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Rhetorical Rationale for the Compositional Integrity of Second Corinthians

Mark Erickson
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_ericksonm@csl.edu

RHETORICAL RATIONALE FOR THE COMPOSITIONAL INTEGRITY OF SECOND CORINTHIANS

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By
Mark Jerome Erickson
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Approved by ______________________________
[Name] Advisor

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[Name] Reader

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[Name] Reader

CONTENTS

All biblical quotations, unless otherwise attributed, are from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible.

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To God be the Glory!

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INTRODUCTION

ANCIENT LETTER WRITING

> Something about the nature of early Christianity made it a movement of letter writers. We possess more than nine thousand letters written by Christians in antiquity. Twenty-one of the twenty-seven writings in the New Testament take the form of letters. Two of the remaining works, the Acts of the Apostles and the Apocalypse, contain letters within them. If the interpreter is willing to understand early Christian letters as Greco-Roman letters, they can provide a fascinating window into the world of those Christians.[1]

The average length of 14,000 recovered first-century Greco-Roman letters is about 87 words, varying in length from 18 to 209 words. The letters of the literary giant Cicero (106–43 BCE) average 295 words (in Latin), ranging from 22 to 2,530 words; the letters of Seneca (54 BCE–39 CE) are longer, averaging 995 words (also in Latin), and ranging from 149 words in his shortest letter, to 4,134 words in his longest. By comparison, the letters of the Apostle Paul average 2,495 words; Philemon, his shortest, is 335 words in length and the longest, Romans, is 7,114 words long.[2] 2 Corinthians is 4,477.[3]

Paul appears to have been quite innovative as a letter writer. He was familiar with literary conventions for letters, both Greco-Roman and Hebrew, but he also felt free to alter these traditions in order to seize the opportunity to bear witness for Jesus Christ in his openings and closings, and also to use them to amplify his letters' main purposes.[4] It would also appear that he realized that, at least sometimes, a letter was more appropriate for his purposes than a personal

[1] Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 8.

[2] E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 163.

[3] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 121.

[4] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 21.

visit. He basically says as much in 2 Corinthians 2:1–9 when he confesses he wrote a letter to the Corinthians rather than make a potentially devastating visit.

In a culture where only 10–15% of the population could read, it was strategic that his letters be read aloud to the congregation addressed. Even letters that he addressed to individuals seem to have been written for an entire congregation to hear. Additionally, having his letters read aloud in other congregations only enhanced Paul's epistolary ministry. His letters were theologically profound and practically insightful for all Christian congregations. His passion, his wisdom and his ability to teach, to exhort and to persuade were, therefore, not limited only to those who could read for themselves.

As will be asserted later in this thesis, Greco-Roman speech making (i.e., rhetoric) and letter writing, although they involved similar strategies and skills, developed separately in antiquity. Rhetoric was the older and more prestigious skill; letter writing skills were developed in the second of three stages of education while rhetoric was the third stage.[5] However, when the purpose of a letter was to persuade, rebuke, or defend, the form it took reflected that of rhetoric. "Most types of letters used in the Greco-Roman world were associated with the epideictic division of rhetoric."[6]

Letters "always have the characteristic of being a 'communication' between people who are separated."[7] They can address circumstances of all kinds, business or personal, frivolous or vital, pleasant or confrontational. The Apostle Paul saw the advantages of using letters, at least at certain times, as an effective strategy to conduct ministry.[8] As such, it seems quite clear that he

[5] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 32.

[6] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 27.

[7] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 23.

[8] Richards, 16.

intended them to be read and heard, aside from the epistolary beginnings and endings, as speeches – as rhetoric. In fact, Ben Witherington III argues:

> the letters we find in the NT are mostly far longer than secular letters of their era. Actually they are *not mainly letters*, although they have epistolary openings and closings sometimes. They are discourses, homilies, and rhetorical speeches of various sorts that the creators could not deliver personally to a particular audience, so instead they sent a surrogate to proclaim them. These documents would not be handed to just anyone. From what we can tell, Paul expected one of his co-workers, such as Timothy, Titus, or Phoebe, to go and orally deliver the contents of the document in a rhetorically effective manner.[9]

Definitions

2 Corinthians – the New Testament canonical writing, almost universally accepted as genuinely Pauline.

Compositional (i.e. literary) integrity – "a single composition [that] was dispatched to its addressees as a single missive;"[10] recognizing that a single letter may address more than one issue or approach one issue from several perspectives or be written for an extended period of time and even in stages of composition. E. Randolph Richards asserts that "the elaborate rhetorical structure of many of Paul's letters . . . does not seem likely to have been dictated extemporaneously."[11]

Rhetoric – "The art of composing an oral or written presentation by using style, argumentation, and arrangement of language to persuade an audience to a particular inclination."[12] Throughout this thesis, the terms "rhetoric," "Greco-Roman Rhetoric," and

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[9] Ben Witherington III, *What's in the Word: Rethinking the Socio-Rhetorical Character of the New Testament* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009), 9.

[10] Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005, 50.

[11] Richards, 25.

[12] David M. May, "Rhetoric" in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry and Lazarus Wentz (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012).

"ancient rhetoric" will be used interchangeably; rhetoric and oratory, rhetor (or rhetorician) and orator will also be used interchangeably. This term will be further developed in Chapter One.

It is also important to distinguish between use of rhetoric at the micro-level (which would include rhetorical language, such as figures of speech and metaphor, to embellish various parts of a document), and use of rhetoric at the macro-level (which refers to extensive use of rhetoric in a document to win the favor of and to influence one's audience).

Rhetorical Criticism –

> An approach to the biblical text that concerns itself with the way language is used in a text to persuade its audience. Style, structure and figures of speech have an affect on the audience or reader of a text, and the rhetorical critic focuses on how this "rhetoric" works rather than focusing on the historical setting of a story or poem.[13]

More specific to the study of New Testament documents,

> Since Paul wrote his letters to be read aloud to the churches, there is a close connection between the forms of his letters and features of oration. In terms of an Aristotelian definition of rhetoric, Paul's letters are examples of the "faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion." For this reason rhetorical criticism has often been used to clarify the rhetorical objectives, structures, style and techniques of his persuasive letters.[14]

Presuppositions

A proper analysis of biblical hermeneutical approaches must begin by accounting for the assumptions, or presuppositions, of any interpreter, whether scholar or not. This analysis helps to explain why two or more people can look at the same tangible data and arrive at completely different interpretations of that data. For the issue addressed in this thesis, it seems necessary and appropriate to ask an interpreter his or her view as to whether there was divine involvement in

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[13] Arthur G. Patzia and Anthony J. Petrotta, *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 101.

[14] Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 822.

the production and preservation of New Testament documents and whether the earliest church commentators and historians were basically trustworthy.

Scholars do not typically present their presuppositions in their writings since this would lengthen an article or paper significantly, even becoming extra-topical or redundant. The problem is that presuppositions about the nature of the New Testament canon and ancient historians will influence the analysis of each and every interpreter.

This present thesis presumes that 2 Corinthians was written and preserved by means of the supernatural superintendence of God the Holy Spirit.[15] It also presumes that the earliest Christian commentators and historians were basically trustworthy and well-meaning. These works, however, are not considered to be divinely inspired as the canonical New Testament works are, and thus are not held to be completely accurate under all circumstances.

Characteristics of 2 Corinthians

Commentators, both academic and non-academic, find 2 Corinthians to be an impressive document, due to its intimacy and transparency, but also its aggressive and defensive rhetorical maneuvers. It reveals the heart and mind of a first generation Christian missionary/theologian as he finds joy and victory in spite of intense conflict within the Christian church he had founded in Corinth and conflict with non-Christians because of their false teachings and/or immoral lifestyles. "There is no letter which enables us to see so deeply into the workings of the writer's mind and heart. Thankfulness, affection, anxiety, entreaty, and indignation come to the surface in successive waves…"[16]

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[15] This thesis does recognize that the transmission of the original biblical writings was fraught with imperfect human involvement so that effective textual criticism is necessary for the critical mind to achieve a certainty of what the original read.

[16] Alfred Plummer, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, (The International Critical Commentary), Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915, xii.

In the first verse of Second Corinthians, the Apostle Paul identifies himself as the writer of this letter (along with his co-worker, Timothy) to the church of God in Corinth and to Christians throughout Achaia. A nearly unanimous consensus of New Testament scholars of the past two centuries is that 2 Corinthians is genuinely written by the Apostle Paul.[17] Another large, though not as unanimous, consensus amongst the same scholars is that the compositional integrity of 2 Corinthians is highly suspect; that is, that 2 Corinthians is actually a compilation of Pauline letters or fragments of letters redacted by a Pauline school or individual follower of Paul shortly after Paul's death.[18] These scholars contend that the literary breaks, or seams, which they observe in the text, signify partitions between the letters or letter fragments within the larger document. However, there is significant diversity of thought amongst these scholars as to just how many fragments there are and under what circumstances and in what order they were originally disseminated.

Second Corinthians differs from other Pauline epistles in its basic organization in that it does not have the apparent theological section followed by an exhortation section. It is a combination of a travelogue, personal historical accounts and clarifications, and spiritual insights added in strategic places. For some, it is more of an anthology of Pauline letters, merged together by an editor without any singular theme or organizational principle. Indeed, there are a number of abrupt, dramatic transitions of thought. For centuries, these transitions were regarded by scholars, commentators, preachers, and lay people simply as different sections of a very long and

[17] "The evidence, both external and internal, for the genuineness of 2 Corinthians is so strong that a commentator might be excused for assuming it without discussion." Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915, xi. This is verified more recently by Harris: "One of the areas in which there is a consensus among NT scholars is that Paul was the author of 2 Corinthians. . ." Harris, 1.

[18] ". . .when we turn to investigate the integrity, as opposed to the authenticity, of this letter, we are confronted with a complex array of data in the text, and, perhaps not surprisingly, with a bewildering variety of partition hypotheses." Harris, 8.

complex letter, especially by ancient standards. In the past two centuries, it has become widely accepted that 2 Corinthians is not one, but at least two and as many as nine[19] distinct letters from Paul to the Corinthian Christians, gathered together and edited in its present canonical form sometime after Paul's death but before 2 Corinthians as we know it was published. There is no evidence from any ancient New Testament manuscript that any such editing took place after the letter was published and accepted as canonical in its current form by the church.

In spite of the widespread consensus that 2 Corinthians lacks compositional integrity, a number of New Testament scholars hold that it is legitimate and advantageous to maintain that 2 Corinthians was written as a single literary unit.

Ben Witherington III argues that "part of the reason for the existence of these theories is that most treatments of 2 Corinthians have not taken into account Paul's use of ancient rhetorical conventions."[20]

Frederick Long concurs, arguing that

> a dynamic exigency existed which likely was met with an equally dynamic rhetorical response. Interpreters must account for this rhetorical dimension in order to appreciate the unity of 2 Corinthians. The appropriate methodology, consequently, is historical-rhetorical criticism."[21]

Long continues:

> Paul deliberately fashioned 2 Corinthians in conformity with forensic practice in the Greco-Roman tradition. Specifically, he was responding to damaging charges about his methods and growing suspicions about his motivations. Therefore, he constructed an official apologetic letter.[22]

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[19] Walter Schmithals, "Die Korintherbriefe als Briefsammlung," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 64 (1973) 263–88.

[20] Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, 329.

[21] Frederick J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology: The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004), 230.

[22] Long, 230.

Long is convinced that "the significance of my analysis is that those problematic literary characteristics of 2 Corinthians are readily accounted for form-critically when 2 Corinthians is affirmed as an apology."[23]

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to examine whether applying ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical principles to canonical 2 Corinthians offers sufficient evidence to support the argument that 2 Corinthians is a single, albeit complex, literary unit.

The Thesis Statement

The contention of this thesis, then, is: The Apostle Paul's apparent use of ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions in 2 Corinthians gives evidence of its compositional integrity and adequately accounts for the apparent partitions which, to some scholars, reveal the existence of multiple documents.

Our goal is not to assert that rhetorical criticism proves that 2 Corinthians is a single letter. It is rather to show that, given the textual evidence within the document, rhetorical criticism offers a plausible, even preferable, interpretation of the data in 2 Corinthians than prevailing composite theories.

Nor is our goal to defend the inerrancy, inspiration or authority of either 2 Corinthians or of Scripture as a whole. Indeed, we would contend that even if we were to conclude that the evidence in fact indicates 2 Corinthians is comprised of two or more letters or letter fragments, the message would still be fully trustworthy, inspired and authoritative. This thesis, then, is about whether the identification and interpretation of 2 Corinthians as macro-rhetoric supports a theory of compositional integrity over against the argument that the canonical document is a collection of edited letters.

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[23] Long, 235.

The Plan of the Thesis

My plan is to defend the thesis statement above according to the following outline:

I. The Historical Context of 2 Corinthians and Challenges to its Compositional Integrity

This chapter will clarify the *current status of the question*, by reporting on the research regarding the history of Paul’s communications with the Corinthian Christians and the subsequent reception by the Christian church of 2 Corinthians as apostolic and canonical. It will also survey and evaluate several basic challenges to the compositional integrity of 2 Corinthians.

II. Ancient Greco-Roman Rhetoric as a Hermeneutical Tool

In this chapter, I will briefly describe the origin of Greco-Roman rhetoric and show that it is clear that the Apostle Paul made use of this ancient rhetorical method as he composed 2 Corinthians. It will also consider whether it is appropriate to apply rhetorical critical methods to the analysis of letters.

III. Reading 2 Corinthians Today

In this chapter, we will note and briefly analyze the major arguments both in support of interpreting 2 Corinthians as a composite and in support of interpreting 2 Corinthians as a unified composition. The latter goal will be met largely through an application of rhetorical criticism to 2 Corinthians which we contend reveals its fundamental unity, complex though it may be.

IV. CONCLUSION – Rhetorical Analysis and the Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians

In this chapter, I will review and summarize the evidence presented in this thesis, consider a number of implications of this evidence, and make a final appeal.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF 2 CORINTHIANS AND CHALLENGES TO ITS COMPOSITIONAL UNITY

> Because of the remarkable epistolary archive preserved in canonical 1 and 2 Corinthians, we are able to go a long way toward reconstructing the early history of the Pauline Christian religious cells, which began to emerge around the Mediterranean in the late 40s and 50s of the Common Era. Paul claims that he was the first to bring the Christian cult to Corinth (1 Cor 3:6; 2 Cor 10:14), the inaugural missionary to this key urban multi-ethnic and religiously plural setting in which Christianity was to gain a foothold and flourish continuously thereafter up to modern times.[1]

This chapter is intended to provide a basic context to the study of 2 Corinthians by reporting on the historical and biblical data pertaining to Paul's communications with the Corinthian Christians and by introducing and analyzing more recent challenges to its compositional unity.

I. The Historical and Biblical Context of 2 Corinthians

Nearly all New Testament scholars agree that the two canonical epistles to the Corinthian Christians were genuinely written by the Apostle Paul. However, since the only tangible data to which scholars today have access include ancient hand-written copies[2] of these two canonical documents[3] and some archeological evidence from the time and place, it is impossible for

[1]Margaret M. Mitchell, "Paul's Letters to Corinth: The Interpretive Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction," Chapter 11 in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Cambridge, MA: the President and Fellows at Harvard College, 2005), 307.

[2] Scholars date the letter (or letter fragments) of 2 Corinthians to about 55–60 CE. Papyrus 46 ($\mathfrak{P}^{46}$) is the earliest extant manuscript of 2 Corinthians, dated 175–225 CE. This means that several generations of copies of the original letter could have been made before the earliest available manuscript was copied.

[3] We agree with scholars who assert that Paul wrote other letters to the Corinthians which were not preserved and are consequently unavailable to modern scholars.

anyone to know, let alone for everyone to agree upon, the exact historical situation to which Paul responds in 2 Corinthians.

Furthermore, the historical and biblical data are difficult to interpret because Paul wrote with an assumption that the readers of his letters were aware of the actual situations and personalities involved at the time of his writings, but which have subsequently been lost and over which scholars can only theorize.

In addition to this, 2 Corinthians features abrupt changes in subject matter and emotional tone. Chapters 1–9 are mostly confident and optimistic, sounding like a conflict between friends has just been reconciled. However, without any helpful transition, chapters 10–13 make it sound like the wounds have reopened, perhaps more viciously than before. Furnish summarizes:

> Paul is concerned that the obedience of the Corinthian Christians is not complete (10:6); he writes not of their zeal for him but of how little they love him (12:15b), of their suspicion that he does not love them (11:11; cf. 12:13), and of their temptation to espouse a different gospel (11:2–4). Here he writes not of his confidence in them but of his "fear" that when he comes he will find "general disorder" (12:20) and a need for repentance (12:20; contrast, e.g., 7:8–12).[4]

Moreover, Mitchell observes that 2 Corinthians appears to be written in "rhetorical shorthand,"[5] with frequent and abrupt transitions, making it extremely difficult to place the historical and biblical data into a clear framework.

In order to illustrate the development of the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians, this thesis employs six "stages" in order to summarize a widely-accepted historical account of

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[4] Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (The Anchor Bible), 32A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984, 31.

[5] Margaret M. Mitchell, "Rhetorical Shorthand in Pauline Argumentation," in *The Writings of St. Paul: Annotated Texts, Reception and Criticism*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks and John T. Fitzgerald (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 670.

the development of the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians based upon canonical 1 and 2 Corinthians and the Acts of the Apostles.[6]

Stage 1 — Paul's initial entrance into Corinth (Acts 18:1–18)

According to Acts 16–17, during his "Second Missionary Journey," Paul found it necessary, on account of his controversial preaching and teaching, to flee from the Macedonian cities of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. He was escorted by Berean Christians as far as Athens. There he waited for Silas and Timothy to meet him and report on the well-being of the Christians in those cities. After a frustrating, though not entirely unsuccessful, stay in Athens, Paul moved on to the recently rebuilt Roman colony, the city of Corinth. Corinth was noteworthy in the ancient world for its wealth and its keen awareness of status, its love of comparing and evaluating professional speakers and traveling philosophers, as a crossroads of travelers to and from all directions, and for its rampant immorality.[7] There Paul worked as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3) and founded Christian congregations, which met in various homes in and around Corinth. Since Luke mentions two items, Emperor Claudius's eviction of Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2), which historians date to about the year 49, and Paul's appearance before Gallio, then-proconsul of Achaia (Acts18:12-16), which historians date to late 51 or early 52, New Testament scholars can date his 18-month stay in Corinth (Acts 18:11) quite confidently to late 49 (or early 50)

[6] For alternative interpretations of the biblical data, see, for example, Richard Charles Henry Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1937, 1963), 13–17, 799–804; Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), xvi–xxi; Charles Kingsley Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1973), 5–11; and David R. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence* (T & T Clark International: London, 2003), 246–248.

[7] See, for example, Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, (Word Biblical Commentary), (Waco: Word Books, 1986), xxvii–xxxiii. Martin notes that "because of the luxury and vice of Corinth the word 'corinthianize' – κορινθιάζεσθαι – (i.e. to fornicate) was coined as an infamous sign of the wealth and immortality for which the city was renowned in the ancient world." Although, as Martin also notes (xxviii), this may be also be the result of "Athenian disdain for the region in southern Greece."

through mid-51 (or early 52). R. Martin declares that Gallio’s accession to “proconsul of Achaia in Southern Greece is one of the fixed points of apostolic chronology.”[8]

Stage 2 — “Corinthians A”

At the conclusion of his residence in Corinth, Paul returned briefly to Jerusalem and Antioch (Acts 18:22). After this, he took up residence in Ephesus, a little over 200 miles eastward across the Aegean Sea from Corinth, and ministered there for at least two years (Acts 19:10). During this time, according to 1 Corinthians 5:9, he wrote a letter to the Christians in Corinth (conventionally designated as “Corinthians A” or “Letter A”),[9] instructing them not to intermingle with sexually immoral people.[10] The fact that Paul needed to clarify his intended meaning for them in 1 Corinthians 5:10–11 would seem to confirm the existence of this “previous” letter beyond all doubt. The vast majority of scholars and commentators hold that “Corinthians A” was written prior to 1 Corinthians but was subsequently lost and is no longer available for study. Other scholars suggest that a fragment of “Corinthians A” has been preserved in 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1.[11]

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[8] Martin, *2 Corinthians*, xxx. In fact, Martin specifies July 1, 51.

[9] For the sake of simplicity, this thesis will simply use the convention, “Corinthians A”, “Corinthians B”, etc. to refer to these documents. “Corinthians B” will be used interchangeably with 1 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians will refer to the canonical writing by that name, while “Corinthians D” will refer to 2 Corinthians 1–9 and “Corinthians E” will refer to 2 Corinthians 10–13.

[10] “῎Εγραψα ὑμῖν ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι πόρνοις,” [“I wrote to you in the letter not to intermingle with sexually immoral persons.”]

[11] Frederick Fyvie Bruce, [*1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971; repr., 1980), 213] traces this hypothesis to A. Hilgenfeld in 1875. Alfred Plummer, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, (The International Critical Commentary), Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915, xxiv] cites Dobschütz, Franke, Hilgenfeld, Lisco, Moffatt, Sabatier, Von Soden, and Whitelaw as subscribers to this hypothesis. J. Paul Sampley, [“The Second Letter to the Corinthians,” *New Interpreter’s Bible, Vol. XI*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000, 27] also cites Strachan, Schmithals (1984) (who includes it with 1 Corinthians 6:1–11 as an earlier Pauline letter to Corinth), and Hurd, but finds the idea unpersuasive. Sampley [32] also notes that Weiss (1959:323-57) included this section with several other sections of 1 Corinthians as “Corinthians A.”

Stage 3 — "Corinthians B"

Not long after "Corinthians A" had been sent to Corinth, several church members from there, referred to in 1 Corinthians 1:11 as "Chloe's people", contacted Paul with a disturbing report on several matters: there was serious quarrelling and dissension throughout the church; there had been a serious sexual infraction and the Corinthian church had not condemned it as immoral; and believers were suing fellow-believers in the pagan courts. About the same time, Paul also received a letter with a list of several church-related questions for his response and advice from Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:17). Paul's response to both of these reports was the lengthy letter known as 1 Corinthians, or "Corinthians B", written from Ephesus and brought to Corinth by Timothy.

Paul clearly hoped (perhaps assumed) that 1 Corinthians would resolve the challenges in the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:18). Unfortunately, however, his letter was not well received, and the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians took a serious turn for the worse.

Stage 4 — Paul's second (interim) visit to Corinth

In 1 Corinthians 16:5–9, Paul indicated that he was planning to remain in Ephesus until sometime after Pentecost. He would then pass through Macedonia (to the north) before arriving in Corinth to spend some significant time with the Corinthians, possibly the whole winter. However, it is clear from 2 Corinthians 1:15–2:4 that Paul's travel plans had been altered. For some reason, perhaps to follow up on 1 Corinthians, Paul made his second visit to Corinth ahead of schedule. In 2 Corinthians 1:15–16, he explained that his revised plan had been to go to Corinth first, then into Macedonia, and then return for a third visit to Corinth before traveling on to Judea.[12] However, that third visit did not occur until much later than Paul had anticipated. Paul admits frankly in 2 Corinthians 1:23 that, "It was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth."[13]

In 2 Corinthians 2:1, Paul explains further why he did not make the third visit according to plan: "I determined for myself that I would not come to you again in pain."[14] This seems like a straightforward explanation for Paul's avoiding a third visit to Corinth until after their conflict with him is resolved. However, this sentence is ambiguous enough that it can be understood in two rather distinct ways: one which would lend support to the approach outlined above, and the other that Paul never made this painful interim visit at all. The ambiguity comes down to which word the adverb, πάλιν, modifies. One interpretation holds that πάλιν modifies ἐν λύπῃ ["I determined for myself not to come to you, *again with sorrow*"], reflecting the idea that Paul's second (intermediate) visit had been characterized by sorrow and pain, and that he wanted to avoid repeating the experience on his third visit. Philip E. Hughes holds to this position: "in 2:1 he tells the Corinthians that he had determined not to come to them again with sorrow, plainly implying that he had already paid them one sorrowful visit. This can refer only to a visit after the establishment of the Corinthian church…and therefore after his first visit to Corinth for the purpose of founding a church there."[15] A second interpretation of this verse takes πάλιν to

[12] From Paul's rhetorical questions in 2 Corinthians 1:17, one can sense that Paul was defending himself against the apparent accusations of some in Corinth, that his change of travel plans suggested that he was "vacillating" or "τῇ ἐλαφρίᾳ ἐχρησάμην" = "treating a matter frivolously, as by irresponsible change of mind" [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 314.]

[13] "ὅτι φειδόμενος ὑμῶν οὐκέτι ἦλθον εἰς Κόρινθον." Paul's placement of the participle at the beginning of the sentence emphasizes his reason for not revisiting them as previously scheduled: "I did not come to Corinth because I was <u>sparing you</u>."

[14] "ἔκρινα γὰρ ἐμαυτῷ τοῦτο τὸ μὴ πάλιν ἐν λύπῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλθεῖν." "ἐν λύπῃ" ["dative of manner", Wallace, 161–162.]

[15] Hughes, 461.

modify ἐλθεῖν ["I determined for myself not *to come again* to you, this time with sorrow"], which seems to indicate that either Paul considered his original entrance into Corinth as a sorrowful visit, or that he anticipated that his upcoming, post-Macedonian, visit might be sorrowful. Both interpretations are grammatically defensible. It would seem, however, that the first interpretation above would be somewhat more likely, given the proximity of πάλιν to ἐν λύπῃ; that Paul wanted to avoid coming to Corinth for another painful visit, thus recognizing that Paul had already visited the Corinthians a second time and that it had been a grievous visit – for both Paul and the Corinthians.

The argument that Paul made this interim, grievous visit also appears to be upheld by 2 Corinthians 12:14 and 13:1, where Paul refers to his upcoming visit to Corinth as his "*third*."[16] Further, in 2 Corinthians 13:2, he also mentions that he had warned those who were sinning during *his second visit*.[17]

The evidence seems quite clearly to support the idea that Paul had indeed made a visit to Corinth between his original sojourn (in Acts 17) and the (third) visit for which he is planning as he writes 2 Corinthians. That second visit had been a painful, sorrowful visit, and apparently non-productive, perhaps even counter-productive to their relationship. Therefore, Paul determined that instead of another such visit, he would write a "tough-love" letter to them expressing his concerns.

[16] "Ἰδοὺ τρίτον τοῦτο ἑτοίμως ἔχω ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς," 2 Corinthians 12:14; and "Τρίτον τοῦτο ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς·" 2 Corinthians 13:1.

[17] "ὡς παρὼν τὸ δεύτερον."

Stage 5 — "Corinthians C" — "letter of tears"[18]

In 2 Corinthians 2:3, Paul refers to a letter which he "wrote."[19] This would most likely indicate that he had written about his concerns to them previously (i.e. in another letter).[20] In the next verse, Paul describes this letter that he wrote as having been written "out of much distress and anguish of heart and through many tears, not in order that you might be grieved, but in order that you might know the love which I have in abundance toward you."[21]

In 1830, Friedrich Bleek, seeking to understand how to interpret these verses, proposed the hypothesis of a second lost letter from Paul to the Corinthian Christians.[22] Although this hypothesis is presently widely accepted, it was not readily accepted by all scholars at the time. Henry Alford, in 1865, called it an "ingenious conjecture." but that it was only a conjecture and therefore was not able to lead interpreters any nearer to knowing what actually happened.[23]

If, in fact, Paul confided this "letter of tears" to Titus, to deliver it to the Corinthian Christians and then work with them to understand Paul's deep love and concerns for them (2 Corinthians 7:13), then this would help explain the extreme nature of the anxiety Paul expressed at not encountering Titus (2 Corinthians 2:12–13). Paul had hoped that Titus would bring good

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[18] In 2 Corinthians 2:4, Paul asserts that he wrote this letter "διὰ πολλῶν δακρύων", that is, "through many tears." Hence this thesis will follow the designation, "letter of tears."

