


## ARTICLE

## The Logic of Paul's Address in 2 Corinthians 10-13

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### Abstract

2 Cor 10–13 may be seen to hang together closely, both internally and with the rest of the canonical letter, once one notices the very careful manner in which Paul distinguishes between and handles three groups: (i) the Corinthians as such, a group that includes his ‘own people’ and sometimes also (ii) his internal critics; and (iii) the rival missionaries. The four chapters are built over a set of four motifs: 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person? absence or presence? meekness or boldness? building up or tearing down? In light of this, one finds the following structure: **A** (10.1–11) on the *i*- and *ii*-groups; **B** (10.12–11.21), **C** (11.22–12.10), and **D** (12.11–13) on the *iii*- and *i*-groups; and **E** (12.14–13.13) on the *i*- and *ii*-groups. The four chapters – and indeed, the letter as a whole – have an inner dynamic that reaches its writerly goal in the comparison of Paul to the *iii*-group (**C**). The final, rhetorical aim, however, consists in establishing the proper relationship between Paul himself and the *i*-group as he is about to reach Corinth once more in the flesh.

**Keywords:** 2 Cor 10–13; unity; underlying logic; clarity of rhetoric; connections with the rest of the letter

### 1. Aim and Status Quaestionis

Second Corinthians continues to tease its interpreters: is it a single letter or a conglomerate of letter fragments? How does it fit into the story of Paul's relationship with the Corinthians? At the time (a large part of the twentieth century) when scholars felt confident that they were able to reconstruct that story with some certainty, they also tended to proliferate the number of letter fragments that went into the canonical letter. In this way, they achieved a very fine-grained understanding of the underlying story. An attempt along these lines that remains worth studying is that of Margaret Mitchell.<sup>1</sup>

Other scholars have been more reluctant to believe in our ability to get at the underlying historical facts in order to allow us to take the crucial step from ‘a single letter’ to ‘a conglomerate of letter fragments’. Here one may see a certain development. Whereas Reimund Bieringer still focused on assessing the historical facts, Ivar Vegge took an important step towards focusing more on Paul's rhetorical strategy in the letter itself.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See M. M. Mitchell, ‘Korintherbriefe’, *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. iv (ed. H. D. Betz et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002<sup>4</sup>) 1688–94. Also, ead., ‘The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics’, *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict. Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall* (ed. T. J. Burke and J. K. Elliott; Novum Testamentum Supplements 109; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 17–53.

<sup>2</sup> See, in particular, R. Bieringer, ‘Teilungshypothesen zum 2. Korintherbrief. Ein Forschungsüberblick’, ‘Der 2. Korintherbrief als ursprüngliche Einheit. Ein Forschungsüberblick’, and ‘Plädoyer für die Einheitlichkeit des

In Vegge's case, this was supported by also paying attention to the literary genres behind the Pauline letter: letter writing and paraenesis. In the most recent major commentary, Thomas Schmeller takes this approach further in assessing the various major shifts in Paul's tone vis-à-vis his Corinthian addressees.<sup>3</sup> If *these* can be understood sufficiently well without relying on a reconstruction of changes in the underlying historical situation, then that is a strong argument for claiming the unity of the canonical letter.

I will do two things in this essay: in the main part, I will discuss Paul's overall rhetorical strategy vis-à-vis the Corinthians in chapters 10–13 of the letter; in an epilogue, I will assess the extent to which the understanding we will achieve of those chapters may fit in with the rest of the letter. Methodologically, I will focus on Paul's rhetorical strategy in the light of a single matter reflected in the letter: Paul's understanding of his own relationship with the Corinthians and theirs with him. This is not exactly the same as the idea of 'reconciliation' that Ivar Vegge made the cornerstone for understanding the letter. Where the latter would be a direct rhetorical aim that Paul might have with the letter as a whole, what I am after is rather an overarching frame of thinking *within* which Paul's various rhetorical aims and practices should be seen, including (if we were to agree on that) the rhetorical aim of achieving reconciliation. (In fact, I prefer to see Paul's rhetorical aim as being what he himself explicitly says in 13.9 and 11: to achieve 'your perfection', τὴν ὑμῶν κατάρτισιν, and that you 'become perfect', καταρτίξεσθε.) Behind those aims and practices, there is an overall concern on Paul's part about his relationship with the Corinthians and theirs with him that gives meaning to everything he says and does in the letter.

The thesis of the essay is that this overall concern lies behind Paul's handling of a set of four closely connected motifs that he presents at the beginning of chapter 10 (10.1–11) and which directly and indirectly governs the whole of the text. In particular, they turn up again with full force in the third, concluding section of the text: 12.14–13.13, thereby giving a different rhetorical character to the middle section, where they are precisely absent: 10.12–12.13. The four motifs are these (see more further on): (1) a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person address? (2) Paul's absence or presence? (3) a meek or bold address? (4) for building up or tearing down?<sup>4</sup>

The thesis is further that once we consider the inner connections between these motifs, we will see that throughout the text Paul operates in a very precise manner with three groups of people to whom and of whom he speaks. There is first (i) the Corinthians as such ('you'); to a large degree Paul sees these as 'his own' people, but they sometimes also include (ii) some internal critics of Paul within the congregation, whom Paul may *sometimes* single out for special mention ('some', 'they'). Finally, (iii) there are some rival missionaries (again 'they'); their criticism of Paul probably lies behind the internal conflict, but Paul does not expect them to be present in Corinth when he himself arrives there nor even to overhear the letter itself. As a result, we will see that the text as a whole has the following structure: A (10.1–11) on the *i*- and

2. Korintherbriefes. Literarkritische und inhaltliche Argumente', all in *Studies on 2 Corinthians* (ed. R. Bieringer and J. Lambrecht; Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium 112; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994) 67–105, 107–30, and 131–79, respectively. I. Vegge, *2 Corinthians - a Letter about Reconciliation* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.239; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> See Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther* (2 Kor 1.1–7. 4) (EKK viii/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener/Patmos, 2010) and *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther* (2 Kor 7.4–13.13) (EKK viii/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener/Patmos, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> The four motifs are among those identified by Jan Lambrecht S.J., *Second Corinthians* (Sacra Pagina 8; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999, 158–9) as being 'present in both ch. 10 and ch. 13' (158). He also quite rightly sees the consequences of this: 'The two chapters [chs. 10 and 13] can be considered, to some degree, as framing and including the middle chs. 11 and 12.'

*ii*-groups; **B** (10.12–11.21), **C** (11.22–12.10), and **D** (12.11–13) on the *iii*- and *i*- (including the *ii*-) groups; and **E** (12.14–13.13) on the *i*- and *ii*-groups. In all this, Paul's writerly target in the text itself lies in the famous comparison (σύγκρισις) between the rival missionaries and himself in sections **B–D**, culminating in section **C**. This is where he is headed at the level of the text, but his rhetorical aim with this comparison is to set the rival missionaries completely aside from the relationship between the Corinthians (both the *i*- and *ii*-groups) and himself, as described in sections **A** and **E**. And so, his ultimate *rhetorical* target is rather – *through* the comparison with the rival missionaries (**B–D**) – to address the internal conflict between the *i*- and *ii*-groups as introduced in section **A** and spelled out further in section **E**.

Before we begin the analysis proper, we should have the four motifs in front of us:

The first motif (2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> third person?): is Paul speaking to certain people or *about* them, that is, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person or the 3<sup>rd</sup> person? For instance, in 10.1 he speaks to 'you' (ὤμᾶς). Already in 10.2, however, he also speaks of 'some' (τινας), who are certainly not just identical with the 'you'. Similarly, in 12.19–20 he speaks to 'you', but in 12.21 and 13.2 of 'many', namely, *among* the 'you'. In 13.3–9, however, he reverts to 'you'. The difference between a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person address is hugely significant in the field of letter writing and paraenesis.

The second motif (absence or presence?): is he speaking about what he does in his letters when he is absent from the addressees, or what he intends to do when he is present with them? For instance, in 10.1 he speaks as one who is absent (ἀπόν), and in 10.9 about what he does through his letters (διὰ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν). In 10.11 and 13.10, he combines the two: 'by letter when absent' (10.11) and 'I write these things while being absent (from you)' (13.10). By contrast, in 10.11, 13.2, and 13.10, he speaks of what he plans to do when he is present (παρόντες, παρών).

The third motif (meekness or boldness?): does he speak of 'appealing' (παρακαλεῖν) to his addressees 'by the meekness and gentleness of Christ' (διὰ τῆς πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιεικειᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 10.1), or rather of 'being bold' (θαρρῆσαι) and 'daring' (τολμῆσαι) towards people (10.2)? For the latter, see also implicitly in 10.11 and explicitly in 13.2 ('I will not be lenient', οὐ φείσομαι) and 13.10 ('so that when I come, I may not have to be severe', ἵνα ... μὴ ἀποτόμως χρήσωμαι). Once again, the difference is hugely significant in paraenesis.

Finally, the fourth motif (building up or tearing down?): does he speak 'for building up and not for tearing down' (εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν, 10.8, 13.10, compare 12.19: 'Everything we do, beloved, is for the sake of building you up' and 13.9: 'This is what we pray for: your perfection', τὴν ὑμῶν κατάρτισιν)? Or does he speak and act 'for tearing down' (πρὸς καθαίρεσιν, 10.4), 'tearing down' (καθαίρουντες) people's arguments (10.4) and more? That is, does he speak to or about people whom he considers as still belonging to Christ (or within the Corinthian congregation)? Or is he speaking about (but never to) people whom he considers to be outside Christ?

