on to do, namely, to accede to the request that he commend his own ministry as his rivals have theirs. He steadfastly opposes the practice, this résumé ritual, and he finds a way to participate in it that allows him to undercut it even as he performs it. Apparently Paul believed that the rivals' influence was dangerous enough that he must use whatever means he may to counteract it. So Paul agrees to boast of his ministry, allowing the Corinthians to compare Paul's ministry résumé with those of the rivals, presumably so that they can choose the leader(s) they want to serve them. But he will boast only after he dons the costume of the fool and speaks as a fool. In this way, he does and does not boast simultaneously. This study suggests but does not assert dogmatically that Paul patterns his response, at least in part, on the character of the ancient mimic fool. The role was performed often in street drama and was seen as low class compared with more sophisticated drama, therefore corresponding to the perception critics expressed about Paul.

The FS begins with Paul's matching the lineage boasts of rivals (11.22). But when their boasting turns to their accomplishments as servants of Christ, Paul escalates his corresponding foolish boast to superiority, and the hardship list of vv. 23–29 supports this thesis that Paul is a better servant of Christ. This list does not amplify Paul's weakness, and it is a boasting *κατὰ σάρκα* (11.18), not *ἐν κυρίῳ* (10.17). It is a straightforward surpassing of the boasts of his rivals, yet it parodies their boasting as well, not by stipulating that they boasted only of triumphs and he of suffering but rather by so surpassing their hardships that their boasting is silenced. The boasting expresses no positive results from the hardships, except that Paul survived them and would, on this account, be seen as a person of merit by Hellenistic conventions.<sup>15</sup> But Paul does not attempt to earn praise from the Corinthians through this boasting, so he stops it with the forceful, but terse listing of the hardships. The concluding item in this list of hardships, 11.29, shows Paul's solidarity with the weak and sinning, evincing again what it means to Paul to serve

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direct quotation of the criticism in 10.10 (ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενήσ)

<sup>15</sup> See Scott Andrews, "Too Weak Not to Lead: The Form and Function of 2 Cor 11.23b–33," *NTS* 41 (1995), 263–276.

διὰ τῆς πραύτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ (10.1) and showing another way (cf. 11.21a) in which Paul happily concedes that he is weak.

With 11.30, the FS turns from boasting κατὰ σάρκα (11.18) to boasting of what shows Paul's weakness, a boasting that is ἐν κυρίῳ (10.17). The first episode, the escape from the ethnarch of Damascus, shows Paul in a reverse of his self-portrayal in 10.3–6 as the conqueror “demolishing fortresses, taking captives, and punishing insubordination.”<sup>16</sup> There he threatened to sack the sophists' city, while here he escapes in a basket. This contrast is fodder for fool's discourse and for mimic humor. The incident itself emphasizes, as does its verbal parallel in Acts 9.23–25, the clever, successful flight of Paul and his disciples. But his flight is that of a runaway fool, whose low status and self-humiliating behaviors amuse an audience. Through it, Paul boasts in the weakness of his humiliating playing the fool (cf. 11.1, 16; 12.1) because critics and rivals already see him as a fool and have, by their wrong judgment, forced the part on him (12.11; 12.1). His flight is successful, but through it he plays the role of the fool to pretentious critics and rivals, not only in the discourse but also in his life as apostle.

Paul boasts of his weakness in his recounting an ascent to Paradise (12.2–5). Like a prolix fool, he repeats his uncertainty about the status of the unnamed man who was caught up, whether in or out of the body (12.2–3). After all these words, all we learn of the ascent is that what he heard cannot be told (12.4), and whether or not he saw anything is not even expressed. Paul will boast for this one, but there is nothing to boast about! But for himself, he will boast only in weakness, even though he could boast straightforwardly and truly about such experiences. Now the fool steps out of character to speak seriously to the audience: People should think about Paul only what they see and hear of him themselves (cf. 10.7), not whatever wondrous events he can create and narrate.