[19] "καὶ ἔγραψα τοῦτο αὐτό," that is, "I wrote this thing/same thing . . ." The aorist would suggest quite strongly a previous letter.

[20] Although, according to Hughes, 54, Chrysostom took this to be an epistolary aorist, which could simply refer to the present letter (i.e. 2 Corinthians), reflecting his belief that there was no intermediate visit.

[21] Original translation of: "ἐκ γὰρ πολλῆς θλίψεως καὶ συνοχῆς καρδίας ἔγραψα ὑμῖν διὰ πολλῶν δακρύων, οὐχ ἵνα λυπηθῆτε ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀγάπην ἵνα γνῶτε ἣν ἔχω περισσοτέρως εἰς ὑμᾶς."

[22] Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 11. See Friedrich Bleek, "Erörterungen in Beziehung auf die Briefe Pauli an die Korinther," *ThStKr* 3 (1830) 614–32; similarly, his *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (ed. Wilhelm Mangold; Berlin: Reimer, 1875) 469–70. Interestingly, Bleek first proposed that this "letter of tears" also preceded both 1 and 2 Corinthians.

[23] Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament: The Acts of the Apostles, The Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1877), 2:61.

news of reconciliation from the Christians in Corinth. Murray J. Harris translates 2:13a: "I could get no peace of mind," calling attention to Paul's use of the perfect tense for ἔχω.[24] So profound was his stress that although the Lord opened an opportunity for ministry in Troas, he could not rest there and went on to Macedonia in hopes of finding Titus sooner. Matera rightly concludes that Paul's angst for Titus's arrival was more deeply felt because of his angst for the Corinthians, so that "the rhetorical purpose of [verses 12–13] is to show the Corinthians his continuing love and concern for them, even after the events of the painful visit and the harsh letter."[25]

This letter was apparently so strong that Paul even reported that, at least momentarily (εἰ καὶ πρὸς ὥραν), he even regretted having sent it (2 Corinthians 7:8). He sums up his misgivings about sending the letter and his great relief upon hearing the favorable Corinthian response in 7:8–9, "Because if indeed I grieved you by means of the letter, I do not regret it (although I was regretting it). For I see that that letter grieved you, although for a short time – but I am not rejoicing because you were grieved, but because you were grieved to the point of repentance. For you grieved in a godly manner, with the result that you did not suffer any disadvantage from us."[26]

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[24] "οὐκ ἔσχηκα ἄνεσιν τῷ πνεύματί μου" Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005, 238, n. 22, notes that Robertson regards this use of the perfect as that of "vivid dramatic recital." [A. T. Robertson, "Second Corinthians," in *Word Pictures in the New Testament IV: The Epistles of Paul* (Nashville: Broadman, 1931), 217.] A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), 901, writes: "Paul may have wished to accent the strain of his anxiety up to the time of the arrival of Titus. The aorist would not have done that. The imperfect would not have noted the end of his anxiety. It was durative plus punctiliar. Only the past perfect and the present perfect could do both. The experience may have seemed too vivid to Paul for the past perfect. Hence he uses the (historical dramatic) present perfect. That is certainly a possible interpretation of his idea." Further, Wallace [578] cites this passage as an example of an "Aoristic Perfect (a.k.a. Dramatic or Historical Perfect)", citing Robertson (above) and explaining further that, "It may be best to think of it as intensive extensive perfect used in narrative (i.e. it is an intensive use of the extensive perfect). That is to say, it focuses so much on the act that there is no room left for results."

[25] Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 65.

[26] ὅτι εἰ καὶ ἐλύπησα ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ, οὐ μεταμέλομαι· εἰ καὶ μετεμελόμην, βλέπω [γὰρ] ὅτι ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἐκείνη εἰ καὶ πρὸς ὥραν ἐλύπησεν ὑμᾶς, νῦν χαίρω, οὐχ ὅτι ἐλυπήθητε ἀλλ' ὅτι ἐλυπήθητε εἰς μετάνοιαν· ἐλυπήθητε γὰρ κατὰ θεόν, ἵνα ἐν μηδενὶ ζημιωθῆτε ἐξ ἡμῶν.

The intensity of his anxiety prior to hearing from Titus was matched by the intensity of his joy in 7:6–11, when Titus found Paul and reported the “longing and mourning and renewed zeal” the Corinthian believers were feeling toward Paul and Timothy. It seems clear that the strong emotional experiences which Paul reported for himself, and which Titus reported on behalf of the Corinthians toward Paul and Timothy, indicated that something extremely disagreeable had transpired between them which led to the writing of 2 Corinthians. Unfortunately for subsequent generations, Paul was writing to “insiders” who already knew the details of the issue(s) that had come between Paul and the Corinthians, and does not specify the reason for such strong emotions.

The identity of this “letter of tears” (“Corinthians C”) is a much debated issue amongst scholars. Harris lists six possible identifications of it:

> (1) an unattested letter written before the “previous letter” (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9, 11) or before 1 Corinthians;
> (2) the “previous letter” [1 Corinthians 5:9];
> (3) 1 Corinthians;
> (4) a letter, no longer extant, written between 1 and 2 Corinthians [i.e. the “letter of tears”];
> (5) a letter, partially preserved in 2 Corinthians 10–13, that preceded the writing of 2 Corinthians 1–9; or
> (6) 2 Corinthians.[27]

Harris also adds that “the first, second, and sixth of these identifications are too improbable to warrant consideration. This leaves us with three possibilities.”[28]

The “time-honored identification”[29] of the “letter of tears” is that it is canonical 1 Corinthians. In other words, there was no interim letter (i.e. “Corinthians C”) between “Corinthians B” and “Corinthians D.” This theory holds that 1 Corinthians was Paul’s “tearful” response to reports of factions, sexual libertinism, litigiousness, incest, and disrespectful

[27] Harris, 5.

[28] Harris, 5.

[29] Harris, 5.

behavior at the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians, Paul is obviously deeply perturbed by their behaviors and confronts them without ambiguity. There are also a number of similarities between 1 and 2 Corinthians: both deal with a particular person who has offended Paul and the Christian community (1 Corinthians 5:1–5, 13; 2 Corinthians 2:5–8) and needs church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:3–5, 13; 2 Corinthians 2:6–7) and the involvement of Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:11). According to Harris, this interpretation has been supported by "an impressive array of scholars from Chrysostom and Theodoret to Meyer, Lightfoot, Clarke, Hughes, Lampe, and Hyldahl."[30] R. C. H. Lenski, and more recently, D. Hall and F. Long, also concur with this analysis.[31] Plummer also adds Alford, Beet, J. H. Bernard, Conybeare and Howson, Denney, Lias, McFadyen, Meyer, B. Weiss, and Zahn.[32]

The second major alternative is that "Corinthians C" was partially preserved in 2 Corinthians 10–13, which would mean that it actually preceded the writing of 2 Corinthians 1–9. Harris identifies this view as being originally promoted by Adolph Hausrath in 1870.[33] He contends that it is presently less popular than it has been in the past; yet, he lists a number of scholars who have espoused this explanation (although they may differ from one another in some details): Kennedy (1900), Moffatt (1901), Plummer (1903, 1915), Rendell (1909), Lake (1911), Goguel (1926), Strachan (1935), Manson (1942), Sparks (1952), Filson (1953), Dodd (1953), Hanson (1954), Nickle (1966), Buck and Taylor (1969), Günther (1973), Watson (1984), Klauck (1986), Aejmelaeus (1987), Talbert (1987), Rolland (1990), Welborn (1995, 1997), Horrell

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[30] Harris, 6.

[31] Lenski, 1312–1314; Hall, 2, 224-232; Frederick J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology: The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7f, 123.

[32] Plummer, xxviii.

[33] Harris, 34. See Adolph Hausrath, *Der Vier-Capitel Brief des Paulus an die Corinthier* (Heidelberg: Bassermann, 1870).

(1996), and Peterson (1997, 1998).[34] Bultmann concludes that chapters 10–13 with 2:14–7:4 and chapter 9 together comprise the "letter of tears", while identifying 1:1–2:13, 7:5–16 and chapter 8 together as the "letter of reconciliation."[35]

The third major hypothesis was that "Corinthians C" was neither 1 Corinthians nor 2 Corinthians 10–13; rather, it was a letter that is no longer extant. Despite seeming to be sympathetic to this position,[36] Harris neglects to cite any scholars who espouse it! Martin notes a number of adherents to this view of the "letter of tears": Hughes, Tasker, Kümmel, and Allo.[37] Sampley[38] and Furnish[39] also identify themselves with this position.

Several possible reasons for the loss of this letter have been offered: 1) that it was so strong that the Corinthian Christians did not copy it or save it with other communications from Paul; 2) that it was so specific to the Corinthians that the larger Christian church did not see fit to include it in the canon; or 3) that the letter was so spontaneous that Paul did not employ a professional amanuensis and therefore no copy (such as a rough draft) was kept.

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[34] Harris, 34. Harris also notes that many scholars consider 2 Corinthians 10–13 to be a separate letter from Paul, but who do not identify it with the "letter of tears", but simply a letter which followed chapters 1–9 chronologically. These scholars include J. S. Semler (1776), Bruston (1917), Windisch (1924), Pherigo (1949), Munck (1954), Osty (1959), Barrett (1964, 1973), Batey (1965), Bruce (1968, 1971), Furnish (1984), Martin (1986, 2000), Best (1987), Kruse (1987, 1989, 1996), Gilchrist (1988), Sumney (1990, 1999), Murphy-O'Connor (1991, 1996), Watson (1993), deSilva (1993), Thrall (1994, 2000), Savage (1996), and Sampley (2000).

[35] Rudolf Bultmann, "Exegtische Probleme des zweiten Korintherbriefes," *Exegetica*, ed. R. Bultmann (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1967), 298–322; cited by Udo Schnelle, *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings* tr. M. Eugene Boring, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 80–81.

[36] Harris, 7–8.

[37] Martin, li.

[38] Sampley, 9–10.

[39] Furnish, 55.

Stage 6 — "Corinthians D" (2 Corinthians 1–9) and "Corinthians E" (2 Corinthians 10–13)[40]

Paul acknowledged having some extremely anxious days or weeks (2 Corinthians 2:12–13) after sending off the "letter of tears", complicated by his sudden, apparently forced, exit from Ephesus as a result of some dangerous events (2 Corinthians 1:8–11; Acts 19:23–20:1). Finally, Paul and Titus met in Macedonia where Paul received the good news that the majority of the Corinthian Christians had repented of the way they had treated him. As a result of Paul's "letter of tears" and Titus's work in Corinth in its wake, the Corinthian believers had a widespread (although not unanimous) change of heart and mind toward Paul. They had disciplined the one who had led in the rebellion against him and were anxious to meet him again in order to restore their relationship with him in person. In response to this good news, Paul writes canonical 2 Corinthians (or at least some portion of it) in order to express his joy at their repentance and desire for reconciliation.

Those who see canonical 2 Corinthians as a compositional unity recognize three basic sections: the joyful expressions for the reconciliation between Paul and the Corinthian Christians, Paul's concern that the offering for the impoverished Christians in Jerusalem be restarted, and, in preparation for his third visit to Corinth, a self-defense and warning for those who remain hostile to Paul and his ministry in Corinth.

Some scholars who see the last four chapters of 2 Corinthians as a separate, subsequent letter refer to it as "Corinthians E", although many of them see this section as having been written prior to "Corinthians D".

[40] Reflecting the widely-held view that 2 Corinthians is comprised of two independent letters, Furnish (41–44) assigns the convention, "Letter D" or "Corinthians D", to 2 Corinthians 1–9 and "Letter E" or "Corinthians E" to chapters 10–13, although, as will be established in the next chapter, many scholars consider chapters 10–13 ("Corinthians C") to have been written prior to chapters 1–9 ("Corinthians D").

There are also scholars who believe that at the time that 2 Corinthians was being redacted, the fragments were pieced together in an incorrect chronology, as will be seen below.

Representing a nuanced view of literary integrity in 2 Corinthians, Martin proposes that canonical 2 Corinthians stands as originally published, but that there is a "compositional hiatus" that accounts for the abrupt transition between chapters 1–9 and 10–13. He asserts that this view is shared by Barrett, Bruce, Furnish, and Harris.[41] Werner Georg Kümmel suggests that Paul's writing or dictating of this lengthy letter was interrupted several times which resulted in the vastly different moods and abrupt transitions.[42]

While admitting that "the dates of the letters can only be estimated in general terms," Sampley approximates that 2 Corinthians 1–9 was written by the fall of 54 or 55, while chapters 10–13 were written the spring or summer of the following year, giving adequate time for the "super-apostles"[43] to again undermine Paul's authority and ministry amongst the Corinthian Christians, to send Titus and two brothers (2 Corinthians 8:16–24) to make a visit to Corinth, and for reports of renewed distrust and animosity against Paul to be brought back to Paul in Ephesus.[44]

The Effect of 2 Corinthians and the Subsequent Relationship between Paul and the Corinthians

> Nothing is known about the Corinthian congregation in the period from Paul's departure for Jerusalem in 57 until the last decade of the first century, when (about 96 or 97) the church at Rome sent a letter to the Christians of Corinth (1 Clement). The occasion of the letter from Rome was a schism in the church at Corinth, allegedly caused by "a few rash individuals."[45]

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[41] Martin, li.

[42] Werner Georg Kümmel, et al., *Introduction of the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 1975, 287–293.

[43] "τῶν ὑπερλίαν άποστόλων" (2 Corinthians 11:5 and 12:11)

[44] Sampley, 11–12.

[45] Furnish, 56.

L. T. Johnson offers an optimistic verdict:

> Did the Corinthians reconcile with Paul and respond? We have two signs that they did. First, when writing to the Romans, Paul later reports: 'For Macedonia *and Achaia* have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem' (Rom. 15:26). Second, they preserved his letters."[46]

Whether 2 Corinthians was an effective defense of Paul's apostleship and an exoneration of his evangelical message; whether it led to reconciliation between himself and his beloved Corinthians; whether Paul did, in fact, visit Corinth again; and whether they ever wrote letters to each other again are all unknown. However, these issues are now less important than the fact that the wider Christian church saw fit to copy, distribute, and canonize 2 Corinthians as a compositional unity. More recently, this presumption has been seriously challenged.

Summary of this Section

The New Testament Canon boasts two letters allegedly written by the Apostle Paul to the Christians in Corinth. However, evidence suggests several others were written, but were either not preserved, or portions of them were preserved in the canonical documents, 1 and 2 Corinthians. It would also appear that Paul made an impromptu visit to Corinth after writing 1 Corinthians, which proved to be disastrous. Thanks to the work of Titus, this conflict was subsequently resolved, and Paul then wrote 2 Corinthians in preparation for his third visit to Corinth.

Of special interest for this thesis is the fact that scholars are widely divergent at "Stage 6", giving expression to the present state of disagreement on the compositional unity of 2 Corinthians. This thesis will now offer a brief description of how 2 Corinthians has been

[46] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (rev. ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 320 [emphasis original]. Some will object to the assertion that the Corinthians preserved Paul's letters, so this is perhaps a questionable assertion.

received in the early church, a description that will stand in strong contrast to more recent partition theories arguing against its compositional unity.

II. Challenges to the Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians

> There appears to be little or no scholarly disagreement with the thesis that 2 Corinthians was "always treated as a unity until modern critics sharpened their tools."[47]

The Early Church through Johann Salomo Semler (1776)

Not only does 2 Corinthians appear to have been considered genuinely Pauline and canonical from the time of its first appearance, but the earliest extant commentaries are also unanimous in either assuming or asserting that 2 Corinthians was a single, complete letter from Paul to the Corinthian Christians.[48]

Filson writes:

> From the time that 2 Corinthians began to circulate in the church at large it has had the form we know in our English Bibles. No manuscript divides it into two or more letters, or omits any section. If therefore we raise a question about its unity, this can be only because the contents appear to require it.[49]

While one cannot make a definitive argument from silence, the silence appears to be absolute in that no textual evidence, nor even any assertions, have been produced that suggests that canonical 2 Corinthians was received by the Corinthian Christians, the earliest Christian Church at large, or by any other ancient commentator or preacher, or subsequently interpreted by any of them, as a composite of Pauline letters edited into a single document. Proponents of a

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[47] Frances M. Young and David F. Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians*, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008, 1987, 28.

[48] Hughes mentions, but does not elaborate upon, a selection of commentaries that have survived: Ambrose and Chrysostom in the 4th century; Theodoret in the 5th; Theophylact and Herveius in the 12th century; Thomas Aquinas in the 13th; Erasmus and Calvin in the 16th century; Estius (1614–16) in the 17th; Bengel (1742) in the 18th; Alford (1849–61), Hodge (1859), Wordsworth (1866), Weiss (1902, 1906), Stanley (1876), and Denney (1894) in the 19th; and ten more in the first half of the 20th century. [Hughes, Philip E. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962, xxxv–xxxvi.]

[49] Floyd V. Filson, "II Corinthians," pages 263–425 in *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. X, (New York/Nashville: Abingdon, 1953), 269.

composite approach to 2 Corinthians are unable to point back to anyone at any time prior to Semler (1776) who even hints that 2 Corinthians was a composite of more than one letter.

Since Semler

In the late 18th century, liberal scholars began applying historical-critical methodologies to the Corinthian epistles and began to report that, while genuinely Pauline (with the possible exception of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1), they were both actually collections of several letters or letter fragments. More recently, however, the integrity of 1 Corinthians has come to be widely recognized,[50] while at the same time, serious questions as to the integrity of 2 Corinthians persist. Two of the more influential commentators in recent years have been Günther Bornkamm and Hans Dieter Betz. Bornkamm has alleged that the reception of 2 Corinthians was significantly later than would be expected, giving opportunity for the editing of the constituent letters to produce 2 Corinthians. The commentary by Betz, while focused on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, gives a detailed, although selective and subjective, history of the interpretation of 2 Corinthians since Semler.

Günther Bornkamm (1962): The Apparently Later Reception of 2 Corinthians in the Wider Church and its Alleged Significance

Witherington places the writing of 1 Corinthians in early 53 or 54. Furnish favors "the fall (October?) of 53 or 54, more likely in the latter year." Martin suggests May 54 or, "less probably, 55. Plummer, Bruce, Harris, and Barnett date 1 Corinthians to spring 55. Thrall proposes after Pentecost in either 55 or 56, while Guthrie places it in the spring of 57.[51]

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[50] Thanks in large part to the work of Margaret M. Mitchell in *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991).

[51] Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 73; Victor P. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB 32A, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 29; Sampley, 11; Martin, xxxv; Plummer, xix; Bruce, 24–25; Murray J. Harris, 64. Harris also cites F. F. Bruce (*The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, Grand Rapids:

Determining a date for the writing for 2 Corinthians is not any more difficult than determining the date of 1 Corinthians. Mitchell holds that the earliest of the letters contained in canonical 2 Corinthians (2 Corinthians 8) was written almost immediately after 1 Corinthians 16.[52] Guthrie reasons that "last year" as found in 2 Corinthians 8:10 and 9:2 refer to any time before the Macedonian New Year (September 21), not necessarily a 12-month timeframe, thus resulting in a substantially reduced interval between letters, of about seven months.[53] Witherington dates 2 Corinthians to "very late in 55, or more probably in 56."[54] Harris sees more time between the letters: "We conclude that about eighteen months elapsed between the two letters and that 1 Corinthians was sent in the spring of 55 and 2 Corinthians in the fall of 56."[55]

Although this evidence suggests that 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians were written within two years (and perhaps much less) of each other, it appears that 2 Corinthians was received and circulated by the wider Christian church some fifty years later than 1 Corinthians. While 1 Corinthians is unambiguously attested to by writers as early as 1 Clement (late first century), Ignatius of Antioch (prior to his martyrdom in about 110–117), Polycarp of Smyrna (before 156), and Marcion (about 140–150), the earliest unambiguous attestation to 2 Corinthians appears to be Marcion's canon[56] and Polycarp of Smyrna's letter to the Philippians[57] in the mid-second

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Eerdmanns/Leicester: Apollos, 1990, 93); H.Conzelmann (*I Corinthians*, ETr Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975, 4, n. 31); J. A. T. Robinson, (*Redating the New Testament*, Philadelphia: Westminster/London: SCM, 1976, 48, 54, 352); R. Jewett (*A Chronology of Paul's Life*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986, 104); Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, (The New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, 1; Margaret E. Thrall, *The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), 11; Guthrie, 458.

[52] Mitchell, "Paul's Letters to Corinth, 328.

[53] Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Revised Edition), Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990, 458.

[54] Witherington, 352.

[55] Harris, 67.

[56] Marcion's writings are no longer extant; Tertullian (*Adversus Marcionem* V. 11, 12; ca. 108) asserts that Marcion included 1 and 2 Corinthians in his canon in about 140.

century. First and Second Corinthians are listed first among Paul's epistles in the Muratorian Canon (traditionally, 180–200, although perhaps as late as the fourth century).[58] Irenaeus of Lyons (about 180), toward the end of the second century, identifies the letter as Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians and quotes from it.[59]

Harris cites critical evidence from Clement of Rome's correspondence with the Christian church in Corinth toward the end of the first century, about forty years after Paul's correspondence with them.

> Writing in A.D. 95 or 96, Clement of Rome clearly alludes to 1 Cor. 1:11-13 when he directs the Corinthians (47:1): "Take up the *letter* of the blessed apostle Paul . . . because even then you had created party divisions". . . Moreover 1 Clement contains several other indisputable allusions to 1 Corinthians. *But conclusive evidence is lacking that our canonical 2 Corinthians was known to Clement and the church of Rome in the mid-90s of the first century. Not only does Clement refer (in the quotation above) to a single letter of Paul [to the Corinthians]; he nowhere clearly alludes to 2 Corinthians.* To conclude that Clement probably did not know 2 Corinthians involves a legitimate use of the argument from silence, for there are not a few passages in 2 Corinthians (e.g., 11:2–3; 12:20; 13:5, 9b) that would have been directly relevant to Clement's concerns . . . as he sought to combat the Corinthian pneumatics of the 90s who had tried to supplant the presbyters . . . Since the situation Clement faced at Corinth related more directly to opposition to authority than to mere party-strife, 2 Corinthians would have been more apposite to cite than 1 Corinthians. . . .[60]

Harris also notes this phenomenon in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch in which 1 Corinthians is frequently cited, while not even ambiguous references to 2 Corinthians have been found.[61]

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[57] Polycarp, *To the Philippians* 2.2; 6.2; 11.3.

[58] There are questions as to whether the Muratorian Canon is early (about 170) or as late as the fourth century. See Geoffrey Mark Hahneman, "The Muratorian Fragment and the Origins of the New Testament Canon," in *The Canon Debate*, eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson,2002),405–439.

[59] Irenaeus, *adv. Haereses* 4.28.3

[60] Harris, 2–3, [emphasis added].

[61] Harris, 3.

Harris concludes, "To judge by the extant attestation of 2 Corinthians, we may conclude that this epistle became widely known throughout the early church only during the second half of the second century."[62]

Günther Bornkamm[63] argues that the hypothesis that 2 Corinthians "is a secondary collection of several Corinthian letters by Paul is finally proved" because of the fact that the document known as 2 Corinthians emerged later. This would all have been accomplished prior to the publication of canonical 2 Corinthians, as there is no textual evidence to suggest that this editing took place. This argument falls considerably short of "proof," since there could well be other reasons for the later attestation of 2 Corinthians, such as sensitivity to the subject matter and the delicacy of some of the issues needed to be dealt with in Corinth in the short term.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor speculates that one part of the New Testament canon began to be collected in Corinth where these letters from Paul were discovered and it occurred to the earliest editors to select three of Paul's letters (1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 1–9, and 2 Corinthians 10–13) for publication.[64] This led to some editing (for example, eliminating the closing from 1–9 and the greetings from 10–13), giving the appearance of 2 Corinthians as one unified writing. This was accomplished early enough so that no textual variants betray this editorial activity, and it was apparently accomplished without controversy or anyone living at the time ever mentioning the existence of these two separate letters merged together as one.[65] Martin

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[62] Harris, 3.

[63] Günther Bornkamm, "The History of the Origin of the So-Called Second Letter to the Corinthians," *New Testament Studies* 8:3 (April 1962), 263.

[64] Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer*, 127. Murphy-O'Connor further postulates that they were either unable to locate the "previous letter" or the "letter of tears", or chose not to include them as they did not seem to apply to the larger Christian church.

[65] Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer*, 127.

agrees that “we have no textual evidence which supports any partitioning; but the probative force of this contention is weakened if the earliest textual evidence postdates the work of a redactor.”[66]

Barrett, however, warns:

> The relative lateness (in comparison with 1 Corinthians) with which 2 Corinthians emerges into general use has been held to confirm that it is composite, made up of parts of two or more distinct letters . . . It is probably true that 2 Corinthians came into general use later than 1 Corinthians. This however does not prove (though it is consistent with) the belief that 2 Corinthians is a composite work. This must be shown by other arguments. There was good enough reason for withholding 2 Corinthians from publication, whatever the process by which it was composed.”[67]

Hall rightly argues:

> Bornkamm’s assertion that 2 Corinthians was known at first only within the province of Achaia may well be correct. The mostly likely reason for this would be that the Corinthians chose to circulate to other churches copies of 1 Corinthians rather than copies of 2 Corinthians. This would be understandable. 1 Corinthians deals for the most part with matters of general interest, and is addressed not only to “the church of God at Corinth”, but also to “all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours” (1.2). 2 Corinthians, on the other hand is a much more personal letter, in which Paul defends himself against personal attacks and vilifies specific people who are at Corinth. It would be natural for the Corinthians to limit the circulation of 2 Corinthians to the immediate area.
>
> However, the question of circulation is quite distinct from the question of authenticity. . . .The fact that 2 Corinthians was not widely circulated in Paul’s lifetime proves nothing whatsoever about the nature of its composition.”[68]

Barrett concludes that “it cannot be said that any good explanation of the process that led to the composition of 2 Corinthians out of the disordered fragments has yet been given. This must remain . . . a significant argument against partition theories.”[69]

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[66] Martin, xlvi.

[67] Barrett, 22.

[68] Hall, 86–87.

[69] Barrett, 25.

Hans Dieter Betz (1985): Reasserting Semler's Discovery

In his influential 1985 commentary on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9,[70] Betz gives the reader a very detailed and, at times, stunning, account of the earliest formulations of 2 Corinthians as a composite of letters. From the outset, Betz freely stipulates that the ancient evidence is unanimous and uncontested; that none of the extant Greek biblical manuscripts gives any evidence that parts of 2 Corinthians were inserted or deleted or relocated elsewhere in the document; and that no church fathers even hint of such editorial activity.