## 2. The Three Groups in 10.1–18: Scholarly Uncertainty

To show what is at issue, let me quote a few sentences from some representative scholars discussing whom Paul has in mind in 10.2–11 when he refers to 'some people' (τινας, 10.2), to 'somebody' (τις, 10.7), to a 'he says' (φησίν, 10.10), and to 'such a person' (ὁ τοιοῦτος, 10.11). Is he thinking of the rival missionaries coming from the outside, or their supporters internally in Corinth – or both? As we shall see, there is much uncertainty here.

Margaret Thrall (2000) was in favour of the third possibility: both. Discussing the λογισμοί ('arguments') of 10.4, she says this: 'There could be an allusion to intellectual forms of resistance to the apostolic preaching in general. In the context, however, Paul

must primarily have in view the forms of argument used by *the rival missionaries and their Corinthian supporters*.<sup>5</sup> However, she also thinks that Paul has the first group (the rival missionaries) ‘primarily’ in view. Thus, still on the same verses, she also says this: ‘Primarily the people in view must be the rival missionaries (the same verb ἐπαίρω is used of them in 11.20), but their Corinthian supporters may also be included (as v. 6 implies).’

Ivar Vegge (2008) first notes – rightly to my mind – that ‘the criticism of Paul in 10.1b and 10.10 has its source in 1 Corinthians and certain Corinthians’ criticism of Paul (cf. 1 Cor 4.18–21).<sup>6</sup> He then concludes that ‘one must assume that the criticism of Paul in 10.1–11 comes originally from a still critical group in Corinth. At the same time, it is difficult to imagine that the [external] opponents would not have supported this criticism – and possibly have reinforced it. Accordingly, we envisage several groups behind the criticism of Paul in 2 Cor 10.1–11.’<sup>7</sup> However, with a reference to 13.1–10, he also suggests that ‘[t]he criticism of Paul seems ... to come from the Corinthian church as a whole’, but hastens to add that ‘this does not exclude the fact that the criticism *could primarily* have come from a smaller, but more critical group in Corinth (cf. 2.6), or that the external opponents may have reinforced it’.<sup>8</sup> While much of this may well be right, it also yields some uncertainty on how to understand the text itself.

Finally, Thomas Schmeller (2015) summarises his view of the critics in 10.1–11 as follows:<sup>9</sup>

Der Text lässt ... offen, an wen sich Paulus eigentlich wendet: Die Formulierung von V. 1 richtet sich zwar an die Gesamtgemeinde, in V. 2 fehlt aber ein Objekt, sodass als Adressaten der Bitte auch ein Gemeindeteil, eben die τινὰς gedacht sein könnte; in V. 6 ist unklar, wer die Gehorsamen und wer die Ungehorsamen sind; in V. 7 und 10f ist das Verhältnis der genannten Einzelperson (τις, φησί, ὁ τοιοῦτος) zur Gesamtgemeinde undeutlich. Unsicher ist ferner, ob und inwiefern die von außen kommenden Fremdmissionare in die Auseinandersetzung einbezogen sind.

Here uncertainty about whom Paul has in mind seems to have gained the upper hand.<sup>10</sup>

At an earlier date, however, Francis Watson (1984) had stated what we will see is the correct view: ‘Here [in 10.1–11] Paul is probably *not dealing with opponents from outside Corinth but with members of the congregation*, for his threat to punish those who oppose him (stated initially in x. 2) is more likely to be directed against members of the congregation (as in xiii. 2, 10) than against the outsiders, to whom he will turn in x. 12–xii.’<sup>11</sup> Fine as this reading is, it is still only presented as probable.

We should conclude that scholarship is fundamentally unsure about whom Paul has in mind in 10.1–11. We will see, however, that once we begin to work with the four motifs that Paul introduces in the passage, a clearer answer will appear.

<sup>5</sup> Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. II (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000) 612 (my italics).

<sup>6</sup> The final result of the present essay will be that 1 Cor 4.18–21 is exceedingly relevant to the whole of 2 Cor 10–13, just as 1 Cor 3.1–4.13 is highly relevant to Paul’s comparison with his external critics in 2 Cor 10.12–12.10. However, I will not spell out these connections here.

<sup>7</sup> Vegge, *2 Corinthians*, 270 (my italics).

<sup>8</sup> Vegge, *2 Corinthians*, 271 (my italics).

<sup>9</sup> Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief* vol. II, 128.

<sup>10</sup> Compare also Bieringer, ‘Die Gegner im 2. Korintherbrief’ (in Bieringer and Lambrecht, *Studies on 2 Corinthians*, 181–221), 186: ‘Dabei bleibt es bisweilen allerdings offen, ob der Apostel von den Gegnern oder von den Korinthern spricht.’

<sup>11</sup> F. Watson, ‘2 Cor. x-xiii and Paul’s Painful Letter to the Corinthians’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 35 (1984) 321–46, at 343 (my italics).

### 3. The Three Groups in 10.1–11

Our question, then, for 10.1–11 is this: when Paul speaks here of certain people in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (in addition to the 2<sup>nd</sup> person ‘you’ with which he begins), does he refer to his internal critics, his external critics, or both? A first question will be whether he refers to the *same* critics in the two sections which make up the text. Paul begins (10.1) by ‘encouraging’ (cf. the motif of meek or bold) ‘you’ (cf. you or they) ‘by the meekness and gentleness of Christ’ (cf. again meek or bold). In this way, he very clearly identifies the whole following text as being directed to the Corinthians as a whole (the *i*-group). He also identifies the manner of speaking that he considers ideal precisely in *paraenesis* addressed to that group. Immediately, however (still in 10.1), he shifts gear by introducing a criticism of himself that has been made either *to* or *within* the *i*-group: he is ‘humble (ταπεινός) when face to face with you, but (only) bold (θαρρῶ) toward you when I am away (ἀπόν)’. This brings in the motif of Paul’s absence or presence together with that of meek or bold. The rest of 10.1–11 is taken up by an account of Paul’s critics and Paul’s own responses to them.

Here we should first notice that in 10.1–2 Paul mentions two points of criticism that have been made against him: (a) that he is humble when present etc. (10.1), and (b) that he ‘acts in accordance with the flesh’ (κατὰ σάρκα, 10.2). This distinction structures the rest. He responds to criticism *b* in 10.2–6 by declaring that he plans to be ‘daring’ (τολμήσαι) towards ‘some people’ (τινας) who think of him like that, and also by insisting that that his ‘weapons of warfare’ (τὰ ... ὄπλα τῆς στρατείας) are in fact anything but fleshly (σαρκικά). Rather, they are ‘powerful for God’ (δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ, 10.4). He responds to criticism *a* in 10.7–11. Here, 10.10, which rehearses the criticism advanced by ‘somebody who says’ (φησιν) that ‘the letters ... are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible’, clearly takes up criticism *a* from 10.1. This distinction between 10.2–6 and 10.7–11 gives rise to our first question: were the two points of criticism made by the *same* people? That need not be the case since Paul presents them consecutively. However, there are indications to show that the answer should be positive.

The most important indication is this: in 10.2 Paul has stated that he ‘thinks or plans’ (λογίζομαι) to be daring towards ‘the somebodies’ (τινας) who ‘think’ (λογιζομένους) that he is acting in accordance with the flesh. In his response to this criticism, he speaks (10.4) of destroying ‘arguments’ (or ‘thoughts’: λογισμούς), and then, in 10.7 and 11, he again uses the term ‘think’ (λογιζέσθω), and now of ‘somebody’ (τις, 10.7), of the one who ‘says’ (φησιν, 10.10) this and that about Paul’s behaviour, and of ‘such a person’ (ὁ τοιοῦτος, 10.11). Here we have two features in 10.7–11 (of ‘thinking’ and being a ‘somebody’) in Paul’s response in 10.7–11 to the *first* point of criticism (of 10.1: *a*) which directly take up his presentation in 10.2 of the *second* criticism (*b*). This already suggests that the two points of criticism are connected – and hence were probably made by the same people. In the same context, note that Paul speaks in 10.7 (on criticism *a*) of somebody’s (τις) ‘being confident’ (πέποιθεν) that he belongs to Christ. This, too, takes up Paul’s talk of his *own* ‘confidence’ (πεποιθήσει) already in 10.2, with which he plans to be daring towards those who had advanced criticism *b*.

The argument, then, is this: Paul clearly separates two points of criticism (*a* and *b*) in 10.1–2 and he structures 10.3–11 accordingly: 10.3–6 on *b*; 10.7–11 on *a*. *Still*, he ties his response in 10.7–11 to *a* very closely with what he says in 10.3–6 on *b*. This suggests that the two points of criticism are in fact connected – and hence were probably made by the same people, *namely*, the *τινας* of 10.2, who also lie behind the *τις* of 10.7, the *φησίν* of 10.10, and the *ὁ τοιοῦτος* of 10.11.

This argument is supported by noting the precise relationship between Paul’s two defences in 10.3–6 and 10.7–11, as indicated by the transition between the two sections:

Τὰ κατὰ πρόσωπον βλέπετε in 10.7. What this means – with the probably correct rendering in the NRSV ('Look at what is before your eyes')<sup>12</sup> – is that whereas Paul has in 10.3–6 spoken rather generally (in a manner we will consider in a moment), he now turns to something much more concrete – which turns out to be his response to criticism *a*. Thus, the two points of criticism are *connected*, but also *distinguished* by the fact that where one (*b*) is somewhat general, the other (*a*) is much more specific.

We must now look at Paul's two defences in slightly more detail. In focus will be the question of how to understand what he says in either text with regard to 'destruction' (καθαίρεσις). Does this throw any light on whom exactly he has in mind as his critics?