The final boast (12.7–10) begins with fool's irony: Because of the abundance of revelations Paul has received (who would want any others like that of 12.2–4!), God gave the infamous, enigmatic thorn, or stake, in the flesh, a buffeting ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ to keep Paul from becoming conceited (how could a vision like the minimalist ascent in 12.2–4 make one conceited!). Whatever the thorn was, Paul identifies it as chronic, painful, and in some sense a weakness, a humiliation (perhaps because through it others looked down on him). Despite a fullness of prayer

for deliverance, or healing, Paul the faithful apostle receives not healing but divine communication: The Lord's grace is sufficient for him, for divine power is fulfilled, brought to completion, through such weakness.

What has this boasting in weakness accomplished? It has shown Paul performing, submitting to, the role corresponding to his critics' estimation of him and simultaneously fulfilling the request that he join the boasting game. It has exaggerated their negative estimation of Paul the fool and may amuse them; yet they would likely discern a serious undercurrent throughout these episodes, an undercurrent that emerges explicitly with the divine oracle of 12.9. Further, especially latter two episodes show that the reasoning of the rivals is flawed. They seemed to believe that visions, revelations, and works of divine power counted (among other evidences) as signs that one is a legitimate apostle. The discourse shows that Paul had the signs, but they proved nothing—nothing of benefit to others from the ascent to heaven and no relief from the painful thorn. But the chief accomplishment of these episodes is that in them Paul revels in his foolish weakness, playing the part of a fool fully, and then he receives the Lord's endorsement and commendation with the oracle that valorizes not strength but weakness. The issue of contention throughout the discourse is, Who are the true apostles of Christ, and how are they known? The divine oracle answers these, not by argument or any other rhetorical technique, but by simple, authoritative declaration: "He said to me" (12.9). The episode of the thorn fits in the final, emphatic position because it bears the authoritative response to the criticism of Paul as too weak to lead and simultaneously silences the practice of self-praise that Paul rejected as boasting *κατὰ σάρκα*. The net effect of this boasting in weakness is at least part of the divine warfare Paul threatened in 10.3–6. Through the satire and divine rebuke of boasting in strength that the FS performs, this discourse destroys arguments (*λογισμοὺς*) and proud conceits that (from Paul's view) oppose the knowledge of God (*πάν ὑψώμα ἐπαιρόμενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ*), and captures thoughts (*νόημα*) not yet obedient to Christ (10.4–5).

Paul's conclusion to the FS lists weaknesses, amplified in 11.29–12.9, along with "insults, catastrophes, in persecutions and distress," expressed especially in 11.23–29 and thereby embracing the whole of the FS, except the opening boast of lineage (11.21b–22). In this discourse, "weakness" refers chiefly to other's evaluation of oneself, usually bearing strong

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<sup>16</sup> Welborn, "The Runaway Paul" 118–119, who cites Abraham J. Malherbe, "Antisthenes and Odysseus, and Paul at War," *HTR* 76 (1983) 143–173. See also Furnish, *II Corinthians* 542; Martin, *2 Corinthians* 384–385; Peterson,

social connotations, rather than to any more or less objective reality, such as physical sickness or general human frailty, or to a subjective, psychological sense of one's inadequacy apart from God. Forbes comments that "'Weakness' is the state of those without power or status, and 'strength' is the state of those who do have status. 'Weakness' connotes humiliation in the eyes of others, rather than inadequacy in one's own."<sup>17</sup> For this discourse, "weakness" extends to Paul's inferior oral rhetoric; his rejection of "strong" authoritarian leadership among the Corinthians in favor of authority expressed "weakly" διὰ τῆς πραύτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ; his identifying with the abused, humiliated, even sinful believers; his appearing as a person of low status because he works to support himself so that he might give the gospel; and his socially stigmatizing thorn in the flesh (if it is distinct from all the foregoing expressions of weakness) mark him in the eyes of higher status critics and rivals as an ineffective leader and certainly no legitimate apostle of Christ. All of these are conditions Paul experiences as a result of his living out his commission as an apostle of Christ. Others view him in these conditions as weak, a label Paul accepts; the Lord, however, overturns the rivals' calculus of value and pronounces this weakness strength.