Betz has made significant effort to document the historical development of contemporary multiple-letter hypotheses and especially of Semler's unique contributions. He begins by noting that

> investigation of the literary problems of 2 Corinthians goes back to the beginning of historical-critical inquiry into the New Testament. In his 1776 commentary on 2 Corinthians, Johann Salomo Semler (1725-91), professor on the liberal theological faculty at Halle since 1753, proposed for the first time the hypothesis that Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians is composed of several distinct fragments.[71]

Betz also notes that

> there is good reason to question whether Semler was really the first to propose a partition theory for 2 Corinthians, and if so, how he may have managed to arrive at it. To be sure, Semler himself never mentioned predecessors, nor were any named by those who subsequently accepted or rejected his hypothesis. But our knowledge of scholarship of the period is incomplete, and the sources give one the impression that Semler was engaged in long, and largely undocumented, debates with students and colleagues. Thus it is possible that discussion of the partition of the letter preceded the publication of Semler's hypothesis; but *so far an extensive search has produced no evidence of actual predecessors, so that Semler must be regarded as the originator of the idea* [emphasis added].[72]

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[70] Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9; A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 3.

[71] Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 3. The title of Semler's commentary is *Paraphrasís II. Epistolae ad Corinthios.* Halle, 1776.

[72] Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 4.

Betz continues:

> the observations which were to bring about a decisive change in the course of scholarship on 2 Corinthians are found in the *Paraphrasis II: Epistolae ad Corinthios* of 1776. In the introduction, Semler proposed that the work is composed of two separate letters. The first letter consists of 2 Cor. 1-8; Rom. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9, together with the conclusion in 13:11-13. This letter was sent to the Christians of Achaia, and was carried to them by Titus. A second letter was composed later, after distressing news about the situation at Corinth had arrived; this letter includes 2 Cor. 10:1–13:10.[73]

Looking back on Semler's proposal regarding 2 Corinthians, Betz notes:

> Perhaps the most significant thing about Semler's hypothesis was that such a proposal was made at all. *Its accuracy was a matter of secondary importance* [emphasis added]. With Semler the dam had broken, releasing a mighty flood which swept scholars of all persuasions and schools into the debate on partition theories of 2 Corinthians and other Pauline letters for the next two hundred years. Semler's hypothesis was first discussed in Germany, then in Holland and England. These debates were characterized by sharp polarization of the participants into two groups: on the one hand the more liberal scholars, who entertained partition theories of one kind or another, and on the other the more conservative, who tried to defend the unity of 2 Corinthians.[74]

In his commentary, Betz reveals the motivation and the early development of the earliest claims that 2 Corinthians is a composite document. He offers neither textual evidence, nor any other evidence prior to Semler's commentary, which would substantiate this position. He even concedes that the accuracy of Semler's claims were not of utmost concern; what was truly significant was that, through Semler, the challenge to the compositional integrity of 2 Corinthians was made so that future scholars would need to deal seriously with these issues.

In his commentary, Betz fastidiously traces various scholarly responses to Semler's hypothesis regarding the compositional unity 2 Corinthians, from Semler to G. Lüdemann in

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[73] Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 3.

[74] Betz, 3–4.

1980.[75] Perhaps most significant for this thesis is Betz's assertion that the arguments for the compositional unity of the epistle are just as speculative as proposals for multiple documents:

> Only recently has it become apparent that the traditional view of the unity of the epistle represents nothing more than another theory in need of positive proof, and that its exponents cannot rely on the naïve assumption that unity is the natural state of the letter.[76]

Betz holds that both sides in the debate lack "positive proof" but asserts that those who hold the "traditional view" are afflicted with a "naïve assumption." His argument is that both those who hold to literary integrity and literary compilation theories have equal standing; that both are hypotheses in need of "positive proof." This means, then, that there appears to be a positive stalemate between those who recognize the compositional unity of 2 Corinthians and those who do not. The former cannot simply claim that there is no textual or historical evidence for multiple letters within 2 Corinthians because it may be that all the editing took place prior to publication and that no evidence of such editing remains. But neither can the latter party take this assertion and deem it proven simply because it is possible.

Betz concludes the historical and theological introduction of his commentary by laying down a gauntlet of sorts:

> The history of research on 2 Cor. 8 and 9 inspires little confidence in its results. Semler's initial hypothesis, proposed in 1776, marks a bright moment in the history of New Testament scholarship. Despite two hundred years of scholarly debate, it still awaits confirmation or refutation. . . .Semler's hypothesis can be regarded as proven if our [i.e. Betz's] analysis in chapters 2 and 3 yields positive results, if the literary genre and function can be identified (chap. 4), and if the letters thus reconstructed can be made understandable within the context of Paul's dealings with the Corinthian church.[77]

[75] These historical details are not pertinent to this thesis; however, interested readers are directed to Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 3–36.

[76] Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 28.

[77] Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 35–36.

Betz proceeds, then, in ground-breaking manner, to apply the conventions of ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric to analyze 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 in an attempt to prove that these chapters are actually two independent letters, thus ostensibly confirming Semler's discovery of multiple documents in 2 Corinthians.

Whether Betz was successful in this endeavor to prove definitively that 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 were two complete and independent letters brought into 2 Corinthians by a redactor a number of years later, is probably best answered by the fact that some are convinced by the evidence and others are not. This will be more fully addressed in chapter three of this thesis.

What is most significant for this thesis at this juncture is the fact that Betz's commentary, designed to confirm Semler's assertions of multiple documents in 2 Corinthians, served to give legitimacy and popularity to the application of rhetorical criticism to 2 Corinthians. And yet, ironically, rhetorical criticism may in turn serve to undermine the very hypothesis Betz sought to establish.

Summary of this Section

The compositional integrity of 2 Corinthians currently faces severe challenges because of apparent literary breaks and because of the abrupt change of mood in chapters 10–13. Many scholars since the 18^{th} century have come to believe that 2 Corinthians is a compilation of two or more of Paul's letters to the Corinthians, edited prior to publication and canonization. H. D. Betz, in particular, has chronicled the history of these proposals from 1776 until 1985 in his highly influential commentary on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. His primary assertion is that defending the compositional unity of 2 Corinthians is just as speculative and unproven as is the compilation, or partition, theory.

It would seem that those who assert the compositional integrity of 2 Corinthians and those who do not are at an impasse. This thesis seeks to resolve this impasse by demonstrating that "the compositional (i.e. literary) integrity of 2 Corinthians is supported by the Apostle Paul's use of Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions." Having considered the historical and biblical data regarding 2 Corinthians, this thesis will now consider Greco-Roman Rhetoric.

CHAPTER TWO

ANCIENT GRECO-ROMAN RHETORIC AS A HERMENEUTICAL TOOL

> Rhetoric is a historical phenomenon and differs somewhat from culture to culture, more in matters of arrangement and style than in basic devices of invention. The New Testament lies on the cusp between Jewish and Greek culture; the life and religious traditions it depicts are Jewish, its language is Greek. How legitimate is it to approach the New Testament in terms of Greek ideas of rhetoric?[1]

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that the Apostle Paul employed Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions in his letters to congregations, not simply at a "micro-level," making use of occasional rhetorical features or expressions, but at a "macro-level," organizing entire letters according to rhetorical conventions popular in his day so that they "reflect the use of rhetorical categories and divisions used in ancient speeches."[2] If this purpose can be realized, we will argue that Paul's use of rhetoric will strengthen the view supporting the compositional integrity of 2 Corinthians, which will be discussed in chapter three.

In support of this purpose, we will offer a brief history and description of Greco-Roman rhetoric. It will demonstrate the extensive use of rhetoric throughout the Roman Empire and that the Apostle Paul was exposed to and made use of it in his letters now preserved in the New Testament canon. It will recognize that the use of rhetoric by the Christian church declined precipitously and was largely supplanted by allegorical and, later, historical-critical hermeneutics, until rhetorical criticism, the study of documents, both speeches and letters, including the New Testament, which reflect the intentional application of ancient rhetoric, was

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[1] George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 8.

[2] Ben Witherington III, *What's in the Word: Rethinking the Socio-Rhetorical Character of the New Testament* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009), 13.

popularized in the 1980s. Finally, this chapter will explore the relationship between letter writing and speech to determine whether it is proper to interpret letters, such as 2 Corinthians, according to rhetorical (i.e. primarily oral) conventions.

Benjamin Fiore observes:

> A rhetorical hermeneutic is a disciplined sensitivity to the significance of language and the connections between thoughts, an awareness of the originality which uncovers new "facts" by a combination of concepts and terms and by transforming those facts into strategies of argumentation (*topoi*) or relating them to commonplaces, a study of connections among theses and between them and problems of life and action.[3]

George A. Kennedy opens his important book by describing ancient rhetorical criticism as

> an additional tool of interpretation to complement form criticism, redaction criticism, historical and literary criticism, and other approaches being practiced in the twentieth century. . . .
>
> Rhetorical criticism takes the text as we have it, whether the work of a single author or the product of editing, and looks at it from the point of view of the author's or editor's intent, the unified results, and how it would be perceived by an audience of near contemporaries.[4]

"The ultimate goal of rhetorical analysis," asserts Kennedy, "briefly put, is the discovery of the author's intent and of how that is transmitted through a text to an audience."[5]

A Brief History of Greco-Roman Rhetoric

> "Rhetoric emerged in the rough-and-tumble of the Greek city-states during the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. Legend has it that rhetoric was the force that banished the tyrants and gave the Greeks democracy. History has it that debate was natural and necessary in the councils of the oligarchies and the assemblies of the people, and that the rules of rhetoric were learned by trial, error, and inventiveness."[6]

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[3] Benjamin Fiore, "Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism (NT Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism)," pages 715–719 in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 5, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 716.

[4] Kennedy, 3–4.

[5] Kennedy, 12.

[6] Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Guides to Biblical Scholarship New Testament Series), (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 25.

Frederick J. Long, in his defense of the literary unity of 2 Corinthians through the observation and application of Greco-Roman Rhetorical Criticism, acknowledges that parts of the historical origin of rhetoric continue to be debated amongst historians. However, despite the lack of clear and direct evidence,

> we know that forensic oratory initially developed because of various social and political factors. First, a need arose in Sicily during the aftermath of the overthrow of the tyrants (466 BCE) for citizens to reclaim lost property through litigation. Second, the use of courts increased in Athens shortly thereafter. Significantly, two other branches of oratory developed in Athens at this time: epideictic oratory in the form of ceremonial speeches offered during the Persian War and deliberative oratory in the form of political speeches within the context of the renewed Athenian democracy.[7]

Aristotle (384-322 BCE) credited Corax of Syracuse (Sicily) with first recognizing and teaching the basic principles of rhetoric around 476 BCE. Corax and his student Tisias wrote handbooks on forensic or judicial oratory for the purpose of helping ordinary citizens argue cases in the law courts of Sicily.[8] Tisias carried the concept of rhetoric to Greece, where fellow-Sicilian Gorgias founded a school of rhetoric in Athens in 427 BCE. The Greeks found rhetoric especially helpful in meeting the needs for political and legal debate. Rhetoric increased in popularity as it became more and more refined and systematized for use in public life as democracy began to give voice and influence to non-royalty. Gorgias is credited with developing and adapting his rhetorical ideas so that they were espoused by the Sophists, itinerant philosophers, and teachers. In about 390 BCE, Isocrates, a student of Gorgias, found the focus upon rhetorical skill alone to be insufficient. He founded a school that brought together Sophist rhetorical flair and a concern for rhetorical substance, truth and morality; his school would influence secondary education throughout the Greco-Roman world for several centuries to come.

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[7] Frederick J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology: The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004), 17–18.

[8] Ruth Majercik, “Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism (Rhetoric and Oratory in the Greco-Roman World),” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 5:710.

Isocrates is also credited with emphasizing writing rather than delivering speeches, turning oratory into literature.[9] Socrates (469–399 BCE) and Plato (428–348 BCE) also emphasized the importance of morality, truth, and logic in oratory. "[Socrates] deemed [rhetoric] invalid unless eloquence served wisdom."[10]

As Rome rose to prominence, the Romans embraced Greek rhetoric, adapted it to their own uses, and made it the central component of their educational system, with the result that it became deeply ingrained in their culture and throughout the Roman Empire.

Ruth Majercik summarizes the rise of rhetoric in Rome and its zenith during the days of Cicero:

> By the beginning of the 1st century BCE, rhetoric and oratory were firmly established in Rome as the primary means by which to advance in public life (judicial oratory was especially emphasized). It was at this time that Cicero wrote his *De Inventione,* the first (and most influential) of his seven books on the techniques of rhetoric. He also composed and delivered numerous speeches (58 are extant). Although clearly dependent on traditional theory and practice, Cicero's mastery of the art made him Rome's greatest orator and most influential writer on rhetorical technique. Cicero's main innovation in terms of technique was his concept of the orator's "three duties": to instruct (*docere*), to delight (*delectare*), to move (*movere*). Each "duty" was connected with an appropriate "style": the "plain" or unadorned style was most suited for instruction and demonstrating proof; the "grand" or lofty style was most useful for stirring up or moving the sublime emotions; the "intermediate" or moderate style was most effective in giving simple pleasure and delight. *Ethos* or character was also stressed by Cicero. . . . This is particularly evident in Cicero's many speeches. Cicero is also credited with thoroughly integrating the art of rhetoric into the classical *paideia* or "liberal arts": for Cicero, the orator must be a person of wide learning as well as persuasive speech.
>
> Cicero's writings on rhetoric and his own expertise as an orator represent the high-water mark of Roman rhetoric.[11]

Quintilian (40–95 CE) advocated that rhetoric should be the "center of a complete educational system."[12]

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[9] Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 6.

[10] Trible, 6.

[11] Majercik, 711.

> His *Institutio Oratoria* is the longest and most complete technical treatise on rhetoric to survive from Antiquity. Its importance lies in its detailed account of how rhetorical training is to be incorporated into every stage of education–from the speech lessons of childhood, to the later mastery of grammar, diction, composition, and enunciation, to the systematic training in adulthood of all the specific techniques and theories of rhetoric under the guidance of a skilled rhetor. The goal of education is to become a "great orator," understood by Quintilian as a "good man" of strong character.[13]

In sum, whether used formally in courts or government, or informally between friends, rhetoric came to be widely available within the Greco-Roman culture.

A Brief Description of Greco-Roman Rhetoric

Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." He cited three "means of effecting persuasion: 1) to reason logically; 2) to understand human character and goodness in their various forms, and 3) to understand the emotions – that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited."[14] Cicero defined rhetoric as "persuasion by speech."[15] Quintillian defined it as "a good person speaking well."[16] Stamps summarizes the three: "Aristotle emphasized proof; Cicero, arrangement; Quintillian, style. Nevertheless, persuasion is the central element to all ancient conceptions of rhetoric."[17] It would be wise also to note the importance of the relative goodness, or good will, of the orator. This ethos would be especially important for Paul as he seeks to restore his apostolic authority in response to those who tried to undermine it.

Kennedy clarifies:

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[12] Trible, 7.

[13] Majercik, 711.

[14] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, tr. W. Rhys Roberts, ed. Jenny Bak (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 6–8.

[15] Cicero, *De Inventione* 1.5

[16] Quintillian, *Institutio Oratoria* 2.14–15.

[17] Dennis L. Stamps, "Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament as a Rhetorical Device," *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 26.

> Rhetoric is that quality in discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purposes. Choice and arrangement of words are one of the techniques employed, but what is known in rhetorical theory as "invention" – the treatment of the subject matter, the use of evidence, the argumentation, and the control of emotion – is often of greater importance and is central to rhetorical theory as understood by Greeks and Romans.[18]

Majercik notes that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* became

> an influential source for later developments of the art. In particular, Aristotle developed a practical theory of rhetoric that dealt with the relation of rhetoric to philosophy, the role of the audience, and a general discussion of arrangement and style. His most important contributions included distinguishing three types of rhetoric (judicial, epideictic, deliberative); three modes of persuasion (*logos*, *ethos*, *pathos*); and his theory of the rhetorical *topoi* ("topics" or "lines of argument"). The "five parts" of rhetoric (invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery)—implicit in Aristotle as well as such 4th-century handbooks as the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*—would be developed in greater technical detail during the Hellenistic period, notably in the writings of the 2d-century rhetor, Hermagoras.[19]

[18] Kennedy, 3.

[19] Majercik, 711.

Phyllis Trible offers the following graphic (slightly revised for this thesis) as a summary of ancient Greco-Roman Rhetoric:[20]

THREE ELEMENTS OF RHETORIC (COMMUNICATION)

Speaker or author
Speech or text
Audience or reader

FIVE PARTS OF RHETORIC

Invention (*inventio*).........................discovery of material suitable to the occasion
Structure (*dispositio*).......................arrangement of material in an organized whole
Style (*elocutio*)................................choice of appropriate words; use of figures and tropes
Memory (*memoria*) ....formulation of mnemonic systems as preparation for oral delivery
Delivery (*pronunciatio* /*actio*)........features of oral presentation

THREE MODES OF PERSUASION

Logos: Intellectual goal of teaching
Ethos: Aesthetic goal of pleasing so as to hold attention
Pathos: Emotional goal of touching the feelings

THREE TYPES OF RHETORIC

	Judicial **(forensic,** λόγοι δικανικοί**)**	**Deliberative** **(hortatory, political** λόγοι δημηγορικοί**)**	**Demonstrative** **(epideictic,** λόγοι ἐπιδεικτικοί**)**
Focus:	justice	expediency	adulation/denunciation
Setting:	law court	public assembly	public ceremony
Purpose:	to accuse (or defend)	to persuade	to please or inspire (or blame)
Time:	past	future	present
Emphasis:	speech	audience	speaker

The Three Elements of Rhetoric.

Whenever there is a need for communication (persuasion), there will be three primary elements, the speaker (or writer), the audience (or reader(s)), and the message (spoken or written). Distinctions between oratory and literary communication will be discussed below. For now, both areas of communication will be considered together.

The Five Parts of Rhetoric: Invention, Structure (or Arrangement), Style, Memory, and Delivery

[20] Trible, 8-9.

“Rhetoric as taught in the schools consisted of five parts which recapitulate five stages in the act of composing a speech.”[21] These five elements of rhetoric were not introduced until after Rome had come to power, but they were the backbone of rhetoric at the time of the Apostle Paul, although the final two elements did not apply to written rhetoric.

The first “part” or “element” of rhetoric, invention (or *inventio*, or åὔñåóéò), involves “the planning of a discourse and the arguments to be used in it.”[22] Long suggests that invention is the essence of rhetoric as he uses Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric to describe invention: “The goal of invention is to find all the possible means of persuasion given a specific case.” Such means of persuasion would include eye-witnesses, laws, written contracts or agreements, precedents from other legal decisions. The use of logic, duty and emotions, and other such sources are seen as highly influential in rhetoric.[23]

Invention also determines which of The Three Types of Rhetoric (from Trible’s chart) will be employed. Aristotle observed that there are three species (“types” in the chart above) of rhetoric which serve different purposes: judicial (or forensic), deliberative (or political), and epideictic (or ceremonial oratory). Judicial rhetoric was probably the first type of rhetoric to develop. A speaker would utilize it when seeking to persuade the audience (usually a judge or jury) to make a judgment about something which took place in the past, particularly through attacking or defending the innocence of someone charged with a crime. Deliberative rhetoric would be employed when seeking to persuade an audience concerning the expediency or harmfulness of an impending decision or action. Epideictic rhetoric would seek to persuade an audience to join together to praise (or blame) a person, living (at festivals) or deceased (at

[21] Kennedy, 13.

[22] Kennedy, 13.

[23] Long, 47–48.

funerals), or the state of things at present. The audience would not function as judge (as in forensic rhetoric) nor as deliberating over a choice of a future course of action (as in deliberative rhetoric), but rather they would be seen primarily as spectators. Epideictic speeches were often offered as entertainment so that audiences actually did judge, not the content of the speech so much as its artistic value. Unlike the other two types of rhetoric, there is usually no thesis statement (*propositio*) in epideictic rhetoric.[24]

> Epideictic rhetoric characteristically uses a lot of picture language, . . . Epideictic rhetoric persuades by moving the audience with such images and so enthralling them, catching them up in love, wonder and praise. The appeal to the emotions is prominent in such rhetoric, stirred up by the visual images.[25]

Witherington puts the dynamic between the three types of rhetoric into perspective:

> Epideictic rhetoric tended to get short shrift compared to judicial or deliberative rhetoric in the standard handbooks, being deemed the least important of the three species of rhetoric. Aristotle seems to have started this trend, only giving epideictic one chapter's worth of scrutiny in his *Rhetoric*: deliberative gets four chapters, and judicial gets six. Cicero gives only a very brief treatment of epideictic in *De inventione rhetorica* at the end of book two, and Quintillian only devotes one chapter to the subject. Yet the truth is, with the rise of the Empire, and the demise of any sort of real democracy (except in the micro-assemblies of small groups, like church meetings, that were not official political bodies) epideictic oratory became an increasingly important feature of the culture, especially with the increase in Olympic-style games and the spread of the Emperor cult all over the Empire.[26]

Kennedy adds:

> Determination of the species sometimes helps to bring out the emphases of a work and thus the intent of the author. In judicial the basic argument involves the question of truth or justice; in deliberative, the question of self-interest and future benefits; in epideictic, a change of attitude or deepening of values such as the honorable and the good, or in a Christian context, belief and faith.[27]

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[24] Witherington, *What's in the Word*, 14.

[25] Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 49.

[26] Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 191.

[27] Kennedy, 19–20.

The second "part" of rhetoric, structure (*dispositio*), or arrangement, has to do with the organization of the different components of the speech, forging it into its most persuasive form. Aristotle noted that a speaker needs to state the case and then make the case.[28] Cicero and Quintillian would refine this part of rhetoric so that one could more efficiently organize one's presentation. Judicial rhetoric is often organized as follows: **<u>the introduction</u>** (*proem* or *exordium*), to gain the audience's attention and good will; **<u>the statement of the case</u>** (*narratio*), which is a simple statement of the facts and/or a narrative or history which led to the current proceedings; then follows **<u>the thesis</u>** (*propositio*) which the speaker wishes to prove; **<u>an outline of the major arguments</u>** (*division* or *partitio*): **<u>the proofs</u>** (*confirmatio*) offered in support of the *narratio*, **<u>a refutation</u>** (*confutatio*) of actual or potential arguments to the contrary, possibly adding **<u>a digression</u>** (*digressio*), which is a different point of view of the evidence in question, but which is still relevant to the overall purpose of the speech; and finally, **<u>the epilogue or conclusion</u>** (*peroratio*) which would review and summarize the case, cast doubt on would-be dissenters, and leave the audience favorably disposed toward oneself and the case presented. This sounds rigid, but it is flexible and not exhaustive as other elements may be added to enhance the argumentation. "Deliberative rhetoric is usually a simplified version of the judicial. . . . [and] in epideictic the body of the speech between proem and epilogue is usually devoted to an orderly sequence of amplified topics dealing with the life of the person being celebrated. . . . "[29] These rhetorical "parts" will be developed more fully in the next chapter.

The third "part" or "element" of rhetoric, style (*elocutio*), concerns the strategic choice of words to be used in a speech (*lexis*) and the way the words are arranged (*synthesis*) so as to form

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[28] Aristotle, 144.

[29] Kennedy, 24.

phrases, clauses and sentences. The micro-level of rhetoric comes into play at this point as the orator/writer creatively constructs his arguments in detail.

Of Aristotle's five "parts" or "elements" of rhetoric, the latter two parts are not parts of rhetoric in its written form, and are only mentioned because Witherington contends that although Paul wrote his letters, they are really speeches (except for the epistolary greetings and leavetakings), Paul committed these letters to trusted coworkers who read them to the recipients in such a way that they heard them as speeches.

The fourth "part" or "element" of rhetoric, memory (*memoria*), is the discipline of being able to recall the first three "parts" above by memory, without reference to notes or manuscripts. It refers to the ability to remember the main arguments, their proper ordering, and critical words or figures of speech, but also leaves the door open to extemporaneous expressions.

And finally, the fifth "part" or "element" of rhetoric, delivery (*pronuciatio*/*actio*), includes the varied vocal inflections, gestures, facial expressions, posture, eye contact, and so on which are so vital to completing the act of communication.

Kennedy offers a six part process for performing a rhetorical analysis of a speech, oral or written. These steps will be applied to 2 Corinthians in the next chapter. (1) **Search for and identify the limits of a rhetorical unit**; (2) **Define the rhetorical situation of the unit**; (3) **Identify the overriding rhetorical problem**; (4) **Analyze the arrangement of the material in the text;** (5) **Consider invention and style in each part of the discourse; and** (6) **Review the whole rhetorical unit's effectiveness**.

In sum, rhetoric was not limited to the Greco-Roman world; every culture has its own way of speaking and writing so as to influence and inform others. However, the civilizations in and around the Roman Empire, of necessity, adopted the basic conventions identified and promoted by Aristotle and other Greek orators of the first through fourth centuries BCE, and as refined and developed by Cicero and other Roman orators and letter writers through the first two centuries CE. It is hoped that, by better understanding how and why documents were written as they were, we of the twenty-first century CE may come to deeper appreciation of the modes and means by which ancient speakers and writers sought to influence their contemporaries.

Rhetoric and the Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul lived and traveled during this era when rhetoric was a dominant feature of the Greco-Roman culture. A pivotal question for this thesis is first, could Paul have been able to proclaim and write while employing rhetorical conventions? And if so, then to what extent did Paul do so? Did he employ macro-rhetoric (in which entire speeches and letters "reflect the use of rhetorical categories and divisions used in ancient speeches"), or did he limit himself to micro-rhetoric (that is, rhetorical devices found within a speech or letter)?[30]

Burton L. Mack explains how universal rhetoric was:

> Rhetoric defined the technology of discourse customary for all who participated in the culture of the Greco-Roman age. . . . All people, whether formally trained or not, were fully schooled in the wily ways of sophists, the eloquence required at civic festivals, the measured tones of the local teacher, and the heated debates where differences of opinion battled for the right to say what should be done. To be engulfed in the culture of Hellenism meant to have ears trained for the rhetoric of speech. Rhetoric provided the rules for making critical judgments in the course of all forms of social intercourse. Early Christians were not unskilled, either as critics of their cultures or as proponents of their own emerging persuasions.[31]

Kennedy agrees:

> Even if [Paul] had not studied in a Greek school, there were many handbooks of rhetoric in common circulation which he could have seen. He and the evangelists as well would, indeed, have been hard put to escape an awareness of rhetoric as practiced in the culture around them, for the rhetorical theory of the schools found its

[30] Ben Witherington III, *What's in the Word*, 13.

[31] Mack, 30-31.

> immediate application in almost every form of oral and written communication: in official documents and public letters, in private correspondence, in the law courts and assemblies, in speeches at festivals and commemorations, and in literary composition in both prose and verse.[32]

Ben Witherington III affirms that "the Greco-Roman world of the NT period was a rhetorically saturated environment."[33] Elsewhere, he also notes that one could receive a high level of training in rhetoric in a number of cities in the Roman Empire which included Rome, Athens, Ephesus, Tarsus, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria.[34] Witherington adds that "rhetoric was a tool useable with the educated and uneducated, with the elite and the ordinary, and most public speakers of any ilk or skill in antiquity knew they had to use the art of persuasion to accomplish their aims."[35]

Indeed, Paul acknowledges in 2 Corinthians 5:11 that his desire was to "persuade people" to believe in Jesus Christ and to live as children of God in this world. As noted above, rhetoric is essentially the art of persuasion. Therefore, it would seem that Paul likely made use of rhetoric in his speaking and writing. However, in 1 Corinthians 1:17–2:5, Paul says that he rejects "eloquent wisdom,"[36] "excessive (or pompous) speech or wisdom,"[37] and "persuasive words of wisdom."[38] Paul insists that his message was based upon the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" so that faith in Christ would not be due to human wisdom but the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4–5).

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[32] Kennedy, 9–10.

[33] Witherington, *What's in the Word*, 11.

[34] Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians*, 56.

[35] Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 5.