In 10.3–6 he uses the term twice. His weapons of warfare are powerful for God 'with a view to destruction of strongholds' (πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων) when he 'destroys arguments' (λογισμοὺς καθαίρουντες, 10.4). By contrast, in 10.7–11 he states that the Lord has given him 'authority' (ἐξουσία) 'for building you up and not for tearing you down' (εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν ὑμῶν, 10.8). This might initially suggest that Paul had two *different* critics in mind: in 10.4–6 some people whom he would *altogether* 'destroy' and in 10.7–11 some *other* people whom he would not destroy as such, but rather handle in such a way that they might ultimately be built up. Would the former not, then, be the *external* critics, the rival missionaries, to whom Paul will also turn directly in 10.12, those we called group *iii*? By contrast, would the latter not be *internal* critics, our group *ii*, who still had a chance of remaining in the congregation (among the *i*-people) once they had been properly 'built up'? That would of course go against our previous result that Paul is in fact addressing the *same* critics in both texts, but the possibility cannot yet be excluded.

However, there are two further points about Paul's handling of his critics in 10.3–6 and one about his handling of them in 10.7–11 with respect to building up or tearing down, that suggest that he is referring to a single group of critics throughout, and in fact the internal ones.

For 10.3–6, first, what Paul 'destroys' are not *people*, but certain *features* of people, in particular, their 'arguments' (λογισμοὺς, 10.4), any 'proud obstacle (ὑψωμα) raised up against the knowledge of God' on their part (10.5), and any contrary 'thought' (νόημα) that they may have (10.5). Moreover, Paul repeatedly speaks of leading the people with these thoughts and attitudes 'into obedience of Christ' (εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 10.5). This, then, is the first point about how Paul envisages the situation. There are 'arguments' around that Paul will destroy in order to lead their possessors into obedience of Christ.

This point is, secondly, strengthened by 10.6, in which Paul moves in the direction of what is apparently his basic theme: how he will behave *when he arrives in Corinth*. He 'is ready', so he says, to *punish* (ἐκδικῆσαι) every disobedience, using here a phrase (ἐτοίμως ἔρχοντες) that he will later use distinctly of his imminent arrival (see 12.14: 'Look, this third time *I am ready* – ἐτοίμως ἔχω – to come to you'). Thus, we are already here beginning to move back to criticism *a* (10.1), which was concerned with Paul's behaviour (the motif of meek or bold) when absent or *present*. Apparently, Paul is intent on boldly destroying the thoughts and attitudes of his critics in direct confrontation with

<sup>12</sup> This is the translation of both the NRSV, Lambrecht (*Second Corinthians*, 155, with discussion), and Thrall (*The Second Epistle*, 597, with discussion, 618–19); I believe correctly. Schmeller (*Der zweite Brief* vol. II, 121, with discussion, vol. II, 139–40) understands the phrase quite differently: 'Ihr seht auf (mein) persönliches (Auftreten)', namely '(und findet es schwach)'. It seems to me that such an understanding would require some kind of contrast in the next sentence: 'However, if somebody is confident etc., then let him etc.' But Paul just continues from the disputed phrase: 'If somebody is confident etc., ... then ... so am I!' To me this speaks pretty strongly for the alternative reading.

them *when he arrives*. This, then, is the second point about how Paul envisages the situation. He is *about to* confront his critics directly when he arrives.

It is, I propose, this strategy, too, that Paul announces in the reference to ‘destruction’ (10.8) that is contained in 10.7–11. What he says here is that he will not ‘be brought to shame’ (οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσομαι) when he employs the authority he has received for ‘building you up and not tearing you down’ (10.8). This he tells them in order that they may not think that he will only frighten them through his letters (10.9), meaning (I propose): and not *follow up* on such forcefulness in actual practice when present.<sup>13</sup> That he certainly will, and it is here that he will not be brought to shame. (Still, he will act in accordance with his missionary principle of ‘building up and not tearing down’.) Hence, the critic may rest assured that ‘the way we are in what we say by letter when absent is also the way we will be in practice when present’ (10.11). Paul thus threatens the critic *as part of* his missionary principle of acting ‘for building you up and not for tearing you down’. This is the third point about how Paul envisages the situation. He plans to be forceful in his presence in order to *build ‘them’ up*.

We may summarise the underlying thought in all this as follows. In 10.1, Paul turns to encouraging (in itself meekly) the Corinthians (‘you’) ‘by the meekness and gentleness of Christ’ (meek!). Faced with a criticism (*a*) concerning his ‘weakness’ (the motif of meek or bold) when present (that of Paul’s absence or presence) as against his boldness when absent, he asks the ‘you’ that he may *not* need to be bold with ‘you’ when he comes to be present – namely, bold with the confidence with which he does plan to be ‘daring’ towards *somebody* (else, ‘they’) who criticise him for acting in accordance with the flesh.<sup>14</sup> In the rest of the passage, he first insists that, in tearing down these people’s mistaken beliefs, he is in fact not acting in accordance with the flesh but quite to the contrary ‘forcefully for God’ (10.3–5). He also declares that he ‘is ready’, when present, to ‘punish’ that is, be bold towards, any disobedience, namely, in *them* as soon as *your* obedience has become complete (10.6).<sup>15</sup> Further, and concretely (10.7), quite to the contrary of what the same people have been saying, Paul will *forcefully* employ his authority for building up and not tearing down when he comes to be present (10.7–11).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> I have not seen this particular way of understanding the connection between οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσομαι in 10.8 and the whole of 10.9 elsewhere. It consists in ‘hearing’ a μόνον after διὰ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν in 10.8. It seems to me that this understanding is supported by Paul’s claim in 10.10–11 that he will in fact not just be ‘weighty and strong’ in his letters (δι’ ἐπιστολῶν) when absent, but also in actual fact when present.

<sup>14</sup> Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, vol. II, 128 and 131, speaks of a lack of a grammatical object for both δέομαι and θαρρῆσαι in 10.2. (In the latter case, it would be εἰς ὑμᾶς.) However, the flow of the sentence, coming directly after παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς and θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς in 10.1, practically calls for ὑμᾶς as the intended object.

<sup>15</sup> The rendering in the NRSV is slightly vague: ‘when your obedience is complete’. So is that of Thrall: ‘when your obedience is brought to completion’. Lambrecht is much better: ‘once your obedience has been made perfect’. His brisk comment is initially well placed: ‘The time difference between v. 6b and v. 6a is strange and not without tension.’ (*Second Corinthians*, 155). I suggest, however, that Paul has a precise point. He will confront his critics directly on his arrival once he has *through the letter* achieved *your* complete obedience. Following up on his 2<sup>nd</sup> person, mild address to the ‘you’ in 10.1, Paul aims to *separate* the ‘you’ completely from the ‘them’ that he will address boldly on his arrival. You will – hopefully – come round to complete obedience *before* that! (Compare for part of this Rudolf Bultmann, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 188: ‘Offenbar hofft er, die Gemeinde im ganzen zu gewinnen, um dann nötigenfalls gegen einige Gegner strafend einzuschreiten’, my italics.)

<sup>16</sup> Note in addition how Paul binds the two defences in 10.3–6 and 10.7–11 together. In both cases, the defence consists in turning the criticism completely around. In 10.2–6 he has been criticized (b, 10.2) for acting *κατὰ σάρκα*. This he then (10.3–6) turns completely around: *on the contrary*, the weapons of his warfare are *not* σαρκικά, but ‘powerful for God’. Similarly, in 10.1 he has been criticised for being weak when present and only bold when absent (*a*). In 10.7–11, then, he assures them – so that he may not appear only to frighten them in his *letters* – that, *on the contrary*, he will be forceful in practice when he comes to be present with them.

Who, then, are the critics whom Paul is targeting here? We have seen that he has three things in mind: (i) he expects them to be present in Corinth when he himself arrives; (ii) he plans to be bold towards them in his presence (contrary to what they have said of him), but in a manner that reflects his missionary principle of acting for building up and not for tearing down, and hence, as he says, in order to bring them into obedience of Christ; (iii) and finally, he will destroy or tear down, not the people themselves, but their mistaken thoughts and attitudes. If this is what Paul intends to do on his arrival, does it fit the *external* critics? Did Paul expect *them* to be present in Corinth on his arrival? We cannot strictly know, but if we consider the way he goes on to describe them from 10.12 onwards – as having transgressed into his own territory and bragging about it (10.12–18), as similar to the snake in paradise (11.3), and as ministers of Satan (11.13–15) – it seems overwhelmingly likely that he did *not* expect them to be present in Corinth, nor even to overhear the letter itself. Next, did he plan to be bold with *them* in a manner that would fit his missionary principle of building them up – as it were as *part* of the congregation in Corinth? Did Paul believe that in handling his weapons of warfare the way he describes these, he might actually bring the rival missionaries, as he goes on to describe *them*, round to obedience of Christ in the sense this was understood by Paul himself? That seems very unlikely. Also, did he expect to be able to destroy only the *thoughts* of *these* critics, so as to leave them as such within the circle of Christ? Once again, in light of the way he describes them from 10.12 onwards, that seems highly unlikely.

This, then, is the basic argument for taking Paul to have *only* the internal critics in mind in 10.1–11: what he says of them (in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person: ‘they’) in terms of the other three motifs (Paul’s planning to be bold with them in his presence and for building them up) cannot be made to fit what he says of the external critics from 10.12 onwards. In 10.1–11, his target is much closer to home in the form of the Corinthians as such (‘you’), that is, our *i*-group, and those (‘them’, the *ii*-people) *among* ‘you’, who had criticised Paul in the two ways described in 10.1 and 10.2, to which he then responds in 10.3–6 and 10.7–11.