### **Transition: 12.11–18**

With the FS, Paul has concluded the majority of the proof this discourse offers. He has proven by divine oracle that his weakness is good, that it qualifies him as an apostle of the crucified and risen Messiah. The remainder of the discourse brings home the results of the previous two sections and confronts the Corinthians with the decision facing them. In this unit, Paul names what he has done—boasted as a fool—and places responsibility on the Corinthians. He challenges them to accept responsibility for his foolish boasting and rehearses briefly his ministry among them, with the aim of removing any reason that they should hesitate to commend him: His ministry included the signs of an apostle, including works of power. In no way did he treat them as inferior to the other churches. Further, they should appreciate his policy of supporting himself as a policy of not burdening them. They know that parents do not burden their children, and Paul gladly spends and is spent for them. Finally, they should recognize through the trustworthiness of his helpers that he has not taken financial advantage of them. If

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*Eloquence* 124; Witherington, *Conflict & Community* 459 n. 79.

<sup>17</sup> Forbes, "Comparison," 19

the Corinthians suspect that Paul embezzled from the collection to replace the support he publicly refused, they should recall their positive evaluation of those he sent to receive the collection. If his helpers were trustworthy, would not he, their leader, be?

***Peroratio: 12.19–13.10***

In this final substantive unit of the discourse, Paul challenges the Corinthians to respond to his rhetorical proof. The rivals are now all but forgotten. Paul has dealt with them in both sections of proof, but now he resumes his appeal to the Corinthians begun at the beginning of the discourse (10.1–2). They, not the rivals, are the audience for this discourse; they, not the rivals, are the agents Paul seeks to move to act. Stopping with the best of proof, without pressing the appeal for action, might squander any conviction already elicited.

Paul first looks back over the discourse and characterizes it: He has not been defending himself through the discourse but, on commission from and accountable ultimately only to God, using the discourse to build them up, not tear them down (12.19). Then he visualizes for them what his upcoming visit threatens to be like, with sorrow for all of them (12.20–21). His previous warnings fulfill the scriptural requirement of two or three witnesses (13.1–2), and because they have dismissed his governance as weak and without divine authority, when he comes he will not spare sinners, and they all will have the proof they say they want that Christ speaks in Paul (13.3). They know that Christ was weak as the crucified One and that he lives by God's power. In a similar way, Paul, whose weakness the Lord has endorsed (12.9), is both weak in Christ and empowered by God to deal with the Corinthians (13.4). Paul is not on the defense. It is the Corinthians who must examine themselves to see if they, having been led astray (11.3), are truly in the faith. Whatever they decide about Paul's adequacy as an apostle, Paul wants them to pass the test, to do what is right, to be strong even when Paul appears to be weak (13.5–9). Paul has written while away from them so that when he comes he will not have to be severe in his authority (13.10). If they mend their ways (13.11), Paul will again appear to be weak, because he will not have to be severe but will be able to continue to serve them in the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Despite appearing to be weak and not strong, this state of affairs is what he hopes for. He will not have to be bold in the way he threatened to be (10.2), and he can continue to expand his pioneering ministry beyond Corinth (10.16).



## TOPICAL THESES

This study has supported six topical theses, each of which is now summarized briefly.

*Thesis One:* Paul responds to the criticism that he is too weak to lead with both denial and acceptance.