[36] σοφίᾳ λόγου – (1 Corinthians 1:17)

[37] ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας – (1 Corinthians 2:1)

[38] πειθοῖ[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις] – (1 Corinthians 2:4)

Anthony C. Thiselton, helps to resolve this seeming conundrum in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, explaining that Paul was reacting against a "particular strain of Greco-Roman rhetoric. . ."[39] Witherington adds, "In fact . . . Paul lampoons Sophistic or ornamental rhetoric at crucial points in his letters to the Corinthians, using the very rhetorical weapons of his opponents and thus turning their forms of argumentation against them."[40]

The second question is: Did Paul actually use rhetoric in his letters?

Kennedy argues that it would have been expected if Paul wanted to gain a hearing:

> In addressing a Greek audience, even when he pointedly rejected the "wisdom of this world," Paul could not expect to be persuasive unless there was some overlap between the content and form of what he said and the expectations of his audience. What we need to do is to try to hear his words as a Greek-speaking audience would have heard them, and that involves some understanding of classical rhetoric.
>
> Approaching the New Testament through classical rhetoric is thus historically justified. It is also philosophically justifiable.[41]

John Paul Heil agrees that Paul used rhetoric when he wrote his epistles: "Although Greco-Roman rhetoric influenced Paul, whether directly or indirectly, he employed, adapted, and transformed it in his own way and for his own purposes."[42] Finally, Witherington asserts that Paul actually used rhetoric quite well:

> Sometimes it is urged that Paul's rhetoric is somewhat rudimentary. The sort of critique is usually leveled by those who think that one can only find in Paul's letters micro-rhetoric, the use of simple rhetorical devices like rhetorical questions, and the like. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Paul's letters reflect the use of some of the most sophisticated and complex rhetorical moves imaginable.[43]

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[39] Michael A. Bullmore, *St. Paul's Theology of Rhetorical Style: An Examination of 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 in Light of First Century Greco-Roman Rhetorical Culture* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publication, 1995), 224; quoted by Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 205.

[40] Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 46.

[41] Kennedy, 9–10.

[42] John Paul Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture in 1 Corinthians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 3.

[43] Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 131.

In sum, rhetoric was prevalent throughout the Roman Empire. It was fundamental to an ancient Greco-Roman worldview. Men made their living by speaking: in court, in public assemblies, and for entertainment. However, it could also be used in less formal settings: communicating in business, family, and for personal satisfaction. Form and organization were critical, but there was also freedom for creativity and innovation.

It would seem that the Apostle Paul was at least minimally exposed to rhetoric in his hometown of Tarsus, where an influential school was located. He may also have been exposed to rhetoric in his studies under the renowned Gamaliel in Jerusalem as a young man. Barring official rhetorical training, Paul could have been self-trained as he listened to rhetorical speeches, or perhaps met and learned from rhetors who, like Paul, would be frequent travelers throughout the Roman Empire. He could also have read and studied one or more of the several rhetorical handbooks circulating at the time.

Although some may have questioned Paul's ability to speak well rhetorically, they were willing to admit that he wrote well.[44] Paul was more concerned about the content of the message than the means used to convey it. This thesis argues that he did not avoid the use of rhetoric so much as he avoided the cultural obsession with rhetoric for the sake of rhetoric. But he was careful to put his use of rhetoric into a proper perspective: Rhetoric served the proclamation of the Gospel. It was only a tool, albeit, an effective tool when used to focus upon the Good News of Christ's sacrificial death as true power and wisdom.

The Decline of Rhetorical Analysis after the Apostle Paul

Duane Watson observes that:

[44] "For they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.'" (2 Corinthians 10:10)

> The rhetorical criticism of the General Epistles and apostolic fathers is still in its infancy. Most works have appeared only during the 1980s and 1990s. Current practitioners are using a variety of methodologies based on Greco-Roman rhetoric, modern rhetoric or both. Much is being discovered about the argumentation, arrangement and style of these books. Our understanding of the interplay of their rhetorical and historical contexts, authors, audiences and purposes is increasing.[45]

It seems strange to describe New Testament rhetorical criticism as being "in its infancy" as recently as the year 2000. If, indeed, rhetoric was a significant component of an ancient Greco-Roman worldview, how is it that this approach seems so recent in its development?

In a short phrase, worldviews evolve. Dominant modes of thinking are challenged by other ways of interpreting data and they adapt and change, and ultimately they are replaced by other dominant ways of thinking and interpreting data. Rhetoric was a dominant means of looking at and interpreting the world at the time of Paul; it served the need for people to participate actively in early democracies. However, as other cultural values and needs changed, so did the need for, and dominance of, rhetoric.

Following the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul, a number of the works of the Apostolic Fathers understood and employed rhetoric, for example, 1 Clement, 2 Clement, The Letters of Ignatius of Antioch, The Epistle of Diognetus. However, beginning with The Epistle of Polycarp and The Didache, it would appear that the use of Greco-Roman rhetoric began to evolve; with the appearance of a "Christian rhetoric." This type of rhetoric "relies more on the ethos or authority of the author and citation of Scripture and church tradition than on example or logical argumentation. Neither their argumentation nor arrangement reflects Greco-Roman conventions typical of the speech.[46]

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[45] D. F. Watson, "rhetoric; rhetorical criticism," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1041.

[46]Watson, "rhetoric; rhetorical criticism", 1049.

Mack traces the history of rhetoric in the Christian church, from its continued use by theologians to its near disappearance:

> It may at first seem surprising that New Testament authors described the novelty of early Christian speech in terms of contrast to conventional rhetorics. It may be even more surprising to discover further that New Testament authors nevertheless made abundant use of rhetorical figures and patterns of argumentation customary for their cultures of context. If so, the surprise is surely due to the demise, some time during the last century, of the long and illustrious tradition of rhetoric at the heart of Western education and culture. The surprise, to be frank, is on us. From the beginning it was not so.
>
> From the beginning it was taken for granted that the writings produced by early Christians were to be read as rhetorical compositions. Origen, for example, or Augustine, knew no other school for making sense of written compositions but the school of rhetoric. One can follow the rhetorical reading of the New Testament through the Middle Ages and into the early period of the Reformation where, for instance, Martin Bucer and Heinrich Bollinger simply assumed that Paul should be read through the eyes of Quintilian. Then, for most of the period of critical scholarship, as well, the rhetoric of the New Testament writings was explored as a matter of course.
>
> We now know that interest in rhetoric waned around the turn of the century, ushering in approximately four generations of scholarship without formal training in rhetoric and with very little knowledge of the tradition of rhetorical criticism . . . .
>
> Modern scholars are not to be faulted for their lack of firsthand knowledge of the rhetorical tradition. Waning interest in rhetoric was a widespread social and cultural phenomenon at the end of the nineteenth century. Rhetoric slipped away all but unnoticed from the curricula of the university, and New Testament studies were, in any case quickly preoccupied with other matters. These preoccupations included the furor over apocalyptic in the teachings of Jesus and the excitement over the new history of religions school with its approach to early Christian myth and ritual. There was also great pressure to shift the scholarly focus from history to hermeneutics. None of the troubled quests for the relevance of the biblical message that dot the history of the twentieth century had much patience for the study of rhetoric. The German movements of theological exegesis (Karl Barth) and existentialist interpretation (Rudolph Bultmann) were even expressly hostile toward rhetorical criticism.[47]

But the decline of the centrality of Greco-Roman rhetoric in the church did not take place suddenly in the 20th century. Despite the cultural dominance of rhetoric during Paul’s life and

[47] Mack, 9–12.

ministry (and the continued use of it by certain Christian leaders for generations), its popularity and widespread use began to wane within the Christian church shortly thereafter

Majercik describes the rhetorical prowess of some of the Church Fathers despite its eventual decline:

> The tradition of Greek rhetoric is most apparent in the writings of the 4th-century Cappadocian Fathers—Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil of Caesarea. All three received excellent Greek educations and were well acquainted with the sophistic rhetoric of the period. Their panegyrical orations in particular display a sophisticated use of rhetorical devices, structure, figures of speech, and argumentation. It was Augustine, however—in his *De Doctrina Christiana*—who developed an explicit theory of Christian rhetoric in the Latin tradition, influenced by Cicero. Augustine, for example, accepts Cicero's concept of the orator's three "duties" and their relation to the three "styles." He also underscores the character or *ethos* of the orator as more important than any gifts of style or technique. But the *De Doctrina Christiana* is not simply a reworking of pagan theories and categories but an appropriation of these rhetorical methods with a specific Christian goal in mind; e.g., the Christian orator must confine his subject matter to scriptural themes, he must be concerned with truth and not argument for argument's sake, he must defend the faith, etc. As Kennedy notes (1980: 146), no less than five of the Latin Church Fathers (Tertullian, Cyprian, Arnobius, Lactantius, Augustine) were "professional rhetoricians before they became Christians." Add to this list the number of Greek Church Fathers who were schooled in rhetoric and the "art of persuasion" becomes a significant element in understanding the Christian literature of Antiquity.[48]

Fiore asserts:

> The last major proponent of literal, rhetorical reading was the classically trained Augustine. His *De Doctrina Christiana* prescribed all the "arts," including rhetorical norms, for exegesis. He advocated the literal sense (*locutio propria*) over the allegorical or figurative (*locutio figurata*), but he also applied a spiritual reading (*lectio spiritualis*) to the literal to arrive at the intent of the author.[49]

Fiore adds then notes a paradigmatic shift in New Testament interpretation that would dominate for about a millennium: "The widely practiced moral (tropological), figurative

[48] Majercik, 712.

[49] Fiore, 716.

(allegorical), and mystical (anagogical) interpretations prevailed over the literary-rhetorically informed literal and historical readings."[50] Fiore continues,

> Rhetorical analyses were carried out in the past (cf. J. Weiss' study of Pauline rhetoric in the 1897 Festschrift for B. Weiss and Cadbury's Lukan studies in the 1920s) but historical criticism's successful results maintained its predominance. Muilenburg's influential assessment of the gains and deficiencies of the then methodologically dominant OT form criticism ended with his proposal of attention to the rhetoric of the biblical writings as a complement to historical criticism. Rhetorical criticism's attention to the texts themselves and to the authors' patterns of words and motifs, to their style, and to the linguistic and rhetorical phenomena they employ would balance form criticism's focus on the typical, both in genre and setting. Nor was the literary focus to obscure attention to the orality behind the texts.[51]

Betz agrees that "at present, discussion about Paul's relationship to rhetoric is experiencing a revival after decades of silence. Although sometimes advocated as a "new" approach, the subject is really as old as the New Testament itself."[52] He adds:

> The question of whether Paul had any rhetorical skills and, if so, of which kind they were, was debated by some of the Church Fathers, especially Augustine. Later, in the Reformation period, Erasmus and especially Melanchthon recognized the question. . . . Luther's commentary on Galatians (1535) demonstrates insights into and creative usage of Paul's rhetoric. Calvin's commentary on Romans has a thoroughgoing rhetorical analysis of the letter. . . .
>
> In the 17th and 18th centuries a number of eminent scholars besides Grotius, such as Johann Jacob Wettstein (1693–1754), Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten (1706–1757), and his student Johann Salomo Semler (1725–1791), paid careful attention to the characteristics of Paul's rhetoric. . . .
>
> In the early 19th century, an Utrecht doctoral dissertation by Hermannus Joannes Royaards contains a long section on Paul's rhetoric. . . .This type of work, however, fell into disrepute during the 19th century. The reasons are not altogether clear. . . .
>
> The major reason, however, was that the *Zeitgeist* had changed and with it also the direction of scholarly research in New Testament studies. . . .
>
> In the 20th century, interest in Paul's rhetoric continued only in a small circle of New Testament scholars, notably Johannes Weiss (1863–1914) and his students Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) and Hans Windisch (1881–1935). But after Bultmann's dissertation of 1910, dealing with Paul's diatribe rhetoric, nothing further seems to have appeared on this topic. . . .

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[50] Fiore, 716.

[51] Fiore, 717.

[52] Hans Dieter Betz, "The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology according to the Apostle Paul," *L'Apôtre Paul: Personnalité, Style et Conception du Ministère* (Leuven (Belgium): University Press, 1986), 44–45.

> If one asks why the subject of rhetoric is of interest in our time, several changes in the intellectual orientation and the state of scientific research should be mentioned. Language philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, communications experts and advertisement wizards have analyzed rhetoric from new scientific perspectives. As a result, new interest in rhetoric has also been generated in the fields of the humanities, in philosophy and classics. New Testament scholars are now venturing new approaches to form criticism and redaction criticism.[53]

In sum, rhetoric appears to have been one of the dominant factors which informed the Greco-Roman worldview. Its use was presumed as the basis for most public communication. It was not simply one area of education among others; it was the basis for education. However, as Greco-Roman culture changed (certainly in no small part because of the emergence of Christianity), its need for and use of rhetoric changed as well. Eventually, Greco-Roman rhetoric existed only in ancient documents and as an ancient curiosity, and few people recognized or applied it. However, with the more recent rise of numerous approaches to interpreting Scripture, rhetorical criticism arose as both a response to and continuation of form criticism. Its recent upsurge in popularity has also been accentuated because of its renewed focus on the New Testament text and upon the desire to try to understand the mind of the writer better through an appreciation of rhetoric as it was used in ancient times. Rhetorical criticism, then, is not a rebirth of rhetoric, but a renewed appreciation of the worldview and intentions of the ancient writers with the hope that it will inform and enhance our understanding of the New Testament and other ancient documents.

The Relationship between Rhetoric and Letter Writing

> Letters in the hands of a Cicero or a Paul became surrogates for and extensions of oral speech, especially of dialogues, and the rhetorical conventions of public speech and discourse were carried over into such letters. Rhetoric gave Paul a means to relate to and impress his Corinthian audience. Even those with little education had

[53] Betz, "The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology according to the Apostle Paul," 17–21.

heard speeches that followed the conventions of rhetoric and were able to appreciate much of Paul's artistry.[54]

Rhetoric and letter writing overlap as forms of personal communication. They are employed for similar purposes and often employ similar techniques. Scholars differ over the extent of the similarities between rhetoric and letter writing. Some, like Witherington, contend that most of the so-called epistolary literature of the New Testament functioned as written speeches: "[Letters] were always meant to be read out loud, usually to a group of people. For the most part, they were simply necessary surrogates for oral communication. This was particularly true of ancient letters."[55] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor concurs: "[Ancient rhetoric and epistolography] are not identical, but since the letter was but a substitute for speech, techniques and forms of verbal communication had an influence on written communication. Moreover, it should be remembered, Paul's letters were designed to be read aloud (1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16)."[56]

Stanley E. Porter, on the other hand, argues that, "Even though many rhetorical analysts of the Pauline letters have approached them as essentially speech or speeches in the disguise of letters, this approach is unsatisfactory, since it either minimizes or altogether neglects the clear epistolary features of the Pauline letters."[57]

Long notes that this debate goes back to the fourth century BCE when Alcidamas and Isocrates disagreed bitterly whether rhetoric included written speech (Isocrates) or if it was to be limited to extemporaneous speaking (Alcidamas). Long holds that the view of Isocrates appears

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[54] Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 45.

[55] Witherington, *What's in the Word*, 3.

[56] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 65.

[57] Stanley E. Porter, "Paul as Epistolographer *and* Rhetorician?" Pages 222–248 in Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (eds.) *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference*, JSNTSup 180, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 233.

to have prevailed over time as Aristotle would subsequently label the style of Alcidamas as "frigid," and that the Romans recognized both spoken and published rhetoric: "In the Roman period, [Richard L.] Enos' view that 'the publication of such forms of rhetoric as forensic argument, which was implicitly intended for both hearing and publication' indicates the utter unity of written and oral rhetoric."[58]

Kennedy also adds,

> There has always been a close formal connection between the oration and the epistle. The Greek 'orator' Isocrates was too nervous to speak in public and wrote out his speeches for publication or to send to an addressee as an open letter. . . . Although an epistle requires a salutation and a complimentary close, its body can take the form of a deliberative, epideictic, or judicial speech with the traditional parts and all the inventional and stylistic features of an oration. On delivery, a letter was usually read aloud; thus audience perception of its contents followed the pattern of speech.[59]

Watson offers his insight regarding the historical fissure that existed between letter writing and rhetoric:

> This debate arises mainly because epistolary and rhetorical theory developed independently in antiquity. Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks rarely discuss the role of rhetoric in epistles, and then only in passing comments pertaining mainly to style. Likewise epistolary handbooks do not discuss the role of rhetoric in epistles, but rather classify epistles according to their function and appropriate style. "Epistolary theory in antiquity belonged to the domain of rhetoricians, but it was not originally part of their theoretical systems. It was absent from the earliest extant rhetorical handbooks, and it only gradually made its way into the genre."[60]

Stanley Stowers notes that "the earliest extant rhetorical work that treats letter writing is the book *On Style*, attributed to Demetrius of Phalerum and probably dating from the first century BCE."[61]

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[58] Richard L. Enos, "Heuristic Structures of *Dispositio* in Oral and Written Rhetorical Composition: An Addendum to Ochs' Analysis of the Verrine Orations," pages 77–83 in *Central States Speech Journal* (*CSSJ*) 35: 78, quoted in Long, 32.

[59] Kennedy, 86–87.

[60] A. J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); quoted by Duane F. Watson, "Rhetorical Criticism of the Pauline Epistles," *Currents in Research* 3 (1995): 223.

[61] Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 34.

The line between rhetoric and epistolography clearly existed, with rhetoric being the more prestigious of the two, but because of the resemblance of the two disciplines, the lines that divided them were light and blurry at times. Stowers writes:

> Letter writing remained only on the fringes of formal rhetorical education throughout antiquity. It was never integrated into the rhetorical systems and thus does not appear in the standard handbooks. This means there were never any detailed systematic rules for letters, as there were for standard rhetorical forms. *The rules for certain types of speeches, however, were adapted for use in corresponding letter types.* So, for example, a letter of consolation written by a person with rhetorical training may more or less follow the form of the consolatory speech.[62]

Stowers, however, resists merging letter writing with rhetoric. “The classification of letter types according to the three species of rhetoric only partially works. This is because the letter writing tradition was essentially independent of rhetoric.”[63]

Porter argues quite strenuously for keeping a clear separation between oratory and letter writing:

> The epistolary features of the Pauline letters are the clear generic features that allow the identification of the literary form, and regardless of whatever else is done with the letters, these elements must be satisfactorily explained before moving to further explanation….The rhetorical features are less clearly perceived, as can be seen in the simple fact that some rhetorical analysts include the epistolary opening, others exclude it and others still relabel it…. There is further lack of agreement when the other parts of the letter/speech are analyzed….
>
> It cannot be shown that Paul’s letters constitute examples of ancient speeches.[64]

Bird agrees:

> In terms of value, rhetorical criticism is said to assist in determining the argumentative dynamics of Paul’s letters. . . .
>
> However, many believe that the usefulness of ancient rhetoric for analyzing Paul’s letters has been over-estimated and several scholars have subsequently questioned the utility of a direct importation of Greco-Roman rhetorical categories into Paul’s letters. . . .That is because applying precise models of formal Greco-Roman rhetoric to Paul’s letters do not stand up to the complexity of Paul’s

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[62] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 34 [emphasis added].

[63] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 52.

[64] Porter, “Paul as Epistolographer *and* Rhetorician?” 233.

> background and the *ad hoc* nature of his correspondence with his churches. Rhetorical criticism is at best an ancillary tool to be utilized in an eclectic and pragmatic approach to studying Paul's letters.[65]

Edgar Krentz holds that the rhetorical analysis of scholars like Witherington needs to be refined or more limited when applying it to letters, such as those in the New Testament.

> Rhetorical analysis has burgeoned in recent years. Duane Watson was the first to provide a rhetorical analysis of Philippians. Others have followed after him. Ben Witherington III structures his commentary on Watson's analysis, while Gordon Fee also makes use of it in his recent commentary. But that is scarcely the whole story. They concentrate on the rhetorical genre and structure. Markus Bockmuehl questions the utility of these approaches. One could add that we need a study of the rhetorical means of persuasion and the *topoi* used in the letter and an evaluation of the rhetorical devices Paul may have used.[66]

Weima states the issue succinctly:

> There is a fundamental problem in mixing the genre of a speech (oral discourse) with that of a letter (written discourse). If one takes seriously the fact that Paul wrote letters, then the most important source for understanding Paul's letter must naturally be the letter writing practices of his day, not the rules for oral discourse.[67]

Long welcomes this debate. He notes seven basic arguments, advanced by various scholars, against applying ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions to Paul's letters. The scholars noted by Long are: Lambrecht, Stamps, Classen, Reed, Porter, Anderson, and Kern.[68] The

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[65] Michael F. Bird, "Reassessing a Rhetorical Approach to Paul's Letters," *The Expository Times*, 119(2008): 8, 374.

[66] Edgar Krentz, "Meeting Paul Anew: Rereading an Old Friend in a New Age," *dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 39 (2000): 4, 275.

[67] Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "What Does Aristotle Have to Do with Paul? An Evaluation of Rhetorical Criticism," *Calvin Theological Journal* 32 (1997): 458–468, 463.

[68] Jan Lambrecht, "Rhetorical Criticism and the New Testament," *Bijdragen: Tidjschrift voor Philosophia en Theologie* 50 (1989), 239–253; Dennis L. Stamps, "Rhetorical Criticism and the Rhetoric of New Testament Criticism," *Journal of Literature and Theology* 6 (1992): 268–279; C. Joachim Classen, "St. Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric," *Rhetorica* 10: 319–344; Jeffrey T. Reed, "Using Ancient Rhetorical Categories to Interpret Paul's Letters: A Question of Genre," in Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (eds.) *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, JSNTSup 90, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993, 292–324; Stanley E. Porter, "Ancient Rhetorical Analysis and Discourse Analysis of the Pauline Corpus," in Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (eds.) *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference*, JSNTSup 146, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, 249–274; Stanley E. Porter, *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period: 330 BC–AD 400* (Leiden; New York: E. J. Brill), 1997; and Porter, "Paul as Epistolographer *and* Rhetorician?"; R. Dean Anderson Jr., *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul,*

arguments Long cites from these scholars (as well as sources of responses to these arguments) include:

> 1) Paul did not use rhetorical terminology in the technical senses that truly corresponded to rhetorical meanings;
> 2) The choice of rhetorical species for individual letters is difficult to determine and therefore unhelpful, since scholarly opinions conflict;
> 3) A foreign structure is imposed on the letters with considerable variation from one rhetorical critic to the next;
> 4) Paul's letters do not correspond to the appropriate venue associated with the respective species, e.g., the courtroom or assembly;
> 5) The rhetorical handbooks are used almost exclusively as a basis for analysis of Paul's letters, when in fact, there were other rhetorics circulating, such as philosophic rhetoric, epistolary rhetoric, diatribe, synagogue homily, and common conversation;
> 6) The existence of an "apologetic letter" genre is questioned; and
> 7) Epistles and oratory were clearly distinguished in antiquity, so one should not confuse genres.[69]

In response to these concerns, Long agrees that "the second, third, and fourth items above call ancient rhetorical critics to use ancient sources with greater care, clarity, and consistency when interpreting biblical materials."[70] However, he also responds that

> many of these concerns are unjustified because of the nature and profusion of ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical theory. One major tenet, for example was to hide rhetorical artifice, so that we should not expect Paul to flaunt his knowledge of theory through using technical terminology. Also, it is no longer possible to assert a rigid dichotomy between ancient epistles and oratory.[71]

Notwithstanding the arguments of those who seek to distance spoken rhetoric from written rhetoric, it can hardly be denied that speakers desired to preserve their speeches for future study in the form of letters. The only speeches preserved from ancient times are those which were committed to writing.

CBET 18, Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996 and R. Dean Anderson Jr., *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, CBET 18, rev. ed., Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1999; and Philip H. Kern, *Rhetoric and Galatians: Assessing an Approach to Paul's Epistles*, SNTSMS 101, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[69] Long, 97.

[70] Long, 98.

[71] Long, 98.

> Oratory from its formal origins was conveyed in a written medium for various ends, despite the fact of its essential oral nature. This affirmation is critical for developing an appropriate framework for viewing Paul's epistles as speeches sent as letters. Richard L. Enos has an extended discussion treating this topic and concludes, "The unity of oral and written expression was so inextricably bound in ancient discourse that its oneness was an unquestioned presumption upon which theories of rhetoric were developed."[72]

Stowers observes that

> writing does differ from speech in at least two ways. First, it tends to eliminate guarantees to privacy. Writing may become "permanent" and public in a way that speech usually does not. Second, there are important communicative aspects of personal presence that are not a part of writing, for example, inflection, tone, gesture, overt emotional behavior.[73]

However, Stowers goes on to say that, "ancient theorists of letter writing denied that the letter was a type of literature and asserted that it was instead a substitute for personal presence."[74] Elsewhere, he also recognizes that "most types of letters used in the Greco-Roman world were associated with the epideictic division of rhetoric."[75]

Other scholars, perhaps most vociferously, Witherington, suggest that it was likely that Paul (and other New Testament writers) wrote rhetorical speeches and sermons to be read as speeches in front of the intended congregation and then shared with other congregations. "Since reading was almost always done aloud, the difference between reading and speaking was often small."[76]

In some cases, when it was not possible for the rhetor to appear personally to deliver the message, as was true of Paul at times, a "letter" could be written and then sent with a trusted ally

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[72] Enos, 62, cited in Long, 31.

[73] Stanley K. Stowers, "Social Typification and the Classification of Ancient Letters," chapter 6 in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism*, Jacob Neusner, et. al., eds., (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 79.

[74] Stowers, "Social Typification and the Classification of Ancient Letters," 81.

[75] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 27.

[76] Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 44.

to read the document with expression as the author might have delivered his speech orally if he had been able to deliver it himself. “Rather than being read primarily by individuals in silence and in private, [Paul’s letters] were written to be orally performed and publicly heard by an assembly of Christians. This oral dimension is a very important but often neglected feature of Paul’s rhetorical strategy.”[77]

Kennedy sees linkage between written and spoken rhetoric:

> Rhetoric originates in speech and its primary product is a speech act, not a text, but the rhetoric of historical periods can only be studied through texts. . . . We need to keep in mind that the Bible in early Christian times was more often heard when read aloud to a group than read privately; very few early Christians owned copies of the Bible, and some did not know how to read. To a greater extent than any modern text, the Bible retained an oral and linear quality for its audience. True, it was read again and again and thus took on the qualities of a frozen oral text in which a hearer might remember passages yet to come, and sometimes it was read in pericopes rather than continuously through a book. Some of the writers of books of the New Testament show signs of envisioning this, but the rhetorical qualities inherent in the text were originally intended to have an impact on first hearing and to be heard by a group. In practicing rhetorical criticism we need to keep in mind that intent and that original impact, and thus to read the Bible as speech.[78]

He concludes that “what we need to do is to try to hear Paul’s words as a Greek-speaking audience would have heard them, and that involves some understanding of classical rhetoric.”[79]

Rhetoric could also take the form of entertainment in which recipients would hear the rhetor speak and then judge his rhetorical prowess. Paul admits that he was not a strong orator (in person anyway) but that entertainment and fine-sounding speeches were not his purpose. Whether he was a good orator or not was beside the point; the point being that the message of the cross was so vital that people were foolish to disregard it even if it was less than powerful rhetorically.

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[77] Heil, 6.

[78] Kennedy, 5–6.

[79] Kennedy, 10.