Here we should consider the fact that Paul appears to be taking up later in chapters 10–13 some of the points of criticism directed towards him that have already been introduced in 10.1–11. Does this mean that there, too, he has the internal critics in mind? Conversely, if in those other places he also has the external critics in mind (or perhaps even primarily or even only), does this imply that he has the external critics in mind in 10.1–11, too, in *addition* to the internal ones? For instance, in 11.6 Paul again refers briefly to the claim about his lack of rhetorical competence, which presumably is criticism *a* in 10.1–11 as raised by those we saw to be the internal critics. Similarly, the very important point of criticism discussed in 11.7–12 (and again in 12.13 and 12.14–18) concerning the rival missionaries’ maintenance by the congregation is probably connected with criticism *b* in 10.1–11 (Paul’s acting in some way ‘in accordance with the flesh’), as raised in 10.1–11 by the internal critics. In both cases, we will see that in chap. 11 the two points of criticism are mentioned distinctly in connection with the rival missionaries, as deriving from a direct comparison of Paul with them. But, should we still say that Paul has *both* groups in mind in both passages (10.1–11 and, e.g. 11.6–12) at the same time, just because the various points of criticism are the same? Here, I think it is very important that we distinguish between the points of criticism themselves, and the various people who are advancing them – and also that we accept that when there are indications that Paul has *either* this *or* the other group in mind in the various passages, then that is in fact so. For there is an alternative, and better, explanation of why the same points of criticism are raised in both connections, namely, that both groups in fact did criticise Paul for *the same* things. Indeed, as scholars have repeatedly claimed, it seems likely that the external critics had directly *influenced* the internal critics in this regard (compare, e.g. 11.4 and 11.20). It remains the case, however, that we should not mix up the criticisms themselves



and those who made them. In one passage, Paul may well be arguing against one group (as we saw in 10.1–11), and in another against another group (as we will see, e.g., for 11.6–12) even though the criticisms themselves are the same. I believe that this distinction greatly helps to see the structure of the four chapters as a whole.

I conclude that in 10.1–11 Paul is not (yet) concerned with the external critics, but only with the Corinthians in the sense of the *i*-group as including the *ii*-people, namely, people *within* the Corinthian congregation who have distinctly criticised Paul. The fact that he also mentions the rival missionaries in connection with the two points of criticism in chap. 11 suggests they made the same criticism as the *ii*-people, as described in 10.1–11. It does not show that Paul does not distinguish clearly between the internal critics and the rival missionaries.

A final argument for this understanding of 10.1–11 is based on the transition Paul makes in 10.11–12. In 10.11 he has said that when he arrives in Corinth (παρόντες), he will practise (τῷ ἔργῳ) what he says (τῷ λόγῳ) in his letters when absent. This is a clear threat that he will be ‘bold’ (θαρῆσαι) and ‘daring’ (τολῆσαι) towards the τοιοῦτος of 10.11 in the manner he had already aired in 10.2. Then it is particularly striking that he continues in 10.12 like this: ‘For we do *not* dare to classify or compare ourselves (Οὐ γὰρ τολμῶμεν ... συγκρίναι ἑαυτοὺς κτλ.) with some of those who commend themselves ...’. Thus, Paul does ‘dare’ to be bold with the τοιοῦτος – but he does *not* dare to ‘classify or compare’ himself with certain *others*. Since the τοιοῦτος of 10.7–11 is clearly someone who is representing the τινὰς of 10.2 towards whom Paul will be both ‘bold’ and ‘daring’ (by 10.2), his play on daring and not daring shows that in 10.2–11 and from 10.12 onwards he is speaking of two distinct groups. And since the latter group clearly consists of external, competing missionaries (cf. 10.13–16), we must conclude that the group of whom he speaks in 10.2–11 constitutes the *ii*-group (the internal critics) *and nobody else*.<sup>17</sup>

The difference between ‘daring’ and ‘not daring’ is vital here. In fact, it is what carries Paul’s argument *into* his self-comparison with the external missionaries. As 11.21 shows, his initial claim in 10.12 that he does not ‘dare’ to compare himself with the rival missionaries is taken back later, when he goes on to declare that he after all does dare to make the comparison, namely, ‘as a fool’: ‘whatever anyone dares (τολμᾷ, namely, do)—I am speaking as a fool (ἐν ἄφροσύνῃ)—I also dare (τολμῶ, namely, do)’ (11.21). This play on Paul’s daring or not daring in 10.2, 10.12, and 11.21 means that the kind of behaviour Paul will display to *some* critics in his presence when he comes to Corinth (10.2, 6, and 11), he will now – though foolishly – also display to some *other* critics *in his absence*, namely, in the letter itself: 11.22–12.10. Not only does Paul distinguish in 10.12 between the two groups; the careful manner in which he explains how he does dare to engage the latter group in the letter, itself shows how utterly different they were in Paul’s mind: internal critics in 10.2–11 and external, rival missionaries in 10.12–12.10.

#### 4. The Three Groups in 10.12–12.13

In this text, Paul basically presents the comparison with the *iii*-group of external critics that he had initially (and quite ironically) announced in 10.12 that he did not dare engage in.<sup>18</sup> This initial denial leads him to adopt the conceit that he may only make the

<sup>17</sup> Watson saw the distinction between the two groups in the quotation given above, but he did not pay attention to the difference between those whom Paul ‘dares’ address (in the future) and those he does *not* ‘dare’ to compare himself with (in the present). I consider this difference to provide strong support for finding the *ii*-group alone in 10.2–11 and the *iii*-group alone from 10.12 onwards.

<sup>18</sup> While Watson clearly saw that Paul is *turning* to the external critics in 10.12, other scholars are less clear on this. Schmeller (*Der zweite Brief* vol. II, 173) begins his account of 10.12–18 as follows: ‘Die Auseinandersetzung mit den Gegnern geht weiter.’ Lambrecht (*Second Corinthians*, 168) connects 10.12–18 relatively closely with 10.8 (on

comparison in foolishness. The conceit is introduced in 11.1 and then spelled out in 11.16–21. The comparison itself is introduced in 11.21b, where it is combined with the idea of daring in the manner we saw. In this way, the whole text of 10.12–11.21 is held together by the *inclusio* on ‘daring’. The comparison runs from 11.22 to 12.10 and is followed by one more clarification of Paul’s ‘foolishness’ (12.11–13). In 12.14, then, Paul begins the concluding section of the four chapters (12.14–13.13).<sup>19</sup>

We thus have three main sections in the four chapters, with the middle one to be further subdivided.

<b>A</b> 10.1–11	The <i>i</i> -group and the <i>ii</i> -group
<b>B</b> 10.12–11.21	Introducing the comparison with the <i>iii</i> -group
	<b>C</b> 11.22–12.10 Comparison with the <i>iii</i> -group
	<b>D</b> 12.11–13 Concluding the comparison with the <i>iii</i> -group
<b>E</b> 12.14–13.13	The <i>i</i> -group and the <i>ii</i> -group

**Figure 1.**

We need to consider two issues in the middle section (subsections **B–D**). First, *to* whom is this whole section directly *addressed*? Secondly, *against* whom does Paul *defend* himself in subsections **B** and **D** with regard to particular points of criticism that have been made against him?

On the first issue, scholars have rightly seen that the whole section is addressed to a ‘you’ that simply consists of ‘the Corinthians’.<sup>20</sup> Here no distinction is drawn between a ‘you’ to be understood more narrowly as Paul’s ‘own people’ and an *ii*-group referred to as ‘they’ – in the way we saw, for instance, in 10.1–2 and 10.6. That his ‘you’ simply stands for ‘the Corinthians’ as such (*including* the *ii*-group without addressing it explicitly) is clear from 10.13–14, where Paul insists (and clearly against the external critics) that he himself stayed within the limits that God had assigned to him when he managed ‘to reach out even as far as *you* (ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν)’ (10.13). Indeed, ‘we were the first to come all the way to *you* (ἄχρι γὰρ καὶ ὑμῶν) with the good news of Christ’ (10.14). That Paul considers them to be basically ‘his own’ people, but is also worried about them comes out in 10.15–16, where he states that he ‘hopes that, as your faith *increases*, our sphere of action *among* you may be greatly enlarged, / so that we may proclaim the good news in lands *beyond* you’. In a way, Paul is here formulating the whole point of his forthcoming visit to Corinth, which was that once things had been securely settled there, he might continue his missionary activity beyond Corinth. (Compare the same idea with regard to Rome in Romans 15.23–24.) However, as he goes immediately on to state in 11.3, he also *fears* (φοβοῦμαι δὲ μὴ πως) ‘that your thoughts may be led astray from the sincere and pure devotion to Christ’ that was originally theirs. Moreover, as 11.4 makes clear, this fear is due to the kind reception they have given to the *external* critics (cf. ‘if

boasting). He speaks somewhat vaguely of Paul’s ‘opponents’, but ends up describing them – rightly, to my mind – as the ‘intruders’. Thrall (*Second Epistle*, 635) is (half-way) on the right track: ‘Paul has already (vv. 7, 10) made allusive reference to the external opposition he faces in Corinth. Now he plainly refers to these people’, meaning ‘the rival missionaries’. The reason for the lack of certainty here is, I contend, that the specific target all through 10.1–11 has not been seen: that of the *internal* critics only.

<sup>19</sup> For this last point, see further below.