The criticism that Paul is weak, too weak to be a true apostle and strong leader, is expressed or implied throughout the discourse. Critics appear to target Paul's unimpressive and humble in-person appearance and manner, his lack of sophistic oratory, his working manually to support himself, his rejection of "strong" authoritarian leadership among the Corinthians in favor of authority expressed "weakly" διὰ τῆς πραύτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ, his identifying with the abused, humiliated, even sinful believers, and his socially stigmatizing thorn in the flesh (if it is distinct from all the foregoing expressions of weakness). In the first section of proof (10.12–11.21a), Paul denies being weak in any way that would keep him from fulfilling his apostolic commission. He pioneers the gospel among the Corinthians, serves them at no charge but at great cost to himself, and loves them instead of abusing them. In the second section of proof, Paul concedes his weakness and, as a fool, boasts of it (esp. 11.29–12.9). This boasting in weakness would be heard as foolishness, even potentially amusing, but with the possibility of being also ominously serious. The divine oracle of 12.9 expresses the utter seriousness of Paul's weakness and the Lord's approval of it and him. When Paul is weak—that is, when his faithful fulfilling of his apostolic commission causes him to be looked down on by others—then he, by God's power, is strong.

*Thesis Two:* Paul the weak leader hardly resembles the Paul portrayed and critiqued in the recent studies of Shaw, Castelli, and Polaski.

This study shows overwhelmingly that the critics of Paul given voice in 2 Cor 10–13 fault his weak governance of the church, not his oppressive authoritarianism. In different ways, these three critiques of Paul focus chiefly on ways texts of Paul have been heard and used throughout the history of the church. Their portrayals of Paul did not emphasize 2 Cor 10–13, neither did they use a method similar to the one used in this study. The present rhetorical reading of this discourse portrays Paul quite differently, and one can hope that all who receive and transmit Paul's letters as holy Scripture will find the topic of Paul's weakness in this discourse worthy of careful understanding and imitation in Christian living and leadership. This study makes clear that for Paul proclamation of the gospel included not only the content of the good news that

could be spoken or written but also an attitude and way of living that embodied the good news. For Paul the good news of God's salvation included a suffering, crucified, and risen Messiah and God's choosing "what is foolish in the world . . . what is weak in the world . . . what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not . . . so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor 1.27–30). In this choice, God sides with and enters the world in Christ as one who is weak in precisely the way Paul valorizes weakness in this discourse.

*Thesis Three:* Paul's practice of "weak" leadership coheres with the Synoptics' portrayal of Jesus' practice and teaching on leadership.

This study does not examine this theme in the Synoptics but points to it suggestively to indicate that, however Paul learned what he knew from the Jesus tradition regarding leadership, his view of "weak" leadership in this discourse appears to cohere with indications of Jesus' view and practice, according to the Synoptic tradition. Matthew 11.28–30 has Jesus present himself as *πραύς . . . καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ*. He invites those laboring under a heavy load of religious authority to find rest under his light yoke. Paul's lenient governance of the church compares to Jesus' offer, and the abuse of the rivals (11.20) compares to the heavy load from which Jesus offered relief. Mark 10.42–45 (par Matt 20.25–28; Luke 22.25–27) has Jesus reject the Gentile manner of leading by lording it over followers in favor of having those who aspire to greatness to be the servant and slave of all. He warrants this direction with the example of the Son of Man, who came "not to be served but to serve." The manner of leadership Jesus rejects compares to the abusive manner of Paul's rivals, while Paul's being *ταπεινός*, slavish, among the Corinthians (10.1; 11.7) compares to Jesus' direction to those who would be great.

*Thesis Four:* Paul's relationship with Greco-Roman rhetoric remains ambiguous, clear in some respects but unclear in others.

In this discourse, Paul deals with rhetorically proficient rivals who, in the FS, appear to follow, with some modification, the pattern of an *encomium*. In 1 Cor Paul, as argued in ch. I of this study, rejects sophistic rhetoric as properly suited to proclaiming the gospel of Christ. From these two facts of the Corinthian correspondence, it is apparent that Paul encounters Greco-Roman rhetoric. The many contemporary rhetorical studies of Paul's letters suggest that they yield profitably to Greco-Roman rhetorical analysis. But the question remains, Was Paul formally trained in rhetoric, and does he follow rhetorical prescriptions in composing his letters?