Witherington asserts:

> Most ancient documents including letters were not really texts in the modern sense at all. They were composed with their aural and oral potential in mind, and they were meant to be orally delivered when they arrive at their destination. . . .
>
> All sorts of texts were simply surrogates for oral speech. This statement applies to many of the biblical texts themselves. . . .
>
> The letters we find in the NT are mostly far longer than secular letters of their era. Actually they are *not in the main letters,* though they have epistolary openings and closings sometimes. They are in fact discourses, homilies, and rhetorical speeches of various sorts that the creators could not be present to deliver to a particular audience, and so instead they sent a surrogate to proclaim them.[80]

Witherington is emphatic, even passionate, as he argues:

> There were not only schools of rhetoric through the Mediterranean crescent, rhetoric itself was part of elementary, secondary, and tertiary basic *education as well. There were no comparable schools of letter writing* not least because it was a rather recent art just coming to prominence in the first century AD. Here we come to a crucial point.
>
> Analyzing the majority of the NT on the basis of epistolary conventions – many of which did not become *de rigeur* nor put into a handbook until *after* NT times – while a helpful exercise to some degree, has no business being the dominant literary paradigm by which we examine the Pauline, Petrine, Johannine, and other discourses in the NT.[81]

Witherington continues:

> the teaching of rhetoric had a long and distinguished pedigree; indeed, there were whole schools in antiquity devoted to the subject in places like Alexandria, Ephesus, Athens, and Rome. Letter writing, however, was an art only beginning to be systematized. . . .The oral and rhetorical culture dominated, and texts had to fit into its paradigms, not the other way around.[82]

Whether it is legitimate to use ancient rhetorical categories to analyze and interpret Paul's letter is not a resolved issue amongst scholars. It would seem, however, that the arguments are more compelling, and that more scholars and more diverse scholars hold that it is a legitimate enterprise. With this in mind, we will conclude that it is legitimate to employ the use of ancient

[80] Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 1–3 [emphasis original].

[81] Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 5 [emphasis original].

[82] Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 8.

rhetoric when analyzing and interpreting Paul's letters, as well as other New Testament documents such as Acts and Hebrews. However, the fact that there is some legitimacy to the claims of those who insist that Paul's letters are to be analyzed and interpreted in accordance with epistolographical principles will tend to mitigate against a strong conclusion in support of the main contention of this thesis. If this tension could be more definitively resolved in the future, it could serve to strengthen the contention that 2 Corinthians is a single letter.

Watson asserts that one of the main arguments, that "Rhetoric and epistolary theory are not integrated in the remaining handbooks and epistolary manuals of the Greco-Roman period, so we cannot expect to find rhetorical theory guiding epistolary practice," is "faulty."[83] He reasons that silence is not a valid argument to reject rhetorical analysis on epistolary literature since their focus was on oral presentations, not written documents. He goes on to argue more precisely:

> We probably should not look for rhetorical theory to guide epistolary practice among the non-literary, documentary letters. But this is not true of literary letters. By the first century BCE rhetorical education had incorporated instruction on letters and had exerted a strong influence on epistolary composition among the educated. Letters had become "sophisticated instruments of persuasion and media for displaying literary skill."[84]

Murphy-O'Connor, after considering both rhetorical and epistolary interpretations of Paul's canonical writings concludes, "No one category can do justice to the complexity of a Pauline epistle. . . . In consequence, the value of epistolary classification of whole letters must be considered extremely dubious."[85]

Stowers observes that, in contrast to ancient writers who would reflect upon the letter as whole,

[83] Watson, "Rhetorical Criticism of the Pauline Epistles," 223.

[84] D. E. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (LEC, 8; Philadelphia: Westminster Press), 160, quoted in Watson, "Rhetorical Criticism of the Pauline Epistles," 223.

[85] Murphy-O'Connor, 98.

> modern epistolary theory has found very little to say about the body of the letter. This major lacuna has occurred because scholars studying "epistolary" style have limited their analysis to elements thought to be unique to letters. Defined in that way, what is "epistolary" about letters shows up only at the beginnings and conclusions….[86]

Stowers offers this analysis to correct this apparent gap in epistolography:

> The work done by [modern] scholars on early Christian letters is extremely valuable but ought to be integrated into a less atomistic and more functional approach to letters. Above all, it is necessary to compare Christian letters to the whole range of letters and to approach them with a knowledge of ancient epistolary and rhetorical theory.[87]

Long concludes: "Oratory from its formal origins was conveyed in a written medium for various ends, despite the fact of its essential oral nature. This affirmation is critical for developing an appropriate framework for viewing Paul's epistles as speeches sent as letters."[88] To substantiate this, he quotes Enos: "The unity of oral and written expression was so inextricably bound in ancient discourse that its oneness was an unquestioned presumption upon which theories of rhetoric were developed."[89]

In sum, valid questions remain unanswered, at least to some scholars, as to whether one can interpret written data using formulae developed primarily for oral data. It seems that the answer is yes, recognizing that some aspects of spoken rhetoric are missing in written rhetoric. However, it seems quite clear that ancient written documents appear to reflect the conventions of oral speaking, and that they were employed either to replace an absent speaker, or to retain the message long after the speaker and audience have passed from the scene. The door remains open to further research and debate on this issue, but it would appear that the opposite contentions are quite static and not likely to change in the near future.

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[86] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 22.

[87] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 23.

[88] Long, 31.

[89] Enos, 62, cited in Long, 31.

Summary of this Chapter

The purpose of this chapter was to give a brief history and description of Greco-Roman rhetoric, to show how extensively rhetoric was used at the time of the Apostle Paul, although it declined after Paul's death, and to defend the application of rhetorical analysis to letters as written speeches.

The next chapter will bring together the historical study of 2 Corinthians from the first chapter and the findings regarding ancient rhetoric from this chapter to respond to the question whether it is reasonable to hold that Paul wrote 2 Corinthians much as it appears in the New Testament canon as a speech he would have given if he had been able to be present with the Corinthians.

CHAPTER THREE

READING 2 CORINTHIANS TODAY

> The problem of the changed attitude of Paul toward the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians [10–13, and hence the partitions betraying different letters and letter fragments] was the first exegetical problem that really fascinated me. I read all the interpretations and explanations I could find, but the answers did not satisfy me. The more I read the more I realized that there is no widely accepted interpretation of this situation today. There are several brilliant conjectures that try to explain the phenomenon by assuming that the original Pauline text was rearranged and distorted by later editors. But no one could tell me what the final editors had in mind when they produced 2 Corinthians.[1]

The purpose of this chapter is to note and briefly analyze the major arguments in support of interpreting 2 Corinthians as a composite of two or more letters or letter fragments and to note and briefly analyze the major arguments in support of interpreting 2 Corinthians as a unified composition. This latter analysis will include an extended discussion on the arguments and evidence of several scholars who contend that 2 Corinthians, as a whole, was consciously written in accordance with rhetorical principles evident other works of the same.

Interpreting 2 Corinthians as a Literary Composite

We have already seen that the exact historical situation to which Paul responds in canonical 2 Corinthians is unknown to present-day interpreters of this document. Furthermore, it was observed that 2 Corinthians appears to have been unanimously considered by all interpreters to be a compositional unit, a single letter from Paul to the Corinthian Christians, for nearly seventeen centuries. Since Johann Salomo Semler's 1776 commentary,[2] however, a significant

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[1] David Trobisch, *Paul's Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* (Bolivar, Missouri: Quiet Waters Publications, 2001), 37.

[2] *Paraphrasís II. Epistolae ad Corinthios.* Halle, 1776.

majority of scholars have come to hold 2 Corinthians to be comprised of at least two, and as many as six, separate letters or letter fragments, joined together by an unidentified post-Pauline editor prior to its publication and reception into the New Testament canon.[3]

Hans Dieter Betz points out that the basis for partition theories lies not in the manuscript evidence but in "internal criteria":

> since no existing manuscripts of 2 Corinthians show traces of division, evidence for partitioning must come from the *internal criteria* of philology and comparative literary analysis…In addition to careful analyses of the letter fragments, an investigation of the methods and ideas of the redactor who was responsible for the final composition of what we call 2 Corinthians will also be necessary.[4]

The "internal criteria" are literary, consisting of seams, or partitions, identified by abrupt changes of mood or topic, textual anomalies, or "a measure of discontinuity or awkwardness."[5]

Margaret M. Mitchell, who used rhetorical analysis to confirm the compositional unity of 1 Corinthians,[6] contends that 2 Corinthians is a composite letter, based upon internal criteria. She observes:

> The two canonical letters [in the Corinthian epistolary archive] especially the second, contain references to other letters (1 Corinthians 5:9; 2 Corinthians 2:3–9; 7:8–12; 10:10) and to a bewildering array of visits promised, delayed, and actualized (1 Corinthians 4:19–21; 11:34; 16:5–9; 2 Corinthians 1:15–2:1; 2:12–13; 7:5; 12:21; 13:1–2), as well as literary breaks, astonishing shifts in tone (such as at 2 Corinthians 10:1) and in content (conciliation, castigation, self-defense, financial appeals), repetitions (such as chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians), and inconsistency in the nature of the relationship between the epistolary partners (contrast 2 Corinthians 1:24 and

[3] Margaret M. Mitchell, "Paul's Letters to Corinth: The Interpretive Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction," In *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth, Interdisciplinary Approaches*, edited by Daniel Showalter and Steven J. Friesen, 307–38, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 317.

[4] Hans Dieter Betz, "Corinthians, Second Epistle to the," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* David Noel Freedman, Ed., (New York: Doubleday, 1996, c1992), 1:1149 [emphasis added].

[5] Charles Kingsley Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians,* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1973), 14.

[6] Frederick J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology: The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5. Long writes: "Margaret Mitchell's *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* (1991) is commendable. Mitchell performs the rhetorical form-critical work called for by Betz with respect to 1 Corinthians. She argues convincingly that 1 Corinthians is a unified letter exemplifying deliberative rhetoric. Consequently, her work has ended the basis to generate partition theories for 1 Corinthians."

> 24:5, for example), all of which strongly suggests that more than one letter has been combined in forming 2 Corinthians. *Although a minority of scholars still hold out for the unity of the epistle, most Pauline scholars affirm some partition theory of the letter* – meaning that they think the letter in its published form was compiled from as few as two to as many as five different letters or letter fragments (or six, if one counts 6:14–7:1 as a separate fragment)." [7]

Mitchell lists what she considers to be the main partition theories regarding 2 Corinthians after years of debate (along with the names of several scholars who favor each theory):[8]

I. Two Letters (in two different chronological arrangements)
    A. 2 Corinthians 1–9 precedes 2 Corinthians 10–13 (Barrett, Furnish)[9]
    B. 2 Corinthians 10–13 precedes 2 Corinthians 1–9 (Kennedy, Watson)[10]

II. Three Letters (Windisch, Thrall, Quesnel)[11]
    2 Corinthians 1–8
    2 Corinthians 9
    2 Corinthians 10–13

III. Five Letters (Bornkamm, Betz)[12]
    2 Corinthians 2:14–7:4 (minus 6:14–7:1)
    2 Corinthians 10:1–13:10
    2 Corinthians 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16; 13:11–13
    2 Corinthians 8
    2 Corinthians 9

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[7] Margaret M. Mitchell, "Paul's Letters to Corinth: The Interpretive Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction," Chapter 11 in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Cambridge, MA: the President and Fellows at Harvard College, 2005), 317 [emphasis added.]

[8] Mitchell, 318.

[9] Barrett, 21; Victor P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (The Anchor Bible), 32A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984, 35-48. Mitchell adds: "For a complete list of adherents to this hypothesis, see Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (ICC 2 vols; EdinburghT&TClark, 1994, 2000) 1:49."

[10] James Houghton Kennedy, *The Second and Third Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians, with Some Proofs of Their Independence and Mutual Relation* (London: Methuen, 1900); and Francis Watson, "2 Corinthians x–xiii and Paul's Painful Letter to the Corinthians," *JTS* 35 (1984):324–46. Mitchell adds: "For a complete list of adherents to this hypothesis, see Thrall, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1:49."

[11] Hans Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* (H. A. W. Meyer, Kritischexegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 6; Götttinggen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924), 5–31; Thrall, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1:1–49 and passim; and Michel Quesnel, "Circonstances de composition de la seconde épître aux Corinthiens," *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997): 356–67.

[12] Bornkamm, "Die Vorgeschichte des sogenannten zweiten Korintherbriefes," 7–36; and Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*. Mitchell holds to the Five-Letter model, except that she believes that 2 Corinthians 8 was the earliest document of the 2 Corinthians "repository," written as a follow-up to his money-raising project for the poor Christians in Jerusalem.

Mitchell holds a modified version of III., above, proposing that 2 Corinthians 8 was written before the other five documents which comprise canonical 2 Corinthians. She believes that her ordering of the letters of 2 Corinthians

> takes very seriously the role each missive itself played in the ensuing events and seeks to highlight the agency of the letters themselves in the unfolding crises and their (eventual) resolution. . . . [One can then] see how in each letter Paul was responding to a reading or readings of his prior missive."[13]

Calvin Roetzel, who agrees with Mitchell's version of the Five Letters view, offers a concise, critical summary of the three dominant partition theories above: their major proponents, their textual bases, and their advantages and disadvantages.[14] He, like Mitchell, refers to them simply by the number of major letters or letter fragments the proponents find within canonical 2 Corinthians: The Two-letter Hypothesis (also called "the four-chapter hypothesis"[15]), The Three-letter Hypothesis, and The Five-letter Hypothesis.

"The Two-letter Hypothesis," according to Roetzel, is the simplest solution; however, there are some apparent drawbacks to this hypothesis as well. First, scholars are divided over the chronological order of the two letters. If chapters 10–13 are earlier, then they may constitute the "letter of tears." This issue is discussed in Chapter One of this thesis. Adolph Hausrath first offered this idea.[16] It was popularized by J. H. Kennedy,[17] and Frances Watson has been the most vocal supporter recently of this interpretation.[18] Roetzel argues that because of the issues raised

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[13] Margaret M. Mitchell, "The Corinthians Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics," *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 24.

[14] Calvin J. Roetzel, *2 Corinthians,* Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 26–35.

[15] Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, (Word Biblical Commentary), (Waco: Word Books, 1986), xli.

[16] Adolph Hausrath, *Der Vier-Capitel Brief des Paulus an die Corinthier* (Heidelberg: Bassermann, 1870).

[17] J. H. Kennedy, *The Second and Third Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (London**:** Methuen, 1900).

[18] Francis Watson, 324–46. Watson claims that the identification of 2 Corinthians 10–13 with the "letter of tears" is "almost certain, and that all that is lost of the painful letter is the initial greeting and perhaps the conclusion." [Watson, 325.] He argues that "2 Corinthians x–xiii as a whole fits the description of the painful letter,

by Watson, the “thesis that the ‘letter of tears’ is lost may not be entirely plausible,”[19] and if 1–9 is first, then on the basis of the past tense in 2 Corinthians 2:4,[20] 2 Corinthians 10–13 cannot be the “letter of tears.” Roetzel argues that it is more logical that chapters 10–13 are earlier than 1–9 because:

> . . . if 2 Corinthians 10–13, with all of its acrimony and slashing rhetoric, is the last letter in this anthology (as Barrett and Furnish propose), how is one to account for the positive report Paul scribes shortly after in Romans 15:26–27? As he dictates Romans just weeks or months later, Paul is in Corinth. The collection is ready, the delegation has gathered, and he heaps praise on believers in Achaia, including those in Corinth. . . . That dramatic shift from angry polemic to happy resolution just weeks or months later without an intermediate reconciling stage is certainly possible, but it strikes me as highly improbable.[21]

Jerome Murphy-O’Connor affirms this view:

> It is perfectly clear that chapters 10–13 cannot be the continuation of chapters 1–9. It is psychologically impossible that Paul should suddenly switch from the celebration of reconciliation with the Corinthians (1–9) to savage reproach and sarcastic self-vindication (10–13). Such an attack on the Corinthians would have undone everything he had tried to achieve in chapters 1–9.[22]

Second, Roetzel also asserts that the “Two-letter” proponents have difficulty finding a satisfying rationale for 2:14–7:4, a long digression between two parts of what seems to be a continuing

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and the allusions to it, in the earlier chapters of 2 Corinthians.” [Watson, 340.] He points out that the one who had sinned against Paul, referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:5–11, had not been punished sufficiently by the community, implicating the entire community for disrespecting Paul’s apostolic office and authority. This needed to be addressed in the “letter of tears,” and, indeed Paul addresses this attitude in 2 Corinthians 10–13, suggesting that the two documents were essentially one and the same. “The severity of the tone throughout ch. x–xiii makes it clear that the whole congregation is implicated in the rebellion. Wherever direct address occurs in ch. x–xiii, it is the congregation as a whole that is addressed; it therefore shares in the rebel’s guilt.” [Watson, 346.] Watson then concludes that “in ii. 5ff, we discover that the congregation has severely punished the leading offender [in response to Paul’s letter of tears, which Watson asserts was chapters 10–13]. 2 Cor. x–xiii is therefore to be identified with Paul’s painful letter.” [Watson, 346.] The weakness in Watson’s argument is that the text does not mention a “leading” offender being punished; the offense was not a community offense, but an individual’s offense, which the community punished to Paul’s satisfaction. It falls short of demonstrating the priority of chapters 10–13.

[19] Roetzel, 27–28.

[20] “For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears . . .”

[21] Roetzel, 28.

[22] Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 10–11.

travelogue.[23] Third, Roetzel holds that the "Two-letter" approach does not account for the "seeming independence of the two accounts of the offering in chapters 8 and 9."[24]

"The Three-letter Hypothesis,"[25] postulates that 2 Corinthians 1–8 is a separate letter, and that it stands as the earliest written document in canonical 2 Corinthians. Roetzel suggests that the three-letter approach resolves the redundancy apparent to scholars of having chapters 8 and 9 in such rapid succession, but that it still has some of the same weaknesses apparent in the two-letter hypothesis.

"The Five-letter Hypothesis" comes from the development of the three-letter hypothesis especially by Günther Bornkamm, and later Hans Dieter Betz and Mitchell.[26] "Bornkamm's proposal has proved persuasive to many partly because he paid special attention to the reconstruction of Paul's dealings with the Corinthians and endeavored to trace the stages by which the original five letters were combined to form the canonical 2 Corinthians."[27] Bornkamm, identifying a literary break between 2:13 and 2:14,[28] proposed that 2 Corinthians 2:14–7:4 (with the exception of 6:14–7:1) was the earliest letter, first defense, in the 2 Corinthians anthology,

[23] Roetzel, 28.

[24] Roetzel, 28–29. However, in a significant exegetical study, Stanley K. Stowers argues that chapters 8 and 9 are woven together grammatically and cannot be separated so easily. He notes that those who separate chapters 8 and 9 have argued that the presence of "μὲν" in 9:1 indicates that what follows may be indicates that the "γὰρ" need not have a connection with what it follows. However, Stowers argues, these scholars have not taken note of the only other place in the New Testament in which the phrase, "περὶ μὲν γὰρ", appears, namely Acts 28:22, where both what precedes and comes after the phrase are linked so closely that the editors of every modern Greek New Testament take verse 22 to be a single sentence, and that this use of the phrase is the typical way it is construed in ancient Greek literature. Stowers concludes that "Betz is surely wrong about γὰρ not having its typical use in 9:1;" [345] and that "the results of this study make it most implausible to think of chapters 8 and 9 as fragments of two letters." [348] [Stanley K. Stowers, "*Peri men gar* and the Integrity of 2 Cor. 8 and 9," *Novum Testamentum* XXXII, 4 (1990), 340–341.]

[25] Roetzel, 30. Roetzel recognizes that Johannes Weiss (1910) and Hans Windisch (1924; reprinted in 1970) proposed and defended this idea.

[26] Roetzel, 30–35, referring to Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul*" and Mitchell, "Paul's Letters to Corinth," 307–38.

[27] Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005, 10.

[28] I.e. Paul's closure of the narration of his travels and search for Titus and opening of a section of rather profound theological reflection upon his apostolic calling and ministry.

followed by a second, stronger defense, the "letter of tears," 2 Corinthians 10–13.[29] This, in turn, was followed by a "letter of reconciliation" (1:1–2:13; 7:5–16) after a positive reception of Titus and the continuation of the offering Paul was collecting for the poor in Jerusalem. Chapter 9 was the final letter to be written in the 2 Corinthians corpus. He held that chapter 8 was an appendix to the "letter of tears."

Consideration of Two Alleged Letters or Letter Fragments in 2 Corinthians

It would seem that all interpreters agree that the most significant transition, or seam, occurs between 2 Corinthians 9:15 and 10:1, effectively separating chapters 10–13 from the rest of the canonical letter. Barrett, a two-letter theorist, argues that "the exegetical difficulties of the points of transition (ii.13/14; vi.13/14; vii.1/2; vii.4/5; ix.15/x.1) have been exaggerated, and the abrupt transitions themselves (except perhaps for the last) can be satisfactorily explained."[30] Keener suggests that "most partition theories on [2 Corinthians] might eventually go the way of alleged partitions in 1 Corinthians, but the proposed partition between Chapters 9 and 10 is more defensible than the others and more likely to endure."[31]

It also appears that 6:14–7:1 obstructs what otherwise seems to many scholars to be a smooth transition, or even a single thought, between 6:13 and 7:2.

This thesis will therefore focus upon these two issues. Other seams observed by Mitchell (above) and others are no less important, but if the seams most commonly recognized by

[29] According to at least some Five-Letter theorists, Paul's appeal for understanding and reconciliation in the first "letter of defense" (2 Corinthians 2:14–7:4, minus 6:14–7:1) apparently fell on deaf ears. As a result, he determined to make a personal visit to the Corinthian Christians in an attempt to restore their strained relationship. Unfortunately, the visit was disastrous for their relationship and Paul left Corinth without being able to make peace with those who distrusted him. In response to this "painful visit" (2 Corinthians 2:1–3), and in an apparent last-ditch effort to defend himself and be reconciled with the Corinthian Christians, Paul writes a "letter of tears" (2 Corinthians 2:4). See, for example, Mitchell, "Paul's Letters to Corinth," 334; and Roetzel, 94.

[30] Barrett, 23.

[31] Craig S. Keener, *1–2 Corinthians* (The New Cambridge Bible Commentary) (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 151.

scholars, and considered most egregious can be successfully accounted for, then it follows, at least for the purpose of this thesis, that the less popular and less apparent seams can also be accounted for in similar ways.

2 Corinthians 10:1–13:11

Chapter 10 begins “Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς. . . .” The use of both αὐτός and ἐγώ suggests a significant transition in the discourse. The question is whether the transition signifies the beginning of another document or if it is simply a new section of the same document. Most scholars hold that it begins an entirely different letter or letter fragment; but not all.

Alfred Plummer, who accepts the compositional integrity of 2 Corinthians, expresses his bewilderment over this transition:

> There is not only logical inconsistency, . . . there is psychological maladroitness. The change is not only surprising in its intensity, it is in the wrong direction. When one wishes to re-establish friendly relations with persons, one may begin by stating one’s own grievances frankly and finding fault freely, and then pass on to say all that is conciliatory, showing a willingness to forgive and a desire for renewed affection. But here the Apostle does the opposite. Having written in tender language of his intense longing for reconciliation and his intense joy at having been able to establish it, he suddenly bursts out into a torrent of reproaches, sarcastic self-vindication, and stern warnings, which must almost have effaced the pacific effect of the first seven chapters.[32]

W. H. Bates, who also adheres to the compositional integrity of 2 Corinthians, states with his tongue firmly implanted in his cheek: “Unfortunately, however, 2 Corinthians does not end at

[32] Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915), xxix–xxx.

chapter 9. The real trouble starts with chapter 10. It really does look as though the apostle has suffered a major brainstorm."[33]

Other scholars hold that chapters 10–13 are best read as a separate letter. Furnish, a two-letter theorist, notes five "discrepancies" between 2 Corinthians 1–9 and 10–13 which lead him to conclude that "canonical 2 Corinthians is a composite of parts of at least two originally separate letters."[34] In other words, he finds a partition between chapters 1–9 and 10–13, based upon the following observations: First, he argues, the tone of 10–13 is "sharply polemic and passionately apologetic;" expressions of joy, confidence, and love found in 1–9 are not found in 10–13. Second, Paul's consideration of an impending visit to Corinth "pervades" 10–13, but is "nowhere apparent" in 1–9. Third, no mention is made regarding the collection Paul was receiving for Christians in Jerusalem in 10–13; and yet, it is quite prominent in 8–9. Fourth, there is no way to account for the optimistic anticipation of a successful offering for Jerusalem expressed in 8–9 when 10–13 acknowledges the doubts that some Corinthians still have regarding Paul's trustworthiness. Fifth, the use of the first person plural dominates 1–9, while the first person singular dominates 10–13. This alternation of terms does occur with some frequency in other Pauline epistles, but "the kind of shift apparent here in 2 Corinthians occurs in no other Pauline letter."[35]

Furnish concludes that "the most plausible hypothesis is that canonical 2 Cor is a composite of parts (probably the major portions) of two originally independent letters. Internal

[33] W. H. Bates, "The Integrity of II Corinthians," *New Testament Studies* 12 (1965):59. The use of "brainstorm" does not appear to mean a process of creative problem-solving, but of an emotional, exasperated outburst."

[34] Furnish, 32.

[35] Furnish, 31–32.

evidence suggests that chaps. 1–9 represent the earlier of these, and chaps. 10–13 the latter."[36]

Bornkamm concurs:

> The last four chapters stand out most clearly from the earlier sections of the Letter as it has been handed down to us. They show Paul fighting hard against new opponents who have penetrated into the community. . . . Nothing in these last four chapters would lead one to suspect that the conflict with the congregation has been settled and that peace has been restored, although in chapters 1, 2, and 7 this was the case in point, in excited and rapturous words. The best explanation of this remarkable state of affairs still supports . . . the thesis, long ago proposed, that chapters 10–13 are a fragment, and certainly the most important section, of the letter which Paul sent to the Corinthians, in his own words (2:4), "out of much affliction and anguish of heart with many tears."[37]

A significant problem that needs to be addressed by those advocating partition theories is why a redactor would remove the opening and closing salutations and blessings of a number of Paul's letters in order to combine several of them in an order that is seen by modern scholars as unacceptable and illogical.

Bornkamm seems to be the only scholar to offer a potential explanation for the apparent fragmentation by calling attention to the fact that it is "strange that the editor not only changed around the course of events in time, but also, as we see, destroyed the consolatory effect of his own collection, by placing it at the end of the heavy, almost desperate controversy with the opponents."[38] In response he suggests that the apparently disorderly sequence of the documents in 2 Corinthians is the result of a

> basic rule of early Christian edificatory literature, which confronts us in numerous texts and sections of texts and above all in the subsequent composition of traditional material as handed down. I mean the fact that the warning against false teachers is very often expressed at the *end* of certain writings and fragments. Behind the formal rule stands the acknowledged view that the appearance of false prophets is a sign of

[36] Furnish, 41.

[37] Günther Bornkamm, "The History of the Origin of the So-Called Second Letter to the Corinthians," in *The Authorship and Integrity of the New Testament: Some Recent Studies,* edited by K. Aland, *et. al*., 73-81. London: S.P.C.K., 1965, 73–74.

[38] Bornkamm, 77–78.

> the last times. Paul himself offers examples for this: 1 Cor. 6:22 in the anathema over those who do not love the Lord, in the warning against seducers in the closing section of the Letter to the Galatians written in his own hand (6:11ff), as well as in Rom. 16:17–20.[39]

Again, and to his credit, Bornkamm appears to be the only scholar willing to investigate the rationale of the editor(s) of 2 Corinthians in even a preliminary way. However, he does not cite any authority or any other source for asserting this "basic, formal rule" of inserting warnings against false teachers at the end of letters or letter fragments. To compare final *sentences*, which would be a short exhortation in leave-taking, with final chapters comprised of extended rhetorical attacks, seems to be stretching the comparison beyond meaningfulness. It also appears not to have led other scholars to concur or to research this possibility, not even those who would otherwise agree with Bornkamm's overall contentions.