<sup>20</sup> Compare, e.g., Schmeller (*Der zweite Brief* vol. II, 197, my italics) on 11.1: ‘Nachdem Paulus im vorangehenden Abschnitt [that is, 10.12–18] gegenüber den Adressaten [that is, the Corinthians] harte Kritik an *den eingedrun-genen Fremdmissionaren* geäußert hatte, fordert er nun *die Gemeinde selbst* auf, ihn mit seiner Narrheit zu ertragen’.

someone *comes* and proclaims ...'). Thus, the issue concerns the influence of the external critics on 'the Corinthians' as a whole (the *i*-group as including the *ii*-group but without addressing it explicitly). The internal critics are not themselves in focus; now it is rather a matter of the *i*-group as such – as being under the influence of the external critics.

This observation helps us to answer the question of whom exactly Paul is defending himself against in subsection 11.5–15 of subsection **B** in preparation for his foolish speech. To begin with (11.6), as we noted, he makes a fleeting reference to the criticism that was also raised in 10.1–11 by the *internal* critics: 'I may be untrained in speech, but...'. And this is even continued in 11.7a: 'Did I commit a sin by humbling myself (ἐμμαντὸν ταπεινῶν) so that you might be exalted?', which recalls Paul's being 'humble' 10.1. So, is Paul not in fact defending himself here, too, against the internal critics? However, the two references are surrounded by two sets of violent denunciations of the *external* critics: they are 'super-apostles' (11.5), 'false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ' (11.13), in fact 'ministers of Satan' (11.15). This suggests that the two points of criticism mentioned in 11.6–7a were either made directly by the external critics, or else at least derived from a comparison with *them*.<sup>21</sup> And so, it is against these that Paul defends himself. Indeed, it soon becomes clear that the main topic for criticism that Paul aims to address is the fact that – presumably in *contrast* to the *external* critics – he has declined to receive financial support from the Corinthians (11.7b–12), and on this point he will not give in for fear of losing an asset with which the external critics themselves cannot compete (11.12). Here, too, the criticism is, if not directly made by the external critics, then at least derived from a comparison with them. Similarly, the two facts that Paul twice in this connection refers to the 'other congregations' (11.8, 12.13), from which he did receive financial support, and that he similarly twice refers to his own love for the Corinthians (11.11, 12.15), suggest that the Corinthians had been led through the comparison with the external critics to doubt the sincerity of Paul's love for them. At the same time, the emphasis with which he stresses that he neither has received nor will accept financial support from the Corinthians in the future (11.9, 12, 12.14–18), also suggests that some among them – and again possibly under the influence of the external critics – may have asserted that although Paul claimed to have 'proclaimed God's good news to you free of charge' (11.7), he did not in fact do so.<sup>22</sup> This is all somewhat speculative. What matters is that the people against whom Paul is defending himself in this whole area – and in fact in both 11.7–12 and 12.13–18 (the transition into and beginning of section **E**) – are the *external* critics, the rival missionaries. They may either themselves have criticised Paul directly, or else the criticisms may have derived from a comparison of Paul with them. No wonder then, that he ends his long introduction to his actual 'fool's' comparison of himself with the external critics (beginning at 11.22), by addressing the Corinthians highly ironically because of their acceptance precisely of the *external* critics (11.19–21, cf. 11.5):<sup>23</sup>

(I will also boast.)<sup>19</sup>For you gladly put up with fools, being wise yourselves!<sup>20</sup>For you put up with it when someone makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or gives you a slap in the face.<sup>21</sup>To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!

<sup>21</sup> Thrall clearly saw the intrinsic connection between 11.5 and 11.6 (*Second Epistle*, 675).

<sup>22</sup> This, incidentally, would fit the fact that already in 2.17 Paul had reversed this charge by referring to the rival missionaries (cf. 3.1 on letters of recommendation) as 'peddlers of God's word' (καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ).

<sup>23</sup> Thrall (*The Second Epistle*, 715) is spot on here: 'v. 20, explanatory of v. 19, clearly refers to the rival missionaries'.

Thus, up until the ‘fool’s’ comparison, Paul’s ‘you’ stands for the Corinthians as a whole, as they had been influenced by the external critics. He does not *specifically* speak of the internal critics (the *ii*-group). Instead, he defends himself against charges deriving from a comparison with the external critics.

The actual comparison (subsection C, 11.22–12.10), as written in a letter to the Corinthians, is evidently addressed to them. But they are not literally mentioned in it, only allowed to overhear what Paul says. Instead, he explicitly only writes about ‘them’ (the external critics, 11.22–23) and himself.<sup>24</sup> With the conclusion (subsection D, 12.11–13) to the whole middle section, however, we are back with the introduction to it (subsection B, 10.12–11.21). Here Paul begins with an emphatic ‘you’ (12.11: ‘I have been a fool! You (ὤμεις) forced me to it.’); the external critics are again called ‘super-apostles’ (12.11, cf. 11.5), and the criticism of Paul for lacking the ‘signs of a true apostle’ (12.12) is likely to be one that had been made in comparison with the external critics.<sup>25</sup> Once again, too, Paul takes up the issue of financial support (12.13), to which he even gives an extended response in the text (12.14–18) that begins the last section of the letter (E, 12.14–13.13).

We should conclude on the whole middle section (subsections B–D) that Paul is not here speaking *specifically* of the *ii*-group. Instead, he speaks about the *iii*-group as part of an address to the *i*-group as a whole (including the *ii*-people), defending himself against criticisms that had been made of him, either directly by the external critics or at least based on a comparison with them.

The importance of this conclusion lies in the fact that we can now understand the whole middle section better by relating it to the four specific motifs that I have highlighted in connection with 10.1–11. With regard to the motif of you or them, we have seen that in the middle section (surrounding the actual comparison: subsection C) Paul addresses the ‘you’ in relation to ‘them’, where the latter are the external critics (the *iii*-group) and none other. With regard to the motif of meek or bold, it is clear that Paul understands his whole comparison of himself with the external critics as very much – indeed, explicitly so (cf. 11.21, *τολμῶ κἀγώ*) – a matter of boldness. If we then also bring in the motif of building up or tearing down, which Paul himself does not explicitly do, we can see that in being bold in a comparison with these 3<sup>rd</sup>-person people, Paul actually aims at tearing them down: they are ‘super-apostles’ – and indeed, ‘ministers of Satan’. Away with them! They have no place among Christ’s people, nor – consequently – should they have any influence on Paul’s direct addressees: the ‘you’ as a whole.<sup>26</sup> What is conspicuously missing is any reference to the motif of absence or presence. That is not at all surprising if, as we surmised, the external critics were no longer thought by Paul to be present in Corinth itself. For this reason, he basically aimed to

<sup>24</sup> Thrall is clear that the ‘them’ are the rival, ‘intruding’ missionaries (*Second Epistle*, 722–33) although she does not specifically discuss the question. Schmeller (*Der zweite Brief*, 242–55) speaks of ‘Rivale’ and ‘Gegner’, but does not make it quite clear that he understands them as the rival missionaries, who have intruded from the outside into Paul’s own missionary field and of whom Paul speaks from 10.12 onwards. Once again, the reason probably is that the two scholars do not draw the sharp distinction between internal and external critics of Paul for which I have argued in connection with 10.1–11.

<sup>25</sup> Thrall concurs. She both claims that in 12.12 Paul is responding to criticisms made by ‘the Corinthians’ (*Second Epistle*, 837) and also states that in 12.11b–12 Paul asserts his own equality with ‘the rival missionaries’ (841). So, it is ‘you’ and these ‘them’.

<sup>26</sup> It is true that in his actual ‘fool’s’ comparison with the intruders, Paul aims to show that he is *better* than them (as opposed to merely calling them ‘ministers of Satan’). This is well emphasized by Schmeller (*Der zweite Brief*, 252): ‘Im Unterschied zu 11,13–15 ist 11,21b–23 keine polemische Denunziation, sondern ein überbietender Vergleich’. However, Paul precisely returns in 12.11, that is, *after* the ‘fool’s’ comparison, to his characterization of them as ‘super-apostles’, thereby continuing his description from 11.5–15. (Paul was someone who could do many things at the same time.)

address the issue of the external critics *in the letter itself*. Once he had done that, he might hope to have disposed of them completely, relative to the Corinthians. His aim in the middle section was therefore this: to denigrate the external critics as much as he could, thereby undercutting their influence on the Corinthians and separating the two parties completely.

## 5. The Three Groups in 12.14–13.13

We saw that Paul addresses the same issue of his lack of financial support at the end of the middle section (subsection **D**, 12.13) and the beginning of the concluding section **E** (12.14–18). The reason for dividing between sections **D** and **E** is that 12.14 begins with a strongly marked ‘Look here’ (Ἰδοῦ), this is the third time (τρίτον τοῦτο) I am ready to come to you’, which Paul repeats in 13.1: ‘This is the third time (τρίτον τοῦτο) I am on my way to you’.<sup>27</sup> Clearly, Paul is here *announcing* the visit by himself to Corinth that the letter as a whole has led up to. We therefore expect to get here his final statement of what he aims to achieve with his letter before his actual arrival.

And that is what we get. He begins, as we saw, by repeating in 12.14–18 from 11.7–12 the point concerning his rejection of financial support from the Corinthians. That was obviously a central issue in his relationship with those he is addressing here as ‘you’ – the Corinthians as such. Indeed, the strongly emotional language of mutual love between children and their parents that he uses here in 12.14–15, is an eloquent indication of the kind of attitude to himself that he hopes to bring about by means of the letter, and then to be received with when he actually turns up.