The evidence of this discourse does not point to an affirmative answer for either question. On the basis of reading a number of Greco-Roman orations,<sup>18</sup> I find Paul's letters to be less fluent and more choppy in sentence style,<sup>19</sup> less complete in expressing ideas, leaving more gaps that readers have to fill in as best they can, and marked less frequently by helpful metadiscourse that guides readers and hearers among points the discourse makes and through internal transitions of thought and function. A separate study is needed to transform these impressions into documented findings, but they cohere with the judgment of classicists who find Paul's writings fundamentally different from models of Greco-Roman oratory. For example, classicist John Dillon finds Paul "insuperably alien to what I know of Greek culture, in his language and in his ways of thought. . . . [H]is mind . . . seems alien. That makes it very difficult for me to credit that he is consciously following any Greek rhetorical form" in 2 Cor 10–13.<sup>20</sup> Dillon contrasts Philo's writing from Paul's: Philo's "language and thoughts are Hellenistic, flowery, Stoic-Platonic. Obviously Philo knew the Greek world. But when I read Paul, I am astonished by the form of language. In what sense is there an influence of Greek culture?"<sup>21</sup> Peter Marshall suggests that Paul "disregarded the proprieties and spoke impulsively and passionately" and that to define his rhetoric more closely one should compare his rhetoric with "unconventional rhetors of his day."<sup>22</sup>

E. A. Judge cites a number of church fathers who, trained in Greco-Roman rhetoric, found Paul's writings to be unconventional: Augustine, who was sure that Paul was not trained in rhetoric but who nevertheless credited him with the eloquence of those inspired (*De Doctrina*, 4.6.9); John Chrysostom, who perceived more clearly than did Augustine that Paul was no expert in rhetoric, although "in knowledge and penetration of thought he was, in contrast, no layman" (*de Sacerdotio* 4.5); Gregory of Nyssa, who said Paul had despised the tropes and schemes and any planned arrangement of his work (*adv. Eunomium*, I, 253B, Migne); and the Latin compiler of correspondence between Paul and Seneca has the latter "regret the poverty of Paul's style (in

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<sup>18</sup> but, admittedly, not studying them as closely as I have 2 Cor 10–13

<sup>19</sup> As one example, see a sampling of criticism among commentators of Paul's opaque syntax and style in 2 Cor 10.12–18 in Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 317–318.

<sup>20</sup> Betz, "Paul's Apology," 17. At the time of the colloquium at which Dillon participated, he was Professor of Classics at the University of California, Berkeley. He is joined in his general assessment by Thomas Conley (Rhetoric) and William Anderson (Classics), both of UC Berkeley.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>22</sup> "Enmity and Other Social Conventions in Paul's Relationship with the Corinthians" (Ph.D. diss., Macquarie University, 1980), 616, cited by Forbes, "Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony," 30, n. 98

letter 9 he says he is sending him a manual to improve it),” while recognizing that Paul did not want “to corrupt his strength by affectation (ep. 13).”<sup>23</sup>

Paul lived in a world saturated with the results of Greco-Roman rhetorical training, and he shows the capacity to master it if he desired to do so. The evidence of 1 Cor 1–4 indicates that he did not see enough good in rhetoric to apprentice himself to it in any formal way. It appears to be best to consider Paul to be a powerful and gifted rhetor, not in the style of one well trained in rhetoric but, as Dillon suggests, gifted as was Lenin. Judge laments how far twentieth-century culture has

fallen away from the classical eloquence. And who is to blame for this more than St Paul? No other writer of antiquity so radically defied the rules of civilized speech and yet found readers ready to admire him, and none tapped so full a fountain of fresh eloquence as had the power to bring the old tradition to new flowerings. . . [T]he fourth-century Fathers, who gallantly did their best to make Paul respectable could never have contemplated that he would ever displace their precious classics themselves.<sup>24</sup>

In summary, nothing in the present study seriously challenges these judgments that Paul practiced a rhetoric that, powerful in its own right to the extent that it influenced the course of Western literacy,<sup>25</sup> was nevertheless distinct from the main stream of Greco-Roman rhetoric.