Barrett, for one, finds Bornkamm's suggestions unpersuasive:

> It cannot be said that these explanations are convincing. Dr. Bornkamm, in effect, destroys his own argument with reference to x–xiii; these chapters are not apocalyptic warnings of what is to be expected in the last days, but a straightforward attack upon contemporaries; not a paraenetic warning (comparable with Acts xx. 29 f.), but polemics.[40]

F. F. Bruce, who holds to the two-letter theory in which chapters 1–9 precede 10–13, (that after having sent the letter found in chapters 1–9, Paul received the bad news of a resurgence of hostility toward him and his ministry and subsequently sent 10–13), wrote concerning this transition:

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[39] Bornkamm, 78.

[40] Barrett, 24. On the other hand, Chevallier asserts that « Il apparaît que la finalité de ces quatre chapitres n'est pas d'abord apologétique ou polémique ; elle est pastorale. On pourrait donner comme titre : 'Préparation pastorale d'une nouvelle visite à l'Eglise de Corinthe subjuguée par des prédicateurs rivaux.' » ["It would seem that the goal of these four chapters is not primarily apologetic or polemic; it is pastoral. One could give it the title, 'Pastoral Preparation for a New Visit to the Corinthian Church which Has Been Subjugated by Rival Preachers.'" [Max-Alain CHEVALLIER, "L'Argumentation de Paul dans II Corinthiens 10 à 13," Revue D'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses 70 (1009): 11–12.]

> Nothing in 2 C. 1–9 prepares the reader for the rude shock administered by the opening words and sustained argument of 2 C. 10–13, in which Paul warmly defends his apostolic authority and denounces with savage irony visitors who came to Corinth and endeavored to displace his authority in the church there . . . . While chapters 1–9 are not free from criticism and self-defense, there is nothing in them comparable to the invective of (say) 11:13–15, and the mood which they reflect is quite different from that of chapters 10–13. This calls for serious explanation.[41]

Barrett works through several possible explanations for the sudden change of tenor in Paul's language on the heels of mostly comforting and encouraging sentiments, and then proposes his own:

> There is a unity of subject-matter in 2 Corinthians, and a unity of treatment; but there is a change in atmosphere, a change in the mood of Paul's response, and also a change in the response that he appears to expect from his readers. It is these changes that make it difficult to accept the literary unity of the epistle. Lietzmann thinks that a sleepless night would account for the difference between i–ix and x–xiii, and Denney puts the matter even more strongly: the break could be explained 'if Paul stopped dictating for the day at the end of chapter ix – if he even stopped for a few moments in doubt how to proceed . . . .' Such delays might possibly cause a change of mood; they might even give rise to the change from a 'We-epistle' to an 'I-epistle' (Bachmann), but they could not give rise to a new reaction, or change a hopeful to a despairing attitude.
>
> The only adequate explanation of the new tone in x–xiii is that Paul had heard further news from Corinth – not that the situation had changed completely but that it had developed. Such news could have arrived while he was writing; he could have decided to let what he had written stand and simply add a supplement. It is hard, however, to think that he would have been content with such a proceeding, and it is more likely that he had already sent i–ix. He could not call these chapters back – perhaps would not have done so if he could; but a new letter was called for.[42]

Martin essentially agrees, asserting that Paul

> received word from or about Corinth which altered his *attitude* toward them. . . .But the composition in chaps. 1–9 may well have left Paul's hands en route to Corinth by the time he was apprised of an outbreak of further troubles in that city. Therefore the more attractive hypothesis is that chaps. 10–13 were a separate letter written after chaps. 1–9.[43]

[41] Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971; repr., 1980), 166.

[42] Barrett, 244.

[43] Martin, xlvi.

This solution, however, also reflects presuppositions that there is no viable solution to resolve the dramatic break between chapters 9 and 10 other than by postulating a separate letter, for which there is no evidence.

In response, however, not all scholars see the transition between chapters 9 and 10 so dramatically. Philip E. Hughes calls attention to the opening words of chapter ten

> where Paul addresses *an entreaty* to the Corinthians 'by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.' He is still writing as their spiritual father, moved by love and 'godly jealousy' for them. It is true that he has some severe and straight things to say, but they are said in entire conformity with the spirit that animates the earlier chapters of the letter; and, moreover, they apply in particular to the intruding false apostles and the minority faction that has associated itself with them.[44]

Frances M. Young and David F. Ford agree:

> The entire letter is concerned with re-establishing mutual confidence. Paul is more concerned to convey his own understanding of his own role and woo back the doubters, misled by others or not, than to attack any specifically identifiable 'opponents.'
>
> This is true even in the final four chapters of the letter.[45]

Significantly, such an apparent juxtaposition of gentle and harsh language was not unheard of in the world of ancient rhetoric. In response to the allegations that chapters 10–13 are out of order, Frederick Danker, although he holds that "the probability is strong that 2 Corinthians was not written in its present form at one sitting, but consists of at least two letters,"[46] argues that "there are rhetorical considerations that have been overlooked in the history of interpretation of 2 Corinthians" and that Paul's rhetoric in 2 Corinthians is comparable to that of the legendary[47]

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[44] Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1962, xxiii.

[45] Frances M. Young and David F. Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians*, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1987, 14–15.

[46] Frederick W. Danker, *II Corinthians* (Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament) (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 18.

[47] Quintillian (*Institutiones*, X, 1.76) recognized Demosthenes as *lex orandi* ("the standard of oratory") while Cicero (*Brutus*, 35, Orator, II.6) affirmed that Demosthenes "stood alone among all orators" and was "the perfect orator."

rhetorician, Demosthenes, in his 330 BCE speech, *De Coronâ* (*On the Crown*). Both Demosthenes and Paul appear to close their respective works with a section of "self-praise, satire, and sarcasm."[48] Danker also asserts that Demosthenes's speech "was recognized in Paul's time as a rhetorical model."[49]

Shortly after Semler's partition theory was published, the Catholic scholar, Johann Leonhard Hug, offered this response, including the allusion to Demosthenes, in his *New Testament Introduction* published in German in 1808 and translated in 1827:

> It is moreover objected how different is the tone of the first part, mild, amiable, affectionate, whereas the third part is severe, vehement, and irrespectively castigatory. But who on this account would divide Demosthenes' oration *De Coronâ* into two parts, because in the more general defense placidity and circumspection predominate while on the other hand, in abashing and chastising the accuser, in the parallel between him and Æschines, words of bitter irony gush out impetuously and fall like rain in a storm?[50]

Abrupt shifts such as this one in an epistle do not typically lead scholars to conclude that they are studying a compilation of letters, and, as David deSilva points out, there is no need to do so for 2 Corinthians either: "The objection that the abrupt shift in tone signals a change in situation (and therefore two separate letters) founders when we encounter similar shifts of tone in texts such as Demosthenes' *Second Epistle*, the literary integrity of which has not been held suspect."[51]

Frank Hughes also calls attention to similar rhetorical practice at the time of Cicero:

> In rhetorical theory (and in most of Cicero's own rhetorical practice) the part of the speech in which one conventionally found appeals to the emotions was the ending of

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[48] Danker, 24.

[49] Danker, 24.

[50] Johann Leonhard Hug, *An Introduction to the Writings of the New Testament*, Vol. 2; tr. by Daniel Guildford Wait (London, 1827), 392 [Originally, *Einleitung in die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, Tubingen, 1808].

[51] David deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004, 584.

> the speech, the *peroratio*. In Cicero's time, there was a conventional understanding that the *peroratio* had two parts: the recapitulation (*recapitulatio*) of the points demonstrated in the speech, and the appeal to the emotions (*adfectus*), which was further subdivided in Latin rhetoric into the arousal of emotions against the opponent (*indignatio*) and the arousal of emotions for the orator and his client's case (*conquestio*) . . . ."[52]

Danker observes further that Paul's juxtaposing meekness with vehemence, which causes some scholars such difficulty, was not Paul's invention. For the Jews, God exhibited such a range of responses to His chosen people as both His wrath and gentleness pulsate throughout the Old Testament. Likewise, Greco-Roman readers would not be put off by such abrupt changes of tone and mood, familiar as they were with similar examples from Demosthenes and Epictetus. Danker points out that these audiences would accept such sudden shifts in rhetoric because it was expressed, not in a self-serving way, but out of concern and love for the listeners. This is why Danker titles these chapters, "A Declaration of Loving Concern."[53]

Paul was certainly aware of such language, stronger, even, than that found in 2 Corinthians 10–13, in the imprecatory passages in the Old Testament Book of Psalms. They are startling, almost inappropriate-sounding, outbursts of passionate condemnation of those who oppose God and the people of God. These are considered so unseemly in some contemporary cultures that such verses are not included in lectionaries or hymnbooks which have Psalms readings within them. Yet these were apparently perfectly appropriate within the culture in which they were written and read, and were embraced as God's Word.

This author agrees with Young and Ford, who do not claim that Paul was "a Jewish Demosthenes, but that 2 Corinthians was self-consciously conceived as an apology according to

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[52] F. W. Hughes, "The Rhetoric of Reconciliation: 2 Corinthians 1.1–2.13 and 7.5–8.24", in D. F. Watson (ed.), *Persuasive Artistry* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 248-249.

[53] Danker, 147-153.

the norms of the day. This theory accounts for the changes in emotional tone within the epistle, . . . It was aimed at persuading, and uses the arts of persuasion."[54]

Hall concludes: "None of the arguments commonly used for separating chs. 10–13 from the rest of 2 Corinthians stands up to examination. We should therefore accept the testimony of the manuscripts and of the early church that the letter is a unity."[55]

In sum, the apparent use of abrupt shifts in argumentation strategies and styles, such as the one beginning 2 Corinthians 10, is present in the rhetoric of other ancient speakers. However, critics and historians who have studied this rhetoric do not suggest that this is evidence of two or more speeches or parts of speeches edited into one by some unknown ancient editor. It should follow then, that while it cannot be taken as absolute proof that 2 Corinthians is a single compositional unit, it does demonstrate that it is clearly a possibility.

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1

The other major problem cited by many scholars is the alleged interpolation found in 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1. Roetzel refers to this passage as a "lumpish disruption of [Paul's] train of thought . . . with strongly non-Pauline language."[56]

Although Paul Brooks Duff defends the placement of this passage, he offers a listing of seven reasons why many scholars and commentators regard 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 to be an interpolation:

> 1) 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 does not fit the context of 2:14–7:4.
> 2) If removed, 2 Corinthians 7:2 would form a smooth continuation of 6:13.
> 3) By itself, 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 functions as a carefully constructed independent unit, intelligible by itself.
> 4) There are a large number of *hapax legomena* within such a brief passage.

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[54] Young and Ford, 43.

[55] Hall, 106.

[56] Roetzel, 25.

5) There is a spirit of exclusivism in the passage which seems incompatible with Paul's outlook.

6) The use of "spirit" and "flesh" in 2 Corinthians 7:1 is contrary to Paul's normal antithetical use of these terms as found, for example, in Romans 8.

7) 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 has an affinity with the writings from Qumran.[57]

The following data offer evidence to support these points and to provide a brief response.

1) Until this section occurs, the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians has been the primary issue. This passage, however, seems to emphasize the relationship between believers and unbelievers. It does not sound unlike what Paul may have written in a previous letter (referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9), and thus it is conceivable that these verses were accidentally inserted at this point at a later time and were not originally part of the letter. Martin notes that this passage "has been regarded by Bultmann (1947), Fitzmyer (1961), Bornkamm (1965), and Gnilka (1982) as a non-Pauline interpolation. Betz (1973) has even argued, on the basis of its similarity to the theology of Paul's opponents in Galatians, that it represents an anti-Pauline tract."[58]

2) The connection between 6:13 and 7:2 is quite apparent – "widen your hearts also" (6:13) and "make room in your hearts for us" (7:2). With this in mind, the intervening verses do seem to be out of place, breaking up the flow of the passage.

In response to these first two assertions, Matera contends that 6:14–7:1 is a "moral exhortation to show the Corinthians what they must do to open their hearts to him"[59] He argues that this passage is part of Paul's appeal for personal reconciliation between Paul and the Corinthian Christians. They will demonstrate their readiness for reconciliation with Paul through sanctified devotion to Christ, consistent with Paul's teaching and ministry. It is the contention of

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[57] Paul Brooks Duff, "The Mind of the Redactor: 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 in its Secondary Context," *Novum Testamentum* XXXV, 2 (1993), 160–180, 161.

[58] Martin, xlii.

[59] Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 160.

this thesis that, while there does appear to be an interruption in the flow of language from 6:13 directly to 7:2, the interruption is purposeful and is not introducing completely unrelated material. "In our view, and against most interpreters, we see 6:14–7:1 as integral to Paul's closing argument begun in chap. 5 and completed in 7:3ff. It is not a digression but a logical development."[60]

3) This is generally acknowledged by a number of scholars who see this passage as a brief digression or material either previously written by Paul or borrowed by Paul from some unknown source. Furnish includes in the first camp scholars such as Héring,[61] Allo,[62] Hughes,[63] Bruce,[64] and Barrett;[65] and places Collange,[66] Dahl,[67] and Olson[68] in the latter. These scholars do not consider this passage to be foreign to the text. Paul may very well have written it either for another occasion or for this very place, or he may also have imported it purposely and purposefully for rhetorical reasons (which will be discussed more fully below).

4) "The section contains no fewer than nine Pauline *hapax legomena* (ἑτεροζυγοῦντες, μετοχὴ, συμφώνησις, Βελιάρ, συγκατάθεσις, ἐμπεριπατήσω, εἰσδέξομαι, παντοκράτωρ,

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[60] Martin, 195.

[61] Jean Héring, *La Seconde Épitre de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens* [Commentaire du Nouveau Testament, VIII] (Neuchatel / Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé S. A., 1958), 49–52.

[62] Ernest Bernard Allo, Saint Paul: *Seconde épitre aux Corinthiens*. [Études bibliques] (Paris: Gabalda, 1937), 190–193.

[63] Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthian*, 241–244.

[64] Bruce, 213–216.

[65] Barrett, 192–203.

[66] Jean-François Collange, *Énigmes de la deuxieme épitre aux Corinthiens: Étude exégétique de 2 Cor. 2:14–7:4* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), [Society for the New Testament Studies Monograph Series (SNTSMS) 18], 316–317.

[67] Nils A. Dahl, Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission (Minneapolis: Augsburg¸1977), 65–69.

[68] Stanley N. Olson, "Confidence Expressions in Paul: Epistolary Conventions and the Purpose of 2 Corinthians," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1976), 190.

μολυσμοῦ)"[69] However, Murray J. Harris asserts that "the existence of *hapax legomena*, even in relatively great numbers, does not in itself prove non-Pauline authorship."[70] Harris further notes that "in the 257 verses of 2 Corinthians there is, on average, one Pauline *hapax* per 1.6 verses, and one NT *hapax* every three verses. . . . [So] the incidence of six Pauline *hapaxes* in six verses (6:14–7:1) is not particularly remarkable."[71] Harris also notes Gordon Fee's observation that five of the hapaxes occur in "a burst of rhetoric" (6:14–16a), and it is characteristic of Pauline rhetoric to have a "sudden influx of hapax legomena."[72] Danker concludes:

> The fact that these verses include several words used only once by Paul . . . may be an indication of the rhetorical power exhibited in the passage rather than a proof of pseudonymous origin as is frequently alleged. In any case, this particular rhetorical feature has been singularly left unexplored in discussions of the passage. Demosthenes similarly uses for special effect in his speech *On the Crown*, terms that are found only once in all his speeches.[73]

5) Some scholars (notably Betz) charge that the theology of this section is not simply non-Pauline, but anti-Pauline. Thrall observes that "the plea for a rigorous separation of the church from paganism seems inconsistent with Paul's earlier attitude, expressed in 1 Corinthians 5:9–10 and elsewhere."[74] However, a more careful reading would suggest that Paul is not talking about having nothing to do with pagans, but with paganism. God's people will not secede from the world, but they will stand in contrast to non-believers rather than finding partnership, fellowship or agreement with them in spiritual things or in marriage. Certainly, Paul saw the need to engage and identify with pagans in order to "win" them (1 Corinthians 9:19–23). Within the same

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[69] Margaret E. Thrall, "The Problem of II Cor. VI.14–VII.1," *New Testament Studies* 24, 133.

[70] Harris, 17.

[71] Harris, 17.

[72] Gordon D. Fee, "II Corinthians VI.14–VII.1 and Food Offered to Idols," *New Testament Studies* 23 (1977), 144; cited by Harris, 17.

[73] Danker, 99.

[74] Thrall, "The Problem of II Cor. VI.14–VII.1," 133.

context as this passage in question, we note that Paul teaches that God has given them the role of "ambassadors for Christ" with a "ministry of reconciliation." This role makes it necessary to rub shoulders with those outside of the church.

6) It is not uncommon for speakers and writers to use multivalent words or phrases; context must determine what specific words mean. Harris illustrates this:

> It is true that when Paul uses σάρξ and πνεῦμα together, they are generally opposed, not merely conjoined (as here). But all Paul's anthropological terms are fluid in use so that although the theological antithesis "flesh-spirit" is common in Paul (e.g., Romans 8:4–5, 7–9, 12–13; Galatians 5:16–24), a poplar use of these two terms is sometimes found in which either term may denote the whole person, the self (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:13 [πνεῦμα] and 7:5 [σάρξ], or, as here in 7:1, σάρξ denotes the outward, and πνεῦμα, the inward, aspects of the whole person. Paul is calling for the total purity of the person, both inwardly and outwardly.[75]

7) Fitzmeyer describes this passage as "a non-Pauline interpolation" and "a Christian reworking of an Essene paragraph which has been introduced into the Pauline letter."[76] Betz concurs.[77] Furnish observes that in response to this argument, some interpreters "dismiss these alleged affinities as more apparent than real (e.g., Fee[78])," while others hold that portions of the Old Testament would evoke similar expressions in Paul just as they did the Jewish community at Qumran (e.g., Barrett[79]).[80]

In terms of treating this passage as an interpolation, Harris suggests that when the textual evidence to substantiate the existence of an interpolation is lacking (which it is here), four criteria need to be addressed in order to identify the passage as an interpolation:

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[75] Harris, 18.

[76] J. A. Fitzmeyer, "Qumran and the Interpolated Paragraph in 2 Corinthians 6:14–17," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (1961), 217? 271–280, cited by Harris, 20.

[77] H. D. Betz, "2 Corinthians 6.14–7: An Anti-Pauline Fragment," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973), 88–108.

[78] Fee, "II Corinthians VI.14–VII.1 and Food Offered to Idols," 146–147.

[79] Barrett, 197.

[80] Furnish, 377.

> (1) the presence of ideas alien to the author, (2) evidence of stylistic preferences or linguistic usage uncharacteristic of the author,…(3) dissonance with the immediate context…[and] (4) literary dependence, that is, when an alleged interpolation draws on or coheres with some other piece of writing. . . . Also, once it has been established that an interpolation is probable, an adequate explanation must be given of how the interpolation found its way into the text.[81]

In short, Harris finds that none of these four criteria are clearly met in this passage. He concludes that:

> far from containing ideas, "stylistic preferences," and "linguistic usage" foreign to Paul (criteria 1 and 2), the paragraph contains many Pauline themes and evidences several words, phrases, and constructions that often occur in Paul's letters. Granted, these six verses are self-contained and begin with an abrupt transition of thought, but their consonance with the immediate and wider context (cf. criterion 3) can be clearly demonstrated. . . . Indeed, we might argue that it is more appropriate to suppose that Paul himself, known for his propensity to digress as he dictated his letters, has abruptly digressed at 6:14 than that some unknown editor, devoid of literary sensibilities, has awkwardly interpolated the passage at this point in Paul's letter. While there are unmistakable affinities between these verses and some Qumran texts, no "literary dependence" (criterion 4) in the sense of the borrowing of ideas or terminology can be established . . . .[82]

Harris, therefore, concludes that this passage's "incontestable Pauline characteristics and the very presence of the paragraph in a genuine Pauline letter and in such an expected place suggest that it stems *in toto* from Paul's own hand."[83]

Duff offers several interesting historical illustrations to the discussion by noting that 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 actually fits quite nicely in its surrounding context by pointing out that this passage corresponds to the imagery evoked at the beginning of the larger context (2:14) in which Paul "describes himself as the herald of a[n epiphany] procession. . . . [whose job it was] first to clear the way for the procession . . . [and] to warn those whom the procession would encounter to

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[81] Harris, 23.

[82] Harris, 24–25.

[83] Harris, 25.

prepare themselves for the epiphany of the deity."[84] Duff goes on to call attention to several examples of such processions in some of the literature in antiquity, such as Apuleius, Athenaeus, and from Aristophanes' comedy, *The Frogs*, where "the heralds' cries presume that some bystanders would be unable to prepare themselves adequately for the god's epiphany, because they are strangers, uninitiated, ritually unclean, or the like. These cries warn such types to depart from the area of the advent."[85]

Duff offers another illustration from Euripides' *Bacchae*, in which the heralds cry out: "Who is in the road? Who is in the road? Who is indoors? Let the former get out of the way! Let everyone sanctify him/herself with a mouth that is religiously silent."[86] He then asserts that

> If we now turn to the stray fragment found in 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1, we are immediately struck by the fact that the focus of the passage (found in the initial imperative) is the separation of unbelievers from the Christian community. . . .The text consists of a command to the community not to be "mismated" with unbelievers. This command is supported by five rhetorical questions climaxing with the final question which distinguishes idols from the temple of God. The questions are followed by a collection of quotations from the First Testament meant to demonstrate that the Christian community is the temple of God. Finally, the passage ends with an exhortation that the community cleanse itself from any and all defilement.[87]

Duff concludes:

> In sum, 6:13 and 7:2a of Paul's text metaphorically present the apostle as the herald of a procession proclaiming the epiphany of God in his body. As such, Paul asks the

[84] Duff, "2 Corinthians 1–7," 18.

[85] Duff, "2 Corinthians 1–7," 19.

[86] Duff, "2 Corinthians 1–7," 19.

[87] Duff, "2 Corinthians 1–7," 19. Duff's reference to 6:14–7:1 as a "stray fragment" is due to his belief that a later redactor inserted this passage in order to amplify Paul's image as a herald for God's procession. However, Duff finds that this explanation is sufficient to undermine partition theories as a means of interpreting 2 Corinthians 1–7, and argues instead for a narrative-critical approach which argues that 2 Corinthians was written by "Paul," though not entirely by the historical Apostle Paul (such as this "stray fragment"). Unfortunately, it appears that Duff makes use of narrative criticism because of the complex compositional, especially pre-canonical, history of 2 Corinthians by postulating an "implied" author to create this "stray fragment" and in so doing, also helped to create the historical Paul. "One can, then, in discussing 2 Corinthians 1–7, still speak of Paul (the implied author), as long as one bears in mind that the Paul of the text may be no more identical to the historical Paul than the Jesus of John's Gospel is identical with the Jesus of history." (23) Notwithstanding this turn from historical to literary, Duff's arguments demonstrating the appropriateness of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 to the larger context are valuable for this thesis.

> Corinthians to "make room" for him. A later redactor added 6:14–7:1 to the apostle's heraldic cry. [This passage] can be seen as an extension of the original herald's cry, in that [it] demands the separation of the community from those who would defile the epiphany. Although the stray fragment found in 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 still awkwardly interrupts the flow of the Pauline letter, it nevertheless seems to continue Paul's metaphorical logic throughout the section.[88]

To reiterate, there are several possible explanations for reading 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 as an integral part of the letter as a compositional unity. They cannot be construed as proof of that unity, but it is evidence that strongly suggests that one cannot simply dismiss this passage as an interpolation, whether Pauline or not.

Summary of this Section and Response

The majority of New Testament scholars contend that 2 Corinthians is made up of two to five shorter letters or letter fragments and at least one interpolation, which have been joined together to produce a "letter" that is actually a compilation of letters in a rather haphazard order. All but one of the typically theologically rich Pauline opening greetings and closing benedictions have been stripped away with rough seams between them, betraying the work of an editor prior to the reception of the "letter" into the Christian canon of scripture.

This is not how the early church received 2 Corinthians. For some 1800 years, there was no suggestion or allegation, and certainly no manuscript evidence or clear extra-biblical data, to support such charges. However, those who resist the more recent formulations have responded to such analyses. As noted above, responses to both of the most recognized seams, offer historically, theologically, biblically, and rhetorically compelling rationale to adhere to the compositional unity of 2 Corinthians.

This thesis contends that the lack of any manuscript evidence for partitions or efforts to "correct" oddly placed transitions within 2 Corinthians, along with an absence of any testimony

[88] Duff, "2 Corinthians 1–7," 19–20.

or debate until late in the 18th century concerning the unknown, and apparently somewhat erratic redactor provides enough precedent to assert its compositional integrity. Those who offer theories of partitions and reorganization of the document must bear the burden of proof. Keener asserts:

> Because ancient letter collections usually preserved some indications (such as introductory or concluding remarks) of breaks between discrete letters; and an accidental interpolation of this nature, possible pages of a later codex, is unlikely to have appeared this early in a scroll without leaving traces in our textual tradition, *the burden of proof should rest with those arguing for disunity*.[89]

Michael W. Holmes agrees, adding a rather profound argument from the reading of the New Testament document, Romans:

> Suggestions that one or more of the present letters are a composite of two or more originally separate letters, and/or that the letters were edited (sometimes extensively) or interpolated in the late first or early second century have long been a part of the textual and literary criticism of the letters. Recently it has been argued that the presence of interpolations should be assumed as a working principle, and that the burden of proof lies with those who would disagree.
>
> The textual history of the letters, however, suggests a different perspective. In view of the circumstance that Romans certainly and other letters probably circulated independently prior to the formation of the corpus, the essential uniformity of the existing tradition is remarkable. This means that since the manuscript tradition began, the letters always have had the same form they now exhibit. (The one letter which does exist in multiple forms, Romans, is the exception which proves the rule, since clear traces of later editorial activity are visible in the tradition.) Therefore any editorial activity, such as that proposed by partition or interpolation hypotheses, must have occurred prior to a letter's entrance into the textual tradition. The burden of proof lies on those who suggest otherwise, and any proposal regarding post-publication textual alterations which is unsupported by evidence of disruption of the textual tradition is inherently implausible.[90]

Hester concludes:

> All the "seams," non-sequiturs and formalist deviations have been, in every case, easily explained by reference to common rhetorical practices and the strategic needs

[89] Keener, 163 [emphasis added].

[90] Michael W. Holmes, s.v. "textual criticism," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* Gerald F. Hawthorne et al., (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 930.

> of Paul to address the argumentative situations arising from his relationship to the Corinthian community.[91]

deSilva asserts:

> Theories of multiple partitioning are very creative, except in their explanation of what would have possessed an editor to combine them in such a problematic way. If an editor was at work in these places, he was clearly the worst editor of antiquity to have created jarring transitions and jumbled the text around so.[92]

The compositional unity of 2 Corinthians, therefore, ought to be retained unless clear and compelling evidence to the contrary, something more objective than theories presented to date, is produced.

Interpreting 2 Corinthians as a Compositional Unit

There are a number of contemporary scholars who interpret 2 Corinthians as a single letter written in its present canonical form by the Apostle Paul.[93] It would seem that this number is growing.[94] They take note of the apparent seams and rough transitions pointed out by partition scholars as different sections of one complex letter, written to address a complex of issues, rather than evidence of multiple letters or letter fragments. Some single-letter scholars recognize a unity of purpose; others appeal to precedent and logic; still others argue that the letter is unified by its

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[91] J. D. H. Amador "Revisiting 2 Corinthians: Rhetoric and the Case for Unity," *New Testament Studies* 46, 109.

[92] David A. deSilva, *The Credentials of an Apostle: Paul's Gospel in 2 Corinthians 1–7* (North Richland Hills, Texas: BIBAL, 1998), 9.

[93] For example, Harris lists twentieth-century commentators who have held to the literary unity of 2 Corinthians: Bernard (1903); Lietzmann (1909); Bachmann (1909); Menzies (1912); Goudge (1927); Schlatter (1934); Allo (1946); Tasker (1958); Hughes (1962); de Boor (1972); Harris (1976); Danker (1989; tentatively); Wolff (1989); Witherington (1995); Kistemaker (1997); Barnett (1997); Scott (1998); Lambrecht (1999); Garland (1999); McCant (1999); Hafemann (2000); and a number of other "supporters." This writer would add Young and Ford (1987); deSilva (1993); Hester (1999); Amador (2000); Matera (2003); and Keener (2005).

[94] Harris quips: "What is of special interest is the recent trend toward defense of the unity of the epistle from the viewpoint of ancient rhetoric." [42] Keener observes: "Given literary-critical trends to read documents as wholes and rhetorical-critical analysis on the function of elements in letters, it is not surprising that an increasing minority of scholars support the letter's unity. . . ." [Keener, 146.]

use of rhetoric, noting that rhetoric from antiquity was also complex, with sudden changes of emphasis or emotion.

Non-rhetorical Arguments for Compositional Unity

The focus in this thesis is the use of rhetorical analysis to interpret 2 Corinthians as a literary, compositional unit. While not averse to a rhetorical arrangement of the material, a "growing minority"[95] of scholars offer other arguments (sometimes along with rhetorical ones which will be mentioned below) in favor of the literary unity of 2 Corinthians.

The argument from reception history

This has already been developed above, so it is only included here to reiterate that to date, no evidence has emerged that anyone, from the time of Paul until the late 18th century, questioned that 2 Corinthians was made up of more than one letter. This fact should make it incumbent upon those who hold to multiple letters comprising 2 Corinthians to offer more than hypothetical reasoning to support this view.

The fact that the Christian canon contains multiple letters written and sent on different occasions to the same recipients (e.g. 1 & 2 Corinthians; 1 & 2 Thessalonians; 1, 2 & 3 John) indicates that there appears to have been no effort to combine several letters into an edited compilation as is suggested by scholars of 2 Corinthians. Early Christian theologians apparently had no problems admitting when there was debate or disagreement on the origin or the writer of New Testament documents if consensus did not exist. For example, the writer of Hebrews was an open question, even though the ancient consensus may have been in favor of Paul. It seems strange that such a significant document as 2 Corinthians would not have been discussed somewhere – perhaps by someone who mourned the loss of the rich greetings and benedictions

[95] Keener, 143.

on account of the editing process; or by someone who wondered why these important letters were not compiled in some discernible (e.g., chronological) order; or by someone just simply wondering who the editor(s) was/were, and whether they had apostolic authority or permission to do this.

The argument from theme or purpose:

While recognizing that 2 Corinthians is complex, some interpreters observe a common thread making its way throughout the document. Due to its complexity, they do not always agree what that common thread is, but they do agree that there is an underlying theme or purpose that unifies 2 Corinthians as a whole.

Young and Ford assert that "the entire letter is concerned with re-establishing mutual confidence. . . . Throughout, Paul's fundamental aim . . . is to assert his utter transparency and openness and his single-minded commitment to his vocation."[96]

Harris writes:

> All of the content of [2 Corinthians] can be related to a single, coordinating purpose in writing – to prepare for this imminent visit by seeking to remove present or potential obstacles that could prevent the visit from being pleasant. . . .It is our contention that this consonance in *all* the content of the letter and a *single*, unifying purpose argues for the unity of the letter.[97]

Hughes maintains that there is a "coherent plan" which is apparent and "may be traced through the epistle."[98] It has to do with Paul's travel itinerary vis-à-vis the Corinthian Christians, particularly to prepare them for his third visit. Hughes argues that chapters 1–7 are an explanation for the change of itinerary (including a long digression from 2:14–7:4); chapters 8–9 have to do with preparing for Paul's upcoming visit by completing the collection that had been

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[96] Young and Ford, 14–15.

[97] Harris, 44–45 [emphases original].

[98] Hughes, xix–xx.

started prior to the difficulties between Paul and the Corinthians; and chapters 10–13 relate to the certainty and immanence of the third visit, "with all that implies, especially for his adversaries."[99]

deSilva holds that Paul writes the entire epistle in response to the way that some itinerant Jewish Christian preachers were impressing a significant number of the Corinthian Christians. They were influencing these Christians toward a more Greco-Roman way of evaluating their leaders and teachers, at the expense of Paul and his ministry. "They had a fundamentally different answer than Paul to the question, 'What makes a person a worthy Christian leader?'"[100]

The underlying unity of 2 Corinthians, despite its complexity, can also be expressed in the outlines presented. Frank J. Matera offers the following outline:[101]

The Salutation and Benediction 1:1–11
Part I: The Crisis over Paul's Apostolic Integrity 1:12–7:16
- A. Paul's Narration of Recent Events 1:12–2:13
- B. The Integrity of Paul's Apostolic Ministry 2:14–7:4
- C. Paul's Narration of Recent Events Resumed 7:5–16

Part II: An Appeal to Complete the Collection 8:1–9:15
- A. The Grace Given to the Churches in Macedonia 8:1–6
- B. An Appeal to Complete the Collection 8:7–15
- C. A Recommendation for Titus and the Two Brothers 8:16–24
- D. Paul's Purpose in Sending the Delegation 9:1–5
- E. The Relationship between Sowing and Reaping 9:6–9
- F. The Theological Significance of the Collection 9:10–15

Part III: Defense and Warnings in Preparation for Paul's Third Visit 10:1–13:10
- A. Paul's Integrity and Missionary Assignment 10:1–18
- B. Boasting Foolishly 11:1–12:13
- C. Preparations for Paul's Third and Final Visit 12:14–13:10

The Letter Closing 13:11–13

Harris offers a number of outlines from various sources, and according to different approaches (e.g. Rhetorical, Chiastic)[102] as well as his own outline as follows:[103]

[99] Hughes, xxi.

[100] deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 586–591.

[101] Matera, 8–9.

I. Paul's Explanation of His Conduct and Apostolic Ministry 1–7
- A. Introduction.. 1:1–11
- B. Paul's Conduct Defended 1:12–2:13
- C. Major Digression – the Apostolic Ministry Described............. 2:14–7:4
- D. Paul's Joy at the Corinthians' Repentance.................................. 7:5–16

II. Paul's Summons to Complete the Collection...8–9
- A. The Need for Generosity... 8:1–6
- B. The Mission of Titus and His Companions 8:16–9:5
- C. The Resources and Results of Generosity 9:6–15

III. Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Authority 10–13
- A. The Exercise of Apostolic Authority 10:1–18
- B. Boasting "as a Fool" 11:1–12:13
- C. The Planned Third Visit... 12:14–13:10
- D. Conclusion 13:11–13

Paul Barnett offers the following outline:[104]

I. INTRODUCTION.. 1:1–11
- A. Salutation 1:1–2
- B. Benediction 1:3–7
- C. Escape from Asia 1:8–11

II. PERSONAL DEFENSE... 1:12–2:13
- A. Preliminary Defense.. 1:12–14
- B. Defense of Changed Travel Plans... 1:15–2:11
- C. Paul in Troas: Turmoil in Ministry 2:12–13

III. DEFENSE OF THE MINISTRY OF THE NEW COVENANT......................... 2:14–7:4
- A. Paul Defends His Ministry... 2:14–4:6
- B. The Ministry: Life and Death 4:7–15
- C. Hope in the Face of Dying and Death.................................... 4:16–5:10
- D. Ministers of God 5:11–7:1

IV. PAUL IN MACEDONIA: TITUS BRINGS NEWS FROM CORINTH........... 7:5–9:15
- A. The Effects of the "Severe Letter".. 7:5–16
- B. Call to Complete the Collection.. 8:1–9:15

V. CORINTHIANS: PREPARE FOR PAUL'S THIRD VISIT........................... 10:1–13:14
- A. Paul's Plea Not to Have to Be Bold when He Comes 10:1–11
- B. "Superlative" Apostles.. 10:12–12:13
- C. Preparation for the Imminent Third Visit 12:14–13:14

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[102] Harris, 105–114. The Rhetorical approaches will be laid out below. The Chiastic approaches either cover only chapters 1–7 [e.g. Craig Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7," Criswell Theological Review 4:1 (1989), 3–20] or 10–13 [e.g. M. A. Chevallier, "L'argumentation de Paul dans II Corinthiens 10 à 13," *Revu d'histoire et de philsophie religieuses*, 70 (1990), 3–15] which fails to take into consideration the unity of the entire epistle, or they are forced and do not follow the text well, or they highlight less important data. See Harris, 105–114, for more information.

[103] Harris, ix–xi.

[104] Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, (The New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, 51–52.

One can readily see that what the above authors consider to be sections within a single epistle generally match the seams alleged by other scholars to be separate letters or fragments of letters with canonical 2 Corinthians.

The argument of logic

Both groups, those who adhere to the traditional, unified composition view of 2 Corinthians and the more recent composite views of 2 Corinthians, lack proof for their positions. However, as Harris asserts, the more assumptions that are needed to build a theory, the more precarious that theory will be:

> The fewer the unprovable assumptions that a hypothesis makes or requires, the stronger the hypothesis. The view that 2 Corinthians is a unity does not need to assume, as do the Hausrath and Semler hypotheses, that two independent Pauline letters to Corinth (chs. 1–9, chs. 10–13) were preserved; that at some date between AD 90 and 96 (the probable period of the formation and publication of the Pauline corpus), some redactor who had access to these two separate letters decided, for reasons that we can only surmise, to issue them in Paul's name as a single letter; that either the end of chs. 1–9 and the beginning of chs. 10–13 had been mutilated, *or* the editor excised the customary Pauline greetings and benediction at the end of chs. 1–9 along with the customary apostolic salutation at the beginning of chs. 10–13, *or* there was some mutilation and some editorial work to produce our chs. 1–13; and that the letter known to us as 2 Corinthians was issued for wider circulation precisely in the form in which we know it, which would explain the absence of any textual evidence witnessing to this editorial process.[105]

Keener adds that

> supporters of partition must provide explanations for why redactors united these distinct letters. An accident is implausible; the earliest copies would have been scrolls, not codices with pages, and even if they were codices one would need to presuppose not just carelessness but that one page in question fortuitously ended with a complete sentence and the other began a new paragraph. Deliberate literary explanations are better, but usually more difficult than assuming unity: If we can explain why a redactor would have united sections, the same explanation might show why Paul wrote them together.[106]

[105] Harris, 49–50.

[106] Keener, 148.

The argument of Greco-Roman rhetorical criticism

For this thesis, the preceding arguments for compositional unity of 2 Corinthians have been preparatory for this argument. It will be argued that the Apostle Paul intended to write 2 Corinthians essentially as it has always appeared to be – one single, albeit complex, letter. deSilva asserts:

> As [partition] theories also rest on innumerable speculations to support the creative re-arranging, both in terms of recreating a plausible historical progression which would have occasioned each new sub-letter and in terms of redactional activity, it might be best to examine the points in the text which the supporters of such theories find so troublesome, to see if there might be some explanation which would make the transitions intelligible. In this regard, classical rhetorical theory provides a wealth of information which explains the arrangement and strategy of the document as it stands, and thus removes the necessity for partitioning.[107]

Long concurs that the best way to defend the compositional integrity of 2 Corinthians is by means of rhetorical criticism: "The best way to argue *conclusively* for the letter's unity…must be within the discipline of ancient rhetorical criticism and involve a rigorous genre analysis of the letter."[108] Long's rhetorical analysis will be examined in more detail below.

This thesis will now apply Kennedy's six steps for analyzing a document using rhetorical analysis. These were identified in the previous chapter.[109] First, one must **search for and identify the limits of a rhetorical unit**, its beginning, middle, and ending. Usually this will be an entire speech or letter, but sometimes it will be a speech or written document within a larger discourse, such as a parable or the beatitudes, or a speech given by the Apostle Paul, all of which are complete discourses within a larger rhetorical setting.

[107] deSilva, *The Credentials of an Apostle*, 9.

[108] Long, 10 [emphasis original].

[109] George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill/London: University of North Carolina, 1984). Kennedy holds that 2 Corinthians is comprised of two unique letters. However, he presents the classic method for rhetorical analysis for both larger and smaller letters. I hope to establish that his method can be used to analyze 2 Corinthians as a compositional unity.

Betz and others held that 2 Corinthians cannot be seen as a single rhetorical unit, but that there were several distinct rhetorical units within the canonical document. Most notably for Betz is his assertion that chapters 8 and 9 are actually two letters written to different audiences, and therefore two distinct rhetorical units each of which bears a separate rhetorical outline. This is what he attempts to establish in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.[110] Those who maintain that 2 Corinthians is a single letter would identify 2 Corinthians, in its entirety, as a single rhetorical unit.[111] Accordingly, they find a rhetorical outline that covers the entire document, with chapters 8–9 as well as 10–13 integrated into the overall theme of the document.

Murphy-O'Connor warns against the "misuse of the rhetorical schema" when it is employed to "demonstrate the limits of a literary unity with a view to establishing its original independence."[112] At first, this seems to be a condemnation of the point of this thesis, since it is asserting the unity of 2 Corinthians based upon its rhetorical structure. However, the point of this critique is aimed at attempts to use rhetorical structure to <u>limit</u> the literary unit of the larger document. Murphy-O'Connor gives examples of two significant scholars violating this principle. First, he points out that G. A. Kennedy wrongly applied his rhetorical analysis of 2 Corinthians as follows: ***Exordium* – 1:3-8; *Narratio* – 1:8–2:13; *Propositio* and *Partitio* – 2:14–17; *Confirmatio* – 3:1–6:13; *Interpolation*: 6:14–7:1; *Peroratio*: 7:2–16**, at which point Kennedy

[110] Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985). In each "letter" (i.e. chapter) then, Betz finds an *exordium* (8:1–5; 9:1–2); a *narratio* (8:6; 9:3–5a); a *propositio* (8:7–8; 9:5b–c); a *probatio* (8:9–15; 9:6–14); and a *peratio* (8:24; 9:15).

[111] Although deSilva, seeks to demonstrate that 2 Corinthians 1–9 is a rhetorical unit (in spite of the title of his article), without mentioning chapters 10–13. In his *Introduction to the New Testament*, he holds that Paul employs a different rhetorical strategy in 10–13 (page 503), and that he wrote 2 Corinthians 1–13 "possibly all at once; possibly in two stages" (page 586).

[112] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 79.

concludes that "The letter is rhetorically complete at this point. All its topics and headings have been fully explored, and the end has been linked to the beginning."[113] This leads Kennedy to ask:

> Can chapters 8 and 9 possibly be part of the same letter as chapters 1–7? The juxtaposition of the two blocks of test is rhetorically unsatisfactory: 1–7 is too long to serve as an introduction to 8–9, and yet 8–9 is too developed to be a kind of postscript to 1–7.

Murphy-O'Connor then notes that Kennedy thus "concludes that we have to do with two separate letters, both brought by Titus, who was instructed to withhold 8–9 until he was sure that 1–7 had been well-received.[114] He argues that Kennedy is wrongly presuming that Paul worked so rigidly within the framework of ancient rhetoric that he could not have written 2 Corinthians 1–7 and 2 Corinthians 8–9 in the same letter, noting, for example, that Cicero did not feel those kinds of constraints. His postscript, for example in his *Letters to His Brother Quintus* is 41 percent of the original letter. By comparison, 2 Corinthians 8–9 is only 28 percent of the length of 2 Corinthians 1–7. He asks, "Why could Paul not have done as Cicero did?"[115]

Second, Murphy-O'Connor asserts that Betz commits this error when he uses rhetorical analysis to prove that 2 Corinthians 8–9 are two separate letters. Betz contends that each letter contains its own rhetorical schema: 8:1–5 and 9:1–2 contain the *exordium*; 8:6 and 9:3–5a, the *narratio*; 8:7–8 and 9:5b–c, *propositio*; 8:9–15 and 9:6–14, *probatio*; 8:16–23, *commendation of delegates*; 8:24 and 9:15, *peroratio*. Murphy-O'Connor cites S. K. Stowers, an expert in epistolary rhetoric: "It stretches the imagination beyond belief to think of 8:6 or 9:3–5a as a *narratio*. What is the point of calling the prayer of thanksgiving a *peroratio*? the only good

[113] Kennedy, 91; cited by Murphy-O'Connor, 79–80.

[114] Kennedy, 92; cited by Murphy-O'Connor, 80.

[115] Murphy-O'Connor, 80.

answer is that Betz is determined to describe chapter 8 as an autonomous discourse."[116] Murphy-O'Connor concludes, "Betz's classification . . . furnishes a perfect illustration of the distortion which occurs when Pauline material is forced to fit into an alien rhetorical mold."[117]

The second step is to **define the rhetorical situation of the unit**. Kennedy suggests that the rhetorical situation "roughly corresponds to the *Sitz im Leben* of form criticism."[118] Essentially, the interpreter will try to discover, primarily from the text, the reason which resulted in the rhetorical address, whether spoken or written.

Long observes:

> Determining the rhetorical situation is a preliminary consideration when doing rhetorical work. As Aristotle and many others have argued, the rhetorical situation initially determines the genre of the writing. Interpretively, the problem that needs solution (exigency), whether conceived as a historical or literary construct, needs to be deduced from the rhetorical piece itself.[119]

Significantly, Kennedy notes that "one rhetorical unit may be enclosed within another, building up a structure which embraces the whole book."[120] While Kennedy is probably referring primarily to rhetorical units within the gospels, one could certainly apply this statement to Paul's letters, especially those longer more detailed ones, such as 2 Corinthians. This may account for the fact mentioned above that there is not unanimity, even amongst interpreters who agree that 2 Corinthians is a single letter, as to the rhetorical situation which resulted in the writing of 2 Corinthians. Witherington asserts that the basic problem to which Paul responds in 2 Corinthians was his opponents' accusation that "he is no *apostolos*, as is shown by his refusal to accept

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[116] Stanley K. Stowers, "Review of Betz, 1985" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987), 730; cited by Murphy-O'Connor, 80.

[117] Murphy-O'Connor, 80–81.

[118] Kennedy, 34.

[119] Long, 12.

[120] Kennedy, 34.

patronage, all the while trying secretly to bilk the Corinthians of money through his appeal for the collection for the poor Christians of Jerusalem."[121] Young and Ford assert that Paul's purpose was "to persuade the Corinthians that their doubts about him are unfounded, that he really is an apostle called of God, and that their reaction to him is of life and death significance."[122] Long notes that there were two primary issues that Paul needed to address: 1) that Paul had failed to make the visit he promised in a previous letter, which "appears to have been the catalyst for much of Paul's problem in Corinth;"[123] and 2) "that Paul had worldly intentions (2 Corinthians 1:17b)."[124] Long contends that Paul's problems are centered on two issues: social status and religious status.[125] These complaints are based upon Paul's responses in his letters, since we do not have access to the actual complaints. First, his social status was due to his relatively poor rhetorical skill in delivering speeches. Paul recognizes this complaint in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 and 2 Corinthians 10:9–10). Second, because Paul refused to accept a patron to support his ministry. Paul responds at length to this in 1 Corinthians 9.

The rhetorical situation, in this writer's view, is that Paul's apostolic and pastoral ministry relationship with the Corinthian Christians had been put at severe risk of being terminated after he wrote his "letter of tears." However, Paul has just learned that they (or at least a strong of majority of them) wanted to be reconciled with Paul. He is elated and, after stating his joy and relief, and musing upon the apparent "weaknesses" of Christian ministry, he prepares them for his forthcoming visit by instructing them to restart the gift for Jerusalem Christians and to ready

[121] Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 371.

[122] Young and Ford, 55.

[123] Long, 126.

[124] Long, 127.

[125] Long, 119.

themselves for Paul's visit by holding fast to his teachings, even though he may not be as smooth or oratorically powerful as some who pass through with a rival "Christian" message.

The third step is to **identify the overriding rhetorical problem**.

Kennedy explains:

> In many situations the speaker will be found to face one overriding rhetorical problem. His audience is perhaps already prejudiced against him and not disposed to listen to anything he may say; or the audience may not perceive him as having the authority to advance the claims he wishes to make; or what he wishes to say is very complicated and thus hard to follow, or so totally different from what the audience expects that they will not immediately entertain the possibility of its truth.[126]

The interpreter must locate the *stasis*, or the issue or set of issues which was threatening to make the situation more intense and difficult to resolve. This would then result in a choice of which of the three species of rhetoric to employ. Kennedy suggests that perhaps the audience is prejudiced against him or it does not think the orator possesses the authority to make the claims he does. This may be discerned not so much by what is said directly, but by what is insinuated throughout the speech (or letter).[127]

Witherington suggests that it was that the Corinthian Christians were concluding that Paul was not a true apostle because he refused payment from a patron (but may have been siphoning money from the offering they had begun collecting after 1 Corinthians had been written) and because he did not come to Corinth with proper letters of recommendation. Long argues that the essential issues were two: that Paul had failed to visit and that Paul "had worldly intentions,"[128] namely, that he used worldly rhetoric and was motivated by a desire for worldly gain. Although he writes as if he is standing trial (which would call for a forensic/judicial approach), his ultimate accountability is to God – "Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending

[126] Kennedy, 36.

[127] Kennedy, 36.

[128] Long, 127.

ourselves to you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved." (2 Corinthians 12:19). Instead of standing trial before the Corinthian Christians for past actions, his approach is more to explain his actions and his words (both spoken and written) with the hope of influencing them to be reconciled with Paul and to embrace his mission once again. This, then, would call for a deliberative/apologetic/forensic approach, which is the judgment of all rhetorical critics.

The fourth step, according to Kennedy, is to **analyze the arrangement of the material in the text**. Here the rhetorical critic will attempt to discern "what subdivisions it falls into, what the persuasive effect of these parts seems to be, and how they work together – or fail to do so – to some unified purpose in meeting the rhetorical situation."[129]

Here the critic attempts to observe the big picture, making use of the major subdivisions discussed in the previous chapter under invention (*inventio*) [i.e. **the introduction** (*proem* or *exordium*); **the statement of the case** (*narratio*); **the thesis** (*propositio*); **an outline of the major arguments** (*divisio* or *partitio*): **the proofs** (*confirmatio*), **a refutation** (*confutatio*), possibly **a digression** (*digressio*); and finally, **the epilogue or conclusion** (*peroratio*)]. These are to be seen as general guidelines, not strict categories; commentators often differ (as will be seen below) when identifying these, and other, rhetorical elements in a speech or letter. It will also be good to keep in mind Kennedy's comment: "Deliberative rhetoric is usually a simplified version of the judicial."[130] Orators and letter-writers did not slavishly follow the conventions suggested above, nor do interpreters hear or read these speeches or documents in the same way.

Witherington offers the following analysis with brief annotations for 2 Corinthians:

I. **The epistolary prescript** (1:1–2).

[129] Kennedy, 37.

[130] Kennedy, 24.

II. **The epistolary thanksgiving and *exordium*** (1:3–7).
III. **The *narratio*** (1:8–2:14), which explains some of the facts that occasioned the letter and climaxes with a further thanksgiving and transition (2:15f.).
IV. **The *propositio*** (2:17), which states the basic fact under dispute.
V. **The *probatio* and *refutatio*** (3:1–13:4), which includes:
   A. Paul's characterization of his ministry and of his anti-Sophistic rhetorical approach (3:1–6:13),
   B. a deliberative digression (6:14–7:1), in which Paul puts his audience on the defensive, urging them to stop attending temple feasts with pagan friends.
   C. Paul's defense of the severe letter (7:2–16),
   D. a largely deliberative argument concerning the collections (chs. 8 and 9), and
   E. a rhetorical *synkrisis* (comparison) of Paul and his competitors in Corinth, the false *apostoloi*, with a strong emotional appeal. [(10:1–13:4)]
VI. **The *peroratio*** (13:5–10).
VII. **The closing epistolary greetings and remarks** (13:11–13).[131]

While his organization is similar to that of Witherington, Long calls attention to several distinctions from Witherington: 1) Although both scholars view 2 Corinthians as an example of largely forensic rhetoric, Witherington sees the overall letter as primarily a general defense of Paul's apostleship, Long contends that 2 Corinthians is more specifically a defense of his "manner of preaching, ministry practice, and itinerant intentions;"[132] 2) Witherington does not equate the "tearful letter" with 1 Corinthians, while Long does, and Witherington also allows for an intermediate visit between the writing of the two canonical letters to the Corinthians, while Long does not. Long contends that Witherington's conclusions in these matters "ultimately undermine the unity of the letter by complicating the logistical and chronological framework and by not acknowledging the central issue of Paul's defense – his failure to revisit Corinth."[133] He further asserts that

> although a large step in the right direction, in the end Witherington's work does not provide a conclusive case for the rhetorical unity of the letter, because very little

[131] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 335–336.

[132] Long, 7.

[133] Long, 7.

support from ancient sources – handbooks and speeches – is used to establish that 2 Corinthians conforms to ancient apologetic practice.[134]

Long helps to resolve the apparent impasse between himself and Witherington, explaining that Witherington acknowledges that his work is provisional in nature, and that its purpose was to provide a more general commentary rather than a detailed analysis, which Long's effort is.

I. **The epistolary opening** (1:1–2).
II. ***Prooemium*** (1:3–7): Assurance of hope expressed. Also, three critical themes introduced: affliction/suffering and comfort, the mutuality between Paul the Corinthians, and abundance.
III. ***Narratio*** (1:8–16) with disclosure statement (1.8) and also distributed (2.12–13 and 7:2–16):
    A. 1.8–11 (*pathos*)
        1. verses 1.8-10, "deadly peril" versus God's deliverance; "the sentence of death"
        2. verse 11, Corinthian financial assistance anticipated in the collection
    B. 1.12 (*ethos*) Paul has acted in holiness and sincerity; he is not worldly. This concern is found throughout the letter (2.17; 4:2; 5:16; 6:7–10; 8:20–21; 12:16–17)
    C. 1.13–16 (*logos*)
IV. ***Divisio* and *Paritio*** (1.17–24) (outlines the entire *probatio*):
V. ***Probatio*** (2.1–9.15):
    A. 2.1–11 Paul explains why he didn't visit the Corinthians…
    B. (2.12–13 *Narrative transition* Paul's brief account of his travels and search for Titus)
    C. 2.14–3.18 God's triumph in Christ, the giving of the Spirit through the preaching of Christ by Paul *et al*. and the greater glory of the new covenant in Christ
    D. 4.1–5.10 Paul's and his associates' ministry of suffering in the life of the Spirit
    E. 5.11–7.1 God's reconciliation and Paul's covenantal exhortation to end idolatrous behavior
    F. (7.2–16 *Narrative transition* Finding Titus and their joint confidence in the Corinthians)
    G. 8.1–9.15 Paul's work: the collection and the Corinthians' faith
VI. ***Refutatio*** (10.1–11.15): Change of tone; Paul addresses and offers various criticisms.
VII. **Self-adulation** (11.16–12.10): Paul speaks (foolishly) about his honorary deeds and piety…
VIII. ***Peroratio*** (12.11–13.10): Summarizes letter in inverted order…The language throughout contains various emotional appeals (urging, parent/child, fearing, warning, etc.).
IX. **Epistolary closing** (13.11–13)[135]

[134] Long, 7.

Kennedy's fifth step is to **consider invention and style in each part of the discourse**. Having discovered the general argument, the rhetorical critic must analyze the arguments in detail.

> In order to do this he will need to engage in a line-by-line analysis of the argument, including its assumptions, its topics, and it formal features . . . and of the devices of style, seeking to define their function in context. This process will reveal how the raw material has been worked out or rhetorically amplified both in context and in style.[136]

Walter B. Russell III notes that this step in rhetorical analysis is "obviously the longest and most difficult because it demands painstaking analysis of the flow of argument in the epistle."[137] While this thesis cannot examine the entire text in detail, it will make an effort to summarize the rhetorical invention of 2 Corinthians. One can discern the flow of Paul's argumentation by carefully observing the outlines presented above.

The reason for the length, intricacy, and passion of 2 Corinthians is that Paul needed to address a number of issues, and he needed to respond both to those who had repented and again embraced his apostolic and pastoral ministry amongst them, as well as those who were apparently not yet ready to do so. Making the task more difficult is that the only information available regarding the charges against which Paul responds in 2 Corinthians is from 2 Corinthians itself and Paul's references to them. Therefore it is necessary to read the letter carefully and closely for fullest understanding.

It would seem that there were three general charges to which Paul responds, corresponding to the three sections into which the letter is often divided by scholars who hold to its essential literary unity as well as by many scholars who do not. One charge was apparently that Paul was

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[135] Long, 143–145.

[136] Kennedy, 37.

[137] Walter B. Russell III, "Rhetorical Analysis of the Book of Galatians, (Part 2)" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (December 1993), 417.

fickle (as revealed in his change in travel plans) and therefore untrustworthy. Secondly, he must allay the suspicion concerning the legitimacy of his “collection” for the poor people in Jerusalem; and thirdly, he needed to address hardhearted opponents who claimed that he was not a real, officially approved apostle and therefore had no apostolic authority or ministry over them.

Paul determines that he will need to defend his actions vis-à-vis the Corinthians in order to seek to regain their trust and partnership in the gospel. Therefore, he will, for the most part, employ an official defense/apology.[138] He begins his task by giving history, sharing anecdotes, using images and symbolism, and by expressing his deep love and spiritual concern for them and his anxiety over having his relationship with them severed. He approaches the money issue in terms of stewardship and trust rather than secrecy or guilt and coercion, and finally he engages those who would seek to undermine him, his office, his message, and ultimately, his ministry as God’s ambassador.

Paul’s style involves “hearing” the criticisms and defending himself formally in the style of Greco-Roman apologetic rhetoric: appealing to his personal character and his devotion to the Corinthians, appealing to their sense of doing what is proper, and by directly refuting those who continue to oppose him. He repeatedly brings the focus away from himself and the Corinthians and places it upon the God of all compassion, wisdom, and justice, and the Son of God, who humbly sacrificed His life to reconcile sinful people to God, and who will ultimately stand in judgment over all people.

This thesis will essentially follow the organizational analysis offered by Witherington.

[138] Long, 230.

Paul opens with an epistolary heading identifying himself and Timothy as the senders of this letter and the church in Corinth, especially, but also including believers throughout Achaia as the recipients.

The Introduction (*proem* or *exordium*), to gain the audience's attention and good will:

Paul introduces the rhetorical aspect of this letter by offering a doxology in which he confesses and teaches that God is the God of all comfort. Paul, himself, has experienced this comfort in a number of seemingly desperate situations, and, having been comforted, he now looks forward to bringing comfort to the Corinthians after having brought significant discomfort to them via the "letter of tears." This *exordium* is intended to make a positive first impression in his listening audience.

The Statement of the Case (*narratio*), which is a simple statement of the facts and/or a narrative or history which led to the current proceedings, as Long states, "showing how the events really ought to be understood."[139]

Paul presents the *narratio* in 1:8–2:16. In response to a charge of being fickle, which some have asserted is a result of Paul's change of travel plans, he states clearly in 1:12 – "For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you." He explains the reasons for his change of travel plans, making it clear that plans sometimes need to change because God opens and closes doors.

An Outline of the Major Arguments (*divisio* or *partitio*):

In 1:17–18, Paul poses and responds to a rhetorical question designed to facilitate their understanding and trust: "Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans

[139] Long, 152.

according to the flesh, ready to say 'Yes, yes' and 'No, no' at the same time? As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No." His defense is that he was not being fickle; he was showing mercy to them, not wanting to have "another painful visit." (2:1)

Next, Paul deals with the issue of a particular man who had grievously offended him. It is likely that it was this man's offense, along with the lack of repentance on his part and a lack of discipline against him from the Corinthian Christians, that Paul wrote the "letter of tears." In response to the "letter of tears," this offender had been punished by the Corinthian believers. He has apparently repented, but is still experiencing grief and sorrow from the situation. Paul asks that they would now forgive and comfort this offender (2:7) since Paul now saw the fruits of their repentance and renewed good will toward him by punishing this offender until he repented.

With a brief transition (2:12–13), Paul breaks off the historical narrative and launches into a lengthy digression (continuing through 7:14) regarding his office and ministry as a Christian apostle. In this digression, Paul will give expression to some of the most profound theology and spiritual realities written anywhere. As a digression, it does not directly address the primary "issues" between Paul and the Corinthians. However it develops the primary issue of all: God is a reconciling God, and this is the ministry that has been confided to Paul and to the Corinthian Christians.

The Thesis (*propositio*) which the speaker wishes to prove:

Witherington proposes that this appears in 2:17: "For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ." Long does not specify a *propositio*.

The Main Arguments and Their Support and a Response in Anticipation of a Rebuttal (*probatio* and *refutatio*):

Both Witherington and Long suggest that the main arguments are made under the auspices of *probatio* and *refutatio*; Witherington includes 3:1 – 13:4, while Long calls 2:1–9:15 the *probatio*; 10:1–11:15, *refutatio*; 11:16–12:10, Self-adulation; and 12:11–13:10 *peroratio*. Witherington identifies 13:5–10 as *peroratio*.

This thesis identifies the beginning of the *probatio* with the apparent transition at 2:14 with the theologically rich imagery of God leading forth His messengers in a dramatic image of a Roman victory processional in which God is seen as the victor and Paul and the Corinthians (and ultimately all Christians) as participants in that processional, even though the ministry of the gospel on earth may lead to oppression and death for believers at the hands of the Roman officials. They do not do this for pay as so many do, but because Almighty God has commissioned them. This rhetoric allows Paul to show how the heights of glory – greater than Moses – and the depths of despair – being afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down, ready to die at any moment – are part of his ministry, and he readily embraces both. It has nothing to do with being paid, suggesting that this is exactly why those who oppose him do their "ministry." Paul asserts that the awesome glory of God paired with human frailty is exactly why, despite the outward appearances of Paul's own weaknesses, the light and power of God's salvation shines forth in ministry.

Apparently some of his opponents were contrasting themselves with Paul by asserting that he does not have the proper references (probably from Jerusalem) to exercise such authority. However, Paul responds by having the Corinthians consider what has taken place in their lives as a result of his ministry to them. In this sense, they themselves are his letter of recommendation; he does not need the approval of human institutions or persons in self-appointed authority.

Another compelling image Paul notes in his capacity of apostle is that of ambassador: announcing God's reconciliation with these people (with whom he had just been reconciled) and with all people, for that matter, thanks to Jesus Christ, who, in His eternal glory and majesty, became sin, so that they might become God's righteousness.

The digression ends climactically with the herald-cry for bystanders to prepare the way for God's triumphal procession. This suggests that, despite the reconciliation of the majority of Corinthian Christians, there are still some who are not preparing, who are still actively blocking the procession with their resistance and stubborn refusal to repent. Paul will deal with these in the last four chapters.

Having dealt with the issues of trust and of Paul's legitimacy as an apostle, he now encourages the Corinthian Christians to pick up where they left off the previous year, by restarting the drive for a money gift to poor Christians in Jerusalem. This was, in a sense, indicating that the reconciliation is complete and that they may now resume what had been waylaid by the opponents' undermining influence. It is also a test to see if they have indeed repented and want to demonstrate the genuineness of that repentance by means of entrusting Paul with a generous gift for their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. Paul, again, is able to make this practical request into a study of deeper theology in the mystery of the incarnation and its benefits to them: 2 Corinthians 8:9 – "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." His emphasis throughout is focused on the benefits of generosity, not only to the recipients, but also to the givers, and ultimately for the glory of God.

He also makes the effort to show his good will by confiding the gifts to men known and trusted by both parties so that he demonstrates that he is personally beyond suspicion of any breach of trust in any way.

Finally, Paul again, takes on those who are resisting him, and ultimately, resisting God. He begins by appealing to them by the meekness and humility of Jesus who will one day also "punish every disobedience" (10:6). So he appeals to them with both humility and gentleness and threats and warnings, again, speaking as God's ambassador. Paul's apparent weakness when he is in their midst should not be mistaken for a lack of spiritual authority and his complete trustworthiness before God and the Corinthians.

Paul then engages the battle with his opponents. Picking up from the theme of God's glory and human frailty, Paul feels the need to "boast." At first he tries to avoid it, but ultimately realizes that it must be done for the sake of these Corinthians. His boasting, however, is filled with both irony and honesty. He "boasts" in his weaknesses, his beatings, his running away from enemies, and he also boasts of the special visions and revelations he has received which no one else has. Ultimately, he states: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9–10)

Right after this, Paul begins to transition to the conclusion of this letter bristling with both sarcasm and reality: "I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works. For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!"

Finally, Paul announces his return (third) visit to Corinth. He admits that he is concerned at the prospect of finding them unprepared: "I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced." (2 Corinthians 12:21) He calls them to prepare themselves: "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. . . ."[140] and "Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you."[141]

Kennedy's sixth, and final step is to **review the whole rhetorical unit's effectiveness**. To what extent does the speaker (writer) achieve the goal of persuasion? To what extent does the rhetorical unit meet the rhetorical exigency?

Did 2 Corinthians meet the need of preparing the Christians in Corinth for his third visit? Did the Corinthian Christians welcome the presence and ministry of Paul and his associates? Was this visit productive without any dramatic confrontations? There is no clear answer. As mentioned in Chapter One, history hints that 2 Corinthians succeeded for at least a short while, since Paul would subsequently write the canonical letter to the Romans from Corinth. It could also be implied that the appearance of the letters of 1 and 2 Corinthians, which were not particularly complimentary of the Corinthians, were saved and later published for the benefit of the larger Christian church from the time of Paul until the present time. This would suggest honest contrition and humility on their part. A highly regarded letter from Clement of Rome,

[140] 2 Corinthians 13:5

[141] 2 Corinthians 13:11

dated to about 96 CE, seems to affirm the Corinthian reputation for hospitality, virtue, and knowledge. However, it also indicates that the church in Corinth, after a few years of rebuilding their reputation, would again be rocked by scandal, and its reputation soiled by conflict.[142]

Conclusion of this Chapter: Where does the evidence lead?

This chapter supports the overall thesis that, not only does Paul's apparent usage of Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions make sense, it appears that it makes better sense of the available data in 2 Corinthians than the partition theories.

This thesis has called attention to the fact that there do appear to be rough or abrupt transitions within the canonical 2 Corinthians, most notably between chapters 7 and 8 and between chapters 9 and 10. It has acknowledged that most scholars have concluded that 2 Corinthians is best read as an anthology of two to five genuinely Pauline letters or letter fragments. It has given significant consideration to two of the most common problems cited by these scholars (2 Corinthians 10–13 and 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1) and found that positing multiple letters or letter fragments is not the only solution to the alleged difficulties. Instead, we assert that there are a number of arguments, including that of recognizing Paul's use of Greco-Roman rhetoric, that should lead scholars to conclude that the evidence for the compositional unity of 2 Corinthians is more convincing than other approaches.

[142] "The Epistles of Clement: Additional Introduction" *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume IX: The Gospel of Peter, the Diatessaron of Tatian, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Visio Pauli, the Apocalypses of the Virgil and Sedrach, the Testament of Abraham, the Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena, the Narrative of Zosimus, the Apology of Aristides, the Epistles of Clement (Complete Text), Origen's Commentary on* John, Books I-X, and Commentary on *Matthew, Books I, II, and X-XIV* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1897), Chapters 1–3.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS

> It is impossible to prove or disprove a partition theory. If the arguments used in support of most partition theories are unconvincing, as I believe them to be, that strengthens the case for their rejection, but does not disprove them. The strongest argument against the partition of either 1 or 2 Corinthians has always been their universal acceptance as genuine letters in the early church. Paul's letters were treasured in the churches he founded. The idea that a compiler could rearrange and republish them, without exciting any comment or criticism, is so improbable that only logically watertight arguments would be sufficient to establish it.[1]

A Review of the Arguments

The statement which this thesis has sought to confirm is: "The Apostle Paul's apparent use of ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions in 2 Corinthians gives evidence of its compositional integrity and adequately accounts for the apparent partitions which, to some scholars, reveal the existence of multiple documents. The goal of this thesis is not to prove that 2 Corinthians is a single letter, but to show that such a theory is a plausible, and perhaps even preferable approach, than the prevailing composite theories."

In order to make this determination, we first became acquainted with the historical context in which Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. After spending about 18 months establishing the Christian church in Corinth, he returned to Ephesus. From there he apparently wrote his first letter (referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9) to them to warn them against associating with hypocrites, people who claimed to be Christian, but whose lives and teachings did not reflect such a claim. He then wrote a follow-up letter (canonical 1 Corinthians) to clarify his teaching and to respond

[1] David R. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence* (T & T Clark International: London / New York), 2003, 124.

to a number of specific issues being raised amongst the believers. Apparently this letter was not well-received by the Corinthians because it appears that Paul made a second visit to Corinth to try to explain his concerns to them in person. It seems that one man in particular insulted and offended Paul, and others apparently followed him, or at least said nothing to defend Paul. It was so bad, Paul retreated from Corinth without resolving whatever the issues were that brought him there in the first place. Shortly thereafter, he wrote a harsh letter to the Corinthians ("letter of tears" – 2 Corinthians 2:3 – which was subsequently lost) and had his co-worker, Titus, deliver it. According to Witherington, this probably meant that Titus delivered it by reading it as a speech in the Greco-Roman rhetorical fashion. Their response appears to have been widespread repentance and a renewed appreciation of and welcome to Paul to return in person. Upon hearing this good news, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians.

We also noted that it appears that most scholars hold that 2 Corinthians is a series of letters from Paul to the Corinthians after his disastrous visit to them following 1 Corinthians. The letters and letter fragments from Paul, which make up 2 Corinthians, were edited by someone who had access to them. There are a variety of hypotheses as to the order and identity of the letters and letter fragments in 2 Corinthians. Most identify the main features of 2 Corinthians as consisting of two self-defenses (one of which was not very effective (2:14–7:4) and the other, the so-called "letter of tears," (10:1–13:10) which was very effective) and a "letter of reconciliation" (1:1–2:13; 7:5–16; 13:11–13) written in response to the Corinthian Christians' change of heart and renewed openness to Paul. It is not clear why the "letter of reconciliation" was so badly fragmented throughout 2 Corinthians. Chapters 8 and 9 are generally considered to be two separate administrative letters; one to the Christians at Corinth and the other addressed to Christians in Achaia, the area surrounding Corinth. 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 is considered by most scholars to be an interpolation, possibly a remnant of the first letter Paul wrote (referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9), but usually considered to be non-Pauline. It is held that 2 Corinthians is an edited collection of these letters and letter fragments which was received (mistakenly) by the Christian church as a single letter years later.

In Chapter Two of this thesis, we offered a history and description of ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric. Rhetoric at the time of Paul was the highest level of Greco-Roman education. It was, in many ways, the height of both entertainment and sophistication in the Greco-Roman culture. It would seem that nearly everyone (in Paul's world) had some exposure to rhetoric, either formally or informally.

Given the widespread prominence of rhetoric in the Roman Empire and with Paul's education and willingness to "become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some,"[2] it certainly seems possible, if not likely, that Paul would make use of rhetoric in order to defend himself before and persuade Greco-Roman Christians to take a different course of action. If this is true, then it is only a relatively small step to putting into writing the speech he would have given, if he had had the opportunity, and sending it to Corinth to be read (likely by Titus) in Paul's absence.

Ancient letter writing, while a separate discipline, made abundant use of rhetorical conventions. Whether or not Paul received any formal education in rhetoric, his travels and observation of rhetoricians gave him sufficient exposure to the skill that he could mimic it – even if not to the liking of the discerning Corinthians. Indeed, in 2 Corinthians 10, Paul appears to agree with his critics that, in comparison to the rhetoricians of his day, he was not a good speaker or orator. This may, itself, have been a rhetorical maneuver in order to call attention more to the

[2] 1 Corinthians 9:22

content of his rhetoric than to the skill and flourish of his speech-making. While he may not have had the wherewithal to deliver a speech effectively, even his adversaries considered him a persuasive writer. Paul found that it worked well when he wrote and sent letters which sounded like and seemed to be patterned after Greco-Roman rhetoric.

We noted that, by ancient standards, the Apostle Paul wrote long and complex letters. He was innovative and apparently felt free to alter the conventions of his time to be more Christocentric. He wrote his letters as though he were personally addressing or speaking to entire congregations. To do this, he made use of rhetorical strategies, seeking to influence the thinking and resulting behavior of his readers. When these letters were read in public, ancient listeners would be able to recognize the rhetorical organization and understand the letter as though it were a rhetorical speech. Both those who regard 2 Corinthians as a single letter and those who see it as a group of only slightly related letters or letter fragments hold that Paul used letter writing effectively and frequently to accomplish his ministry.

The question, then, is whether Paul made intentional and strategic use of rhetoric in his letter writing or not; and if so, whether that rhetoric can be used to demonstrate that 2 Corinthians was written and sent as a letter in much the same form as we now have it in the New Testament. This thesis contends that he did and that it does. The fact that Paul traveled extensively, wrote and spoke Greek, wrote extremely long letters, especially by ancient standards, and employed numerous rhetorical devices and rhetorical forms of argumentation, strongly suggests that he would be able to write letters that resembled rhetorical speeches which he might have given if he had had the opportunity to be present with them in person. This led us to the contention that, if Paul had been able to speak to the Corinthians in person (rather than sending this letter or series of letters as collected in canonical 2 Corinthians), he would have prepared and delivered a speech similar to that which has been recorded in 2 Corinthians; rough transitions and all. This essentially confirms the contention of this thesis: that reading 2 Corinthians as if the Apostle Paul wrote it in the style of a Greco-Roman rhetorical speech so that it could be read by one of his ministry associates, with the result that it would be received by the Corinthians as if Paul had delivered his actual speech to them in person.

In Chapter Three of this thesis, the arguments for and against the compositional integrity of 2 Corinthians were considered. The focus was upon the two most compelling passages used as arguments for partitions, 2 Corinthians 10–13 and 6:14–7:1. The awkward transitions and rationale for the latter section being a non-Pauline interpolation were acknowledged and considered. The arguments are compelling but not convincing when analyzed and when cultural and contextual data are considered. We further argued that rather abrupt changes in tone and language could reflect a well-known rhetorical strategy employed by one of the greatest and most recognized ancient rhetoricians, Demosthenes. It was also observed that abrupt changes in tone or the awkward transition between chapters nine and ten are culturally determined; i.e., what may seem awkward to one culture may not be awkward to another culture.

The final section of the chapter focused upon arguments for compositional integrity. We argued that, from its reception by the earliest church until the 18th century, 2 Corinthians was understood to be a single letter. We also argued that its thematic cohesiveness throughout ought to lead one to perceive its underlying and fundamental compositional unity. We also argued that, logically speaking, the number of unproven assumptions of the partition theories (especially the inability to identify any editor or any editorial rationale for producing 2 Corinthians as it appears in the canon), or to demonstrate that the early church made any reference to the multiple letters and strange editing of Pauline letters leads us to doubt the real strength of these theories.

Ultimately, we presented a brief rhetorical analysis of 2 Corinthians as a whole to demonstrate that the constituent parts of Greco-Roman rhetoric can be identified throughout the entire letter as we have it in the New Testament.

We would not suggest that the apparent use of rhetoric definitively proves the literary unity of 2 Corinthians. However, we have shown that Paul's apparent use of macro-rhetoric in 2 Corinthians complements a number of other arguments which, taken together, make a compelling case for its literary integrity. We urge, therefore, that Paul could very well have written 2 Corinthians, in its entirety, much as it presently appears in the New Testament canon and that the case for the compositional unity of 2 Corinthians be given renewed consideration.

Implications of Reading 2 Corinthians as a Literary Composite or as a Literary Unity

New Testament scholars agree that "no existing manuscripts of 2 Corinthians show traces of division,"[3] not even where the critical seams or partitions occur. This means that the differences of interpretation of 2 Corinthians are due to underlying presumptions about the involvement of the divine and the basic trustworthiness of the early church. This was alluded to at the beginning of this thesis. This thesis maintains that the question of literary compositeness or literary unity is vital to understanding 2 Corinthians properly. David deSilva asserts that the significance of the literary integrity of 2 Corinthians is not merely for the sake of historical reconstruction, but for accurate reading and interpretation of the letter itself. Absent the literary integrity of 2 Corinthians, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the larger context for the statements in the letter, and "the interpretation of any given passage within 2 Corinthians will

[3] Hans Dieter Betz, "Second Epistle to the Corinthians." In Vol. 1, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1149.

change (often only slightly, sometimes more dramatically) according to the interpreter's idea of the 'whole' which guides the reading of the 'part.'"[4]

The implications of the two basic points of view are significant – especially to the church. For the church, the study of Scripture will involve a basic trust that the Bible is God's self-revelation to the world, and as such, that it is fundamentally trustworthy. The church must also exhibit a basic trust in the wisdom of the early church as they made decisions about the canon – its consistency with the teachings of Jesus and the earliest believers and its authority as God's revealed Word – including their understanding of 2 Corinthians.

Those who hold to partition theories tend to see 2 Corinthians as a record of several letters from Paul to the Corinthians, pieced together in no particular order. They generally see it as a combination of two letters of self-defense and a "letter of reconciliation." Chapters eight and nine are most often seen as two independent administrative letters only tangentially related to the other letters in 2 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 are considered by most partition theorists to be an interpolation which "does not reflect on Paul's relationship with Corinth or on the Jerusalem collection."[5]

On the other hand, those who see an underlying unity tend to identify the one primary purpose of 2 Corinthians as preparation for Paul's third visit following a disastrous second visit. Through a number of rhetorical shifts and digressions Paul skillfully prepares for the upcoming visit by weaving together an accounting to the Corinthian believers of his recent travels, of his deep concern over the relationship between him and them, and for their ongoing spiritual welfare; he shares very candid views of the ministry to which he is called; an emphasis on

[4] David A. deSilva, "Meeting the Exigency of a Complex Rhetorical Situation: Paul's Strategy in 2 Corinthians 1 through 7," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 34(1996): 5.

[5] Betz, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, 1150.

reconciliation (both in a vertical dimension with God and in a horizontal dimension between them and Paul); an opportunity to demonstrate their change of heart toward Paul through completing the offering for the Christians in Jerusalem; and finally a strong warning to any who would continue to resist God by resisting Paul and his ministry.

Partition theorists interpret 2 Corinthians as an edited collection of letters which traces a conflict to its resolution, based largely upon a presupposition that chapters 10–13 would ruin the reconciliation that seems apparent in the first nine chapters. Their understanding of chapters 10–13 in this way leads them to conclude that Paul is almost out of control as he aims the harsh statements in these chapters at the Corinthian Christians.[6] Compositional unity theorists, however, are willing to tolerate the uncomfortable appearance of these verses as Paul concludes this letter (except for a warm benediction) with what sounds to our cultural sensibilities like an ill-timed, out of order, and ultimately counter-productive interruption. They hold that this section is aimed at the Corinthian Christians only to alert and alarm them to the fact that there are still those amongst them who are unrepentant and who continue to stir up trouble. He makes it quite clear as he speaks to the Christians in Corinth in the second person and refers to the opponents and their allegations in the third person (e.g., 10:2 – "some people [τινας] who reckon that we are living according to the flesh;" 10:10 – "'For his letters,' it is said [φησίν], 'are heavy and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech is loathsome;'" and 10:11 – "Let such a person consider [τοῦτο λογιζέσθω ὁ τοιοῦτος] that the things we are in word when we are absent, we are in action when present."). He is clearly not aiming his anger and threats at the

[6] For example, Calvin J. Roetzel states that Paul wrote chapters 10–13 "from a safe distance . . . bitterly defending his gospel, honesty, apostolic integrity, *modus operandi*, and sincerity;" and "In a public confrontation with these partisans [in Corinth] Paul was humiliated (11:6–7); he felt the sting of their sharp criticism of his weak physical presence, his inept speech (10:10; 11:6; 12:7), and his cowardice (10:1). Aware that he was losing the church's loyalty, he retreated in a huff–sad, demoralized, and angry." *2 Corinthians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007)], 94 and 96.

church, but at those who are undermining it; and it is not self-serving, out-of-control anger, but righteous indignation on behalf of God.

That Paul could have written a series of letters which were collected and edited so as to appear to be a single letter, as proposed by partition theorists, seems logical enough. However logic should also apply to the way they were edited. First, why would someone edit the Apostle's writings at all? No one ancient or contemporary suggests that Paul's letters needed to be combined for some reason. There is a First Corinthians recognized by the church. There was apparently no effort to combine First Corinthians with Second Corinthians to avoid having more than one letter. Why would the church try to obfuscate the existence of multiple letters from Paul? Second, why do partition theorists not cite anyone prior to the 18th century who even suggests that 2 Corinthians is comprised of several Pauline letters? If redaction occurred during the extended time when 1 Corinthians had already appeared but before 2 Corinthians made its appearance, why don't any ancient commentators make mention of this? Surely it was not a secret that people took to their graves! Third, why would an editor edit Paul's writings in such a haphazard order? Bornkamm makes an effort to explain, but the academic silence in response suggests that it is not an effort worthy of support by those of like mind. If a redactor would have taken care to edit out the endings and greetings of the several letters of this "anthology," one would assume that that same redactor would also have placed them in some kind of a discernible order, even if not chronological.

Fourth, if an editor is responsible for the present mélange of letters and fragments of letters, then how can we say we are hearing the voice of the Apostle Paul and not what his editors say he said? It is really inaccurate and misleading for scholars to call 2 Corinthians "authentic" or "genuinely" Pauline if his letters have been placed into a different context than that in which he intended them to be heard. The words in the letters may be the Apostle's, but their intended meaning has become that of the editor.[7]

Fifth, even if someone edited Paul's letters to produce a composite 2 Corinthians, it was still recognized as a compositional unit and should continue to be read and interpreted as such. Frank Matera points out:

> When all is said and done, it is probably impossible to present a conclusive argument that will convince everyone of a particular partition theory or of the literary integrity of 2 Corinthians. But even if one grants that 2 Corinthians is a composite letter, it is still necessary to deal with the fact that someone brought the supposed fragments of this letter together, thereby giving 2 Corinthians its canonical form and viewing it as a literary unity.[8]

Finally, it appears that