This all fits closely with the profile of the whole middle section. Once Paul had disposed of the external critics (as he hoped), he should be left with the Corinthians alone, who would by then understand that his rejection of financial support from them was *precisely* an expression of his *love* for them (12.14–15). And so, they should respond in kind (12.15). That this is how one should understand 12.14–18 becomes clear in 12.19, where Paul states this: ‘You have no doubt been thinking all along that we are defending ourselves (ἀπολογούμεθα) before you. (However,) we are speaking in Christ before God. Everything (we have been doing and saying: τὰ δὲ πάντα), *beloved*, is for the sake of *building you up*’. Paul obviously *has* been defending himself in the middle section: *to the Corinthians* and *against* the rival missionaries. But this has all been aimed at building up (οἰκοδομή) the former out of love for them (ἀγαπητοί). By recalling the motif of building up or tearing down from 10.8, Paul here very precisely gives his own view of what he has been up to in the whole middle section: *their* upbuilding, through his own tearing down of the external critics.

If that is the correct reading of both 12.14–18 and 12.19, then why should we not see 12.14–19 as itself part of the middle section? However, the strong formulation at the beginning of 12.14 speaks against this. Thus, 12.14–19 should rather be seen as containing

<sup>27</sup> Two points here. First on the translation of 12.14 and 13.1. As will be clear, I take τρίτον τοῦτο in 12.14 to go directly with what follows immediately: ἐτοιμὸς ἔχω, and not ἐλθεῖν. For the alternative view, see, e.g., Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 212–13. I just find the other reading easier in the Greek. Secondly on the division of sections. Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 832, sees 12.11–18 as a *peroratio*, and hence does not divide clearly between 12.13 and 12.14. Similarly, Lambrecht (*Second Corinthians*, vi) sees 12.11–21 as a single unit of ‘Self-Defense and Apostolic Concern’. By contrast, Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 346, rightly states this: ‘Dass ein neuer Abschnitt beginnt [namely, in 12.14], wird nicht nur durch ἰδοῦ angezeigt, sondern auch durch den Aspekt der Rückkehr nach Korinth’. In the latter connection, he also rightly notes the strongly marked shift from the past tense in κατενάρκησα in 12.13 to the future tense in κατεναρκήσω in 12.14. Paul clearly takes a breath between the two verses. In addition, *concluding* a section with a specific theme, and then continuing into a *new* section with the *same* theme is a Pauline specialty (cf., e.g., Rom 7.25).

a summary of the overall point of the middle section (but now with a view to the ‘you’) now that Paul moves directly in the whole concluding section, which will still begin with 12.14, from the basic duality in the middle section of ‘you’ and the *external* critics to his overall focus in the concluding section – much closer to home – on ‘you’ and the *internal* critics and ‘you’ and Paul himself. Let us now consider this.

After 12.14–19, section E of the four chapters comes out as having two distinct subsections: 12.20–13.2 and 13.3–13.<sup>28</sup> This becomes clear when one considers this whole section in terms of the four basic motifs, which turn up here in their full form. Thus, 12.20–13.2 ends (13.2) with Paul declaring that he will not be sparing (οὐ φείσομαι, the motif of meek or bold) when he arrives in Corinth (that of absence or presence). Similarly, the main part of 13.3–13 ends (13.10) with Paul stating that he has written the way he has in his absence ‘so that when I come, I may not have to be severe’ (the same two motifs). In the latter verse, he even repeats the fourth motif from earlier to the effect that the ἐξουσία he has received from the Lord is ‘for building up and not for tearing down’. However, there also is a vital difference between 12.20–13.2 and 13.3–13, which has to do with the crucial, first motif of ‘you’ or ‘them’. It is this difference that we must attempt to understand.

In 12.20–13.2, Paul directly addresses the problem of internal conflict in the Corinthian congregation that he is trying to solve in the letter. In 12.20, he repeats his ‘I fear that ... (φοβοῦμαι ... μή πως)’ from 11.3. There, however, his fear concerned the overall ‘you’ of the Corinthians in relation to the *external* critics (the *iii*-group). Now, by contrast, his fear concerns the same ‘you’ but in their internal relations. What he fears is, under a general description, that (a) he may himself not ‘find you as I wish’ (a deplorable possibility) and, conversely, that (b) ‘that you may find me not as you wish’ (a veiled threat, 12.20a). (a) What is wrong with them – and what Paul fears – are two things: first, that there may be conflict among ‘you’ (12.20b) and secondly, that God may ‘humble’ Paul himself ‘before you’ (12.21a) and make him ‘mourn over many [πολλούς, namely, among you] who have previously sinned and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and licentiousness that they have practised’ (12.21b). (b) But Paul now promises the ‘you’ (cf. 13.1) that upon his arrival ‘I will not be sparing (οὐ φείσομαι)’ with regard to *them* (13.2). Since he describes ‘them’ as ‘those who sinned previously’, which directly takes up his description in 12.21 of the ‘many who have previously sinned and have not repented’, it is probable that Paul intends to punish them unsparingly *unless* they do repent.

That, then, is the overall picture. Two questions should then be considered. Are the people among the ‘you’, who are responsible for the internal conflict (cf. 12.20), the same as those who have previously sinned and not repented (in 12.21)? And are they the same as those whom Paul has already threatened in 10.2–11 with his forceful behaviour when he arrives? It is hardly possible to decide this with ultimate certainty. However, application of Occam’s razor will suggest that a positive answer should be given. Moreover, the fact that Paul fears that God may *humble* him (ταπεινώση) ‘before you’ with regard to the sinners suggests the same. For this appears to recall the basic criticism of Paul for being precisely ‘humble’ (ταπεινός) in his appearance when present, as introduced already in 10.1. In that case, the people whom Paul describes in various ways in 12.20–13.2 are the *ii*-people, Paul’s internal critics.

<sup>28</sup> This should be contrasted with Schmeller’s careful analysis, *Der zweite Brief*, 354. He finds that Paul’s announcement of his forthcoming visit in 12.14–13.10 consists of four small sections that are ‘relatively loosely connected’ with one another: 12.14–18, 12.19–21, 13.1–4, and 13.5–10. I believe that the precise way in which Paul moves from speaking to the inclusive *i*-group (12.14–20) to speaking of the *ii*-group (12.21–13.2) and then returning to the *i*-group in a non-inclusive way (13.3–10) indicates a different division. (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, x, is even less helpful: ‘(i) Anxiety about the Corinthians’ moral state (12.19–21) (ii) Threat of punishment when Paul arrives: exhortation to reformed conduct (13.1–10).’)

How, then, should we understand the ‘you’ in all this? Does it include the *ii*-people or not? There are two answers to this question, both of which appear to be right. First, yes, the ‘you’ does include the *ii*-people, inasmuch as the ‘you’ stands for the Corinthians as such (cf. 13.1: ‘This is the third time that I am on my way towards you’), which includes them all. But secondly, also no, since it is clear that in the passage as a whole (12.19–13.2), Paul attempts to *distance* the recalcitrant among the Corinthians in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person as ‘they’ from the ‘you’ of the Corinthians as a whole. Thus, the passage both contains an implicit appeal to those among the ‘you’ who are within Paul’s immediate reach to distance themselves from the *ii*-people – and also an implicit and weak threat to the *former* (compare the general fear expressed in 12.20a) ‘that you may find me not as you wish’, namely, if they do *not* distance themselves from the *ii*-people.

We should conclude that in 12.19–13.2, Paul’s ‘you’ both includes the *ii*-people, and also refers specifically to those among the ‘you’, who are more within Paul’s immediate reach than the *ii*-people – but who may still be in need of *some* correction. If we compare this use of ‘you’ with what we found in 10.1–11, we must say that in that passage Paul basically took the ‘you’ to be on his own side (10.1), but also spoke of a need for the ‘perfection’ of their (‘your’) obedience (10.6). In the present passage, by contrast, although he has just addressed them as ἀγαπητοί (12.19), he also *fears* that he may find them (‘you’) not to be altogether the way he wishes (12.20).

This sets the scene for a consideration of the two following verses, 13.3–4, which by any account are quite dense. (1) What is Paul aiming to tell his addressees? (2) How is that message connected (by the initial ‘since’, ἐπεὶ, in 13.3) with the οὐ φείσομαι at the end of 13.2? (3) And who are the ‘you’ addressed by Paul here?

(1) The most straightforward paraphrase of the two verses run, I believe, like this. ‘You ask for proof that Christ is speaking in me – Christ, who (as you claim) is not weak in relation to you but rather powerful among you’ (13.3). This verse states the Corinthians’ view of the matter. Then comes Paul’s reply. ‘Yes, while Christ was admittedly crucified in weakness, he also lives (at present) through the power of God. And I, too, am weak in Christ, but will come to live together with him through the power of God – (and also) in relation to you’ (13.4). Thus, while the Corinthians have claimed to be powerful in Christ, Paul opposes them by claiming that he, too, is powerful in Christ – as it were, *through* his weakness ‘in him’ – but will also be so in the future – and in relation to *you*. The last point directly connects 13.3–4 with 13.2.<sup>29</sup> (2) Thus understood, the two verses follow directly on 13.2. Paul will not be sparing. *For* he is powerful, too – as against their denial that Christ speaks in him and their conviction that they are themselves strong in Christ.

(3) But who, then, are the ‘you’? It can hardly be Paul’s internal critics alone who have just been identified as ‘they’. Thus, the ‘you’ rather stands for the Corinthians as a whole, with a focus on the apparent fact that *all* the Corinthians, *including* those of 12.20–13.2 whom Paul considered within his immediate reach, have apparently come to doubt that Christ is speaking in the weak Paul. This understanding relies on the huge importance of Paul’s switches throughout chapters 10–13 between a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person address. It is also supported by the fact that Paul in 13.3 introduces the theme of ‘proof’ (δοκιμή), which also structures the section that begins at 13.5.<sup>30</sup> For this whole section is clearly addressed to the

<sup>29</sup> Lambrecht argues (*Second Corinthians*, 221) that ‘We shall certainly live with him’ in 13.4 ‘does not point to life after death, but to Paul’s promised boldness of action’ when he arrives. I do not think it is an either-or, rather a both-and. But Lambrecht must be right that Paul’s εἰς ὑμᾶς does refer to his promised boldness of action on his arrival. Compare also Bultmann (*Der zweite Brief*, 246, my italics): ‘Das ζήσομεν kann im Zusammenhang nicht das künftige Auferstehungsleben meinen wie Röm 6, 4f oder dieses nur, sofern es sich schon in der Gegenwart als wirksam erweist’.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. δοκιμάζετε in 13.5, ἰδοὺ δοκίμοι in 13.5, 6, and 7, and δοκίμοι in 13.7. Note also how in 13.9 Paul takes up the issue of ‘your’ ‘strength’ and his own ‘weakness’ from 13.3–4: ὅταν ἡμεῖς ἀσθενώμεν, ὑμεῖς δὲ δυνατοὶ ἦτε.

Corinthians as a whole, as being both people who are within Paul's reach (cf. 13.11–12) and also critical of him. Finally, it is supported by the fact that whereas Paul straightforwardly and unswervingly declares in 13.2 that 'I will not spare', namely, *them* (the internal critics), in 13.10 he rather states to *you* that he has written the way he has in order to *avoid* (ἵνα ... μὴ) having to be severe with *you*.<sup>31</sup> All three points speak for dividing between 13.2 and 13.3, in spite of the fact that 13.3–4 also provides the ground for Paul's οὐ φείσομαι in 13.2. One might put the transition like this: (... *those* I will not spare, 13.2.) For when *you* ask for proof (δοκιμή) that Christ is speaking in me (believing yourselves to be powerful), know that I, too, am powerful (13.3–4). Instead, *you* should examine (περιόζετε) and test (δοκιμάζετε) *yourselves* (ἑαυτούς) ... (13.5). In 13.3–10, then, with his 'you' Paul addresses the Corinthians as a whole, but with special focus on those among them whom he considered to be within his immediate reach (not least in 12.14–19 and 12.20–13.2), but who had *also* been influenced by the critics. It is to these people that the rest of the letter is addressed.

How, then, does Paul go about addressing *these* people? His central tool is to bring in *himself* and then to compare *them* with *him*. He does this in principle by placing both parties on the same level. This should cause no surprise if they *are* those within his immediate reach – as it were, 'his own' people. For instance, in 13.3–4 (1): 'you' claim to be strong in Christ (13.3b); and indeed, Christ *is* strong (13.4a); and Paul, *too*, is strong in Christ (13.4b)! Or this (2): 'you' require proof (δοκιμή) that Christ speaks in Paul (13.3a); instead, 'you' should 'examine' *yourselves* and 'test' (δοκιμάζετε) *yourselves* to see whether 'you' do *not* 'fail to meet the test' (are ἄδοκιμοί, 13.5); by contrast, Paul hopes that they will realise that he himself does meet the test (that he is *not* ἄδοκιμος, 13.6)! Or this (3): Paul 'prays' to God that 'you' will 'not do anything wrong' (13.7a); if the condition is that he himself *appears not* to meet the test, then so be it (13.7b)! Or, finally, this (4): Paul rejoices when he is himself 'weak' if only 'you' are 'strong' (13.9a)! What Paul does in all this is to *appeal* to the 'you' (the Corinthians) as 'his own' people, namely, by bringing into the centre his own person and *his* relationship with *them*. This is not just a matter of 'encouraging' them 'by the meekness and gentleness of Christ', as he had started out in 10.1, but of 'praying to God' (13.7 and 9b) that they will reconsider their relationship with Paul himself. For they must know that 'we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth' (13.8). In effect, what Paul is doing in all this, is to call them *back* to where they originally were through his own efforts. The way he does it is by bringing *himself* squarely into the appeal.

This also lies behind his articulation in 13.9b–10 of two points: (a) what he aims to obtain from the 'you' and (b) how his writing to them here and now should be understood. (a) What he calls for is their 'perfection' (κατάρτισις, 13.9). This immediately fits his talk at the beginning of the four chapters of the 'completion' of their ('your!') obedience (10.6). The idea is obviously that while they do remain on the correct track, they must themselves see to it that they will actually reach the goal. (b) This also fits what he says of his aim of writing in his absence (ταῦτα ἄπὸν γράφω), namely, that he need *not* 'behave severely' (ἀποτόμως χρήσῃμαι) when he comes (13.10), which we took to contrast clearly with his 'I will not spare them' (οὐ φείσομαι) in 13.2 as directed to his critics. He adds that were he to behave severely, he would still be acting in accordance with his ἐξουσία, which is 'for building up and not for tearing down'. But the crucial point is that he claims to be *writing* – as it were, *in advance* – the way he does, in order *not* to have to behave severely when he comes. This is

<sup>31</sup> To my mind, this difference is extremely important. Note how it fits Paul's distinction in 10.2 between 'asking' the Corinthians ('you', here those within his immediate reach) that he may *not* need, upon his arrival, to be bold, namely, with 'you', and the confidence with which he does plan to be daring *via-à-vis* 'those' etc., whom we saw to be the internal critics. This distinction fits exactly (though in reverse order) with his direct threat in 13.2 to the internal critics, and his expression in 13.10 that he hopes to *avoid* having to act severely towards the Corinthians.



clearly addressed to the 'you', to be understood precisely as those within Paul's immediate reach, although *also* critical of him. *They* have the means to respond to Paul's special manner of argument in 13.3–10 in such a way that he may avoid having to be severe.

## 6. The Overall Strategy

If we take a look back over the whole of chapters 10–13 (cf. [Figure 1](#)), what we see is that Paul begins in 10.1 with the Corinthians viewed basically as 'his own' people (the *i*-group more narrowly understood as those Corinthians who still have 'a sincere and pure devotion to Christ', cf. 11.3), but then quickly turns towards the internal critics (the *ii*-group in 10.2–11). Here he brings in his threat to be bold upon his arrival (10.2 and 10.11). In the long middle section, he pays no special attention to the internal critics. Instead, he does his best to destroy the *external* critics. In section E (after his summary in 12.14–19 of the preceding section), he quickly turns towards the internal critics (12.20/21–13.2), but then leaves *them* behind in order to focus on those among the Corinthians whom he considered to be within his immediate reach (from 13.3 onwards). Thus, Paul's basic focus is on the 'you' to be understood more narrowly as 'his own' people. However, since *they* have apparently been influenced by the internal critics, and these by the *external* critics, what he does first (10.2–11) and last (12.21–13.2) is to *threaten* the internal critics with his behaviour *when he comes*, thereby as it were disposing of *them* (though still, in principle, for building them up), and then in the middle section to *dispose* completely of the external critics *in the letter itself*, indeed, to *destroy them*. There is a *very clear strategy* in all this, which one may see as soon as one keeps the three groups as clearly separate as Paul himself apparently does: *from* Paul's 'own people' to the internal critics (who are not to be destroyed, but whom Paul will confront powerfully on his arrival) *to* the external critics, who *are* to be destroyed (namely, through the letter in Paul's absence) – and then back again. However, it is also noteworthy that in terms of the actual length of Paul's treatment, the *external* critics (the *ultimate* villains!) get the lion's share. By destroying *them* (and rejecting, as we saw, the issue of financial support that *they* had apparently succeeded in impressing on Paul's 'own people'), Paul hoped to undercut the external support for his *internal* critics, whom he could thus hope actually to bring around, either through the letter itself, or else when he turned up and acted with unsparing boldness towards *them*. The external critics would be out, but the internal critics might still be within reach of Paul's ἐξουσία, which was meant 'for building up and not for tearing down'.

Thus, by disposing of the internal critics in a *non-destroying* manner (10.2–11 and 12.21–13.2), and of the external critics behind them (10.12–12.10) in a *destroying* manner, and by rejecting the argument on financial support that the external critics had succeeded in impressing on Paul's 'own people' (11.7–12 and 12.13–18), the apostle hoped by his *ad homines* arguments of 13.3–10 to bring about the 'perfection' of 'his own' people. This is all, then, wholly logically summarised in his concluding paraenesis (13.11): 'Finally, brothers, farewell (χαίρετε). *Perfect* yourselves (καταρτίζεσθε, cf. 13.9), listen to my *appeal* (παρακαλεῖσθε, cf. 10.1), *agree* with one another (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖτε, contrast 12.20), live in *peace* (εἰρηνεύετε, contrast again 12.20) – and the God of love and peace will be with you.' *They*, the Corinthians as such, but more narrowly construed as Paul's 'own people', are his ultimate target. To them, as he began this whole section of the letter, he could appeal 'by the meekness and gentleness of Christ' (10.1). And that is how he ends in 13.11.

## 7. Epilogue

The crucial question concerning the canonical 2 Corinthians is how chapters 10–13 (with the content and shape that we now know) may hang together with everything that

precedes.<sup>32</sup> This is obviously not the place to address this question in any detail but a few pointers are in order. They will show some of the very close connections – indeed, the highly impressive *dynamic* of Paul’s logic – that one may find in the whole letter if one starts out reading it as a single, coherent one.

A first point is that chapters 10–13 may be seen to depend on and take up Paul’s account in 1.15–2.11 of his change of travel plan (he had planned to come and give them ‘a second gift’, 1.15, but then decided otherwise, 1.23), and his writing instead a letter to them (2.3–4, 9). In 1.23 he says that (1) ‘it was to *spare* you (φειδόμενος ὑμῶν) that I did not come again to Corinth’, and in 2.9 he declares that (2) ‘I wrote for this reason: to *test* you (ἵνα γνῶ τὴν δοκιμὴν ὑμῶν)’ and (3) ‘to know whether you are *obedient* in every-thing (εἰ εἰς πάντα ὑπήκοοί ἐστε)’. These ideas are literally taken up in 13.2, 13.3, and 10.6, respectively. Now Paul is *again* writing a letter to the Corinthians before his forthcoming arrival in Corinth, telling them (1) that he will *not* spare his (internal) critics when he does turn up – but of course only if these critics have not been converted by this *second* letter of Paul’s. Also, (2) where the Corinthians have apparently sought a proof from Paul that Christ is speaking in him, he now turns this around (13.5), telling them that they must first test themselves. Further, (3) he again writes in order to make their obedience complete.<sup>33</sup>

A second point is that Paul’s account in 1.15–2.11 of his travel plan and letter writing is then followed by an account of his reflection on his own competence as a missionary (2.15, 3.5–6), as he was travelling between Troas and Macedonia in order to get news from Corinth through Titus (2.12–7.4). This account is strongly focused on Paul himself, though constantly as directed towards ‘you’.<sup>34</sup> However, this long account is clearly *triggered* by a few references to some rival missionaries of Paul. Thus, he contrasts himself with ‘the many who are peddlers of God’s word’ (2.17), who have been operating in relation to the Corinthians with ‘letters of recommendation to you or from you’ (3.1). It is probably correct to say that what Paul goes on to say about himself (as part of his self-reflection) contrasts *positively* with the only *half*-explicit negative picture that he gives of these rival missionaries (cf. 4.2). Thus, he neither addresses the latter directly nor speaks *explicitly* to any large degree about and against *them*. Instead, he focuses throughout 2.14–7.4 on himself – in relation to ‘you’. Thus, it will also be correct to say that a more frontal attack on these people might well be needed – and that, of course, is what we get in chapters 10–13.

A third point is that what makes Paul rush to Macedonia – and hence, what gives rise to his long self-reflection *en route* – is not in fact the general issue of the rival missionaries. It is something much more specific, namely, as 2.3–13 makes clear, his eagerness to hear from Titus how the Corinthians had reacted to his letter *with regard to the individual case that he discusses in 2.5–11* of the so-called ‘wrongdoer’ (ὁ ἀδικήσας in 7.12). For it is

<sup>32</sup> Compare Bieringer’s excellent summary (‘Teilungshypothesen’, 82–3) of Victor Paul Furnish’s list of five differences and inconsistencies between 2 Cor 1–9 and 10–13. (Furnish, *II Corinthians. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*; Anchor Bible 32A, Garden City: Doubleday, 1984, 30.)

<sup>33</sup> Incidentally, these are some of the correspondences that have made adherents of the ‘Hausrath-Kennedy hypothesis’ find chapters 10–13 to be the letter of ‘tears’ that Paul had written previously (cf. 2.4). See, e.g. Watson, ‘Painful Letter’, and Lars Aejmelaeus, *Streit und Versöhnung. Das Problem der Zusammensetzung des 2. Korintherbriefes* (Suomen Eksegeettisen Seuran julkaisu 46; Helsinki: Kirjapaino Raamattutalo, 1987). I am turning this approach completely around. The similarities are there, but what they mean is that Paul decided to write *one more* letter (namely, 2 Corinthians) in order to achieve the same aims with the remaining, underlying, *bigger* issue of his own standing vis-à-vis the rival missionaries. That decision was motivated by the fact that his *earlier* letter with similar aims concerning a smaller issue (of the ‘wrongdoer’, see below) had been a success.

<sup>34</sup> I have analysed this section in ‘Paul’s Temporal Thinking: 2 Cor 2.14–7.4 as Paraenetic Autobiography’, *New Testament Studies* 67 (2021) 157–80.

this precise case that is the overall theme of Paul's account in 7.5–16, of his happiness when he then finally did receive the positive report from Titus. This is clear from 7.8–12. In other words, by the end of chapter 7 the wider theme of the rival missionaries that was broached at the beginning of 2.14–7.4 has not (yet) been either addressed or solved; something like chapters 10–13 would be needed for that.<sup>35</sup>

A fourth point is that Paul does much in 7.5–16 to emphasise the closeness of the Corinthians to *Titus* – whose 'mind has been set at rest by all of you' (7.13) and whose 'heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of all of you, and how you welcomed him with fear and trembling' (7.15). There can be little doubt that this is because Paul goes directly on in chapters 8–9 to entrust precisely Titus with bringing the collection to a successful conclusion when he now returns to the Corinthians carrying Paul's letter, and hence *before* Paul's own arrival. Thus, Paul's joy at the Corinthians (7.16) is partly due to the fact that they responded the way they should to what Paul had written about the wrongdoer, partly to their positive relationship with Titus.<sup>36</sup> *What remains* is that they will also come fully round to Paul *himself* in relation to the much wider issue of the rival missionaries. *That* issue is then addressed in chapters 10–13.

A fifth point follows directly from the previous one. It is, and remains striking, that Paul begins the last four chapters in this way: 'I myself, Paul, appeal to you' (10.1). This Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος is so emphatic that it must have some special point. What could it be? Here are some suggestions: 1) The issue of the wrongdoer, as addressed by Paul in his previous *letter* (written as a substitute for his own physical *presence*), has been responded to wholly positively by the Corinthians, but the wider issue of Paul himself versus the rival missionaries that was broached at the beginning of 2.14–7.4 remains. 2) Similarly, the issue of the collection as managed by *Titus*, is about to be solved now that *Titus* will arrive in Corinth carrying the letter, but the wider issue of the relationship of the Corinthians with Paul himself vis-à-vis the rival missionaries remains. 3) Moreover – and most importantly from Paul's perspective – *this* issue has become urgent and requiring to be solved (and preferably in advance), now that Paul *himself* is about to arrive in Corinth and be physically present there. The result of all this is the following: Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος ... In other words, Paul *now* aims to address the wider issue that has been underlying everything up to now (and was broached at the beginning of 2.14–7.4). Since that issue pertains *directly to himself* and concerns his overall adequacy as a preacher in relation to the Corinthians, he feels that it must be solved *before* he finally arrives. And so, he writes *about* it in one more letter to the Corinthians (the canonical 2 Corinthians), 'in order to test you (ἵνα γινῶ τὴν δοκιμὴν ὑμῶν) and to know whether you are obedient in everything (εἰ εἰς πάντα ὑπήκοοί ἐστε)' – as 2.9 had it in relation to the *earlier* letter, and as he now repeats in 13.3–6 and 10.6. If the earlier letter was a success with regard to the specific case of the wrongdoer, as he so carefully explains in 2.5–7.16, then why not try the same approach once more with regard to the overall theme of Paul himself and the rival missionaries? He had written *one* letter concerning the wrongdoer, aiming to avoid having to be bold in this regard upon his eventual arrival. And that was a success.

<sup>35</sup> I have not found any clear indication in scholarship that one should distinguish markedly between the specific case of the wrongdoer (which is the basic theme of chapters 2–7) and the much broader case of the rival missionaries (which is the theme of chapters 10–13). As I see it, the distinction helps immensely to explain the dynamic of the whole letter. This claim includes the fact that Paul already *broaches* the broader case in 2.17, 3.1, and 4.2. Of note, however, is a splendid statement by Bieringer on the issue of the wrongdoer and that of the opponents ('Die Gegner', 220, my italics): 'Am wahrscheinlichsten ist, dass sie [that is, the two issues] verschiedene Problembereiche darstellen, dass Pls sie aber in 2 Kor insofern einandern annähert, als er die bereits gefundene Lösung des *adikesas*-Problems als Modell für die noch ausstehende Überwindung des Gegnerkonflikts vorstellt.'

<sup>36</sup> The importance of the role of Titus in 7.5–16 and into chapters 8–9 has been convincingly brought out by Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 117–19.

He now writes one *more* letter with the same aim but addressed to a much more basic issue. Would that *that* letter would *also* be a success!<sup>37</sup>

If all of this is correct, we may note one additional point that helps to hold the whole canonical letter together. It is the fact that Paul brings himself in so strongly in two ‘phases’ of the letter: in 2.14–7.4 as part of his handling of the issue of the wrongdoer, and in 10.12–12.10 as part of his handling of the issue of the rival missionaries. These two texts stand out for the staggering boldness with which they are focused on – Paul himself! Here we are at the core of Paul’s letter writing. He apparently felt that when he was up against the wall, the best remedy at his disposal was to present *himself* to his addressees as strongly as he could.<sup>38</sup>

I conclude that it is difficult not to see the whole of the canonical 2 Corinthians as a unity, with a number of messages to the Corinthians that all aim at securing, first the success of Titus’ renewed arrival (with the letter itself) in Corinth, and then the complete success of Paul’s own forthcoming arrival in the city in the flesh.

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<sup>37</sup> Just for the record, with – but not because of – tradition, I take the former of these two letters to be 1 Corinthians and the latter, of course, to be 2 Corinthians as a whole.

<sup>38</sup> Lambrecht tentatively saw the connection (*Second Corinthians*, 164): ‘Is 10:1b–12:18, therefore, not somewhat analogous to the equally major (but, of course, quite different) excursus of 2:14–7:4?’ Only, neither of these two sections is an ‘excursus’! On the contrary, they are crucial to Paul’s argument.