*Thesis Five:* Paul’s rivals are Jewish Christians who value and practice rhetorical eloquence and therefore may be called sophists. They are either precursors of or early participants in the Second Sophistic.

Chapter I of this study argues, following Winter, that the strife and jealousy expressed in 1 Cor 1.11 and 3.3 are clearly related to the sophistic movement and that Paul critiques it in 1 Cor 1–4, including the conventions of a sophist’s coming to a city. Chapters II through IV proceed with this understanding and discuss evidence that Paul’s rivals are rhetorically proficient and that they criticize him on sophistic bases. The most significant affinities between Paul’s rivals in this discourse and what we know of first-century and later sophists appear in these emphases from the discourse: (1) criticism of Paul’s unsatisfactory oral rhetoric, expressed in 10.10 and 11.5–6; (2) contempt for Paul’s intentional lowliness, expressed in 10.1, 10.10, 11.7, 11; (3) hubristic attitudes expressed in their boasting beyond the limit, 10.13–18, and in their abuse of the Corinthians, 11.20; (4) use of rhetorical forms for their self-commendation, i.e., the underlying

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<sup>23</sup> Judge, “Paul’s Boasting,” 38–41

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 43

pattern Paul's FS imitates, 11.21b–12.9. This study does not claim that identifying the rivals as sophists signifies that they may not be identified with other contemporary intellectual and social types as well, but it does urge that because rhetoric figures prominently in both 1 and 2 Cor, “sophistic” may be the most important descriptor that joins the preceding four emphases discerned in this discourse.

*Thesis Six:* From Paul's perspective, the conflict between him and his rivals centers on incompatible understandings of authentic Christian spiritual leadership. Paul condemns his rivals because they think and lead as sophists more than as Christians and have consequently imported a different Jesus, spirit, and gospel into the Corinthian church.

This study has argued that the chief criticism of Paul is that he is weak, that he leads and governs weakly. This criticism highlights the chief differences between Paul and his rivals as well. Both he and they share similar lineage, the experience of hardships in the course of their ministerial service, and miracles. They differ crucially in the manner in which each serves and governs the church—Paul, out of weakness; the rivals, out of strength. Sophists of the time came from upper class families and were therefore wealthy and accustomed to ruling. Paul experiences his rivals as power grabbers when they come to Corinth and take credit for his work and usurp his place as founder of the church: They boast “beyond the limit.” The rivals find Paul to be a weak leader—humble in person, contemptible as a speaker, curious in his refusal to receive support from his followers, easy-going toward their wrong behavior, identifying with the lower class, weak in the congregation, overall failing to measure up to the prevailing standards of leadership. His weak leadership has left a vacuum in the church, which they are happy to fill (are they competing among themselves to see who becomes the primary leader?). Their valuing of eloquence as essential to ministry, their despising of what is humble and lowly, their willingness to receive support from the Corinthians, and their heavy-handed governance of the church together produce the *de facto* different Jesus, spirit, and gospel that Paul fears has led the believers astray. Over this, rather than over any overtly theological difference, Paul and they conflict. This study highlights the lengths to which Paul would go—even to the point of indulging in the boasting he finds contemptible—to attempt to turn the Corinthian believers back from an abusive, “strong” Jesus expressed by the rivals to the gospel of a weak and strong Christ

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. on this point C. Jan Swearingen, *Rhetoric and Irony: Western Literacy and Western Lies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

who governs and serves in meekness and gentleness and whose apostle is “strong” and severe only as a last resort, in order to spare believers he loves and serves sacrificially from great harm.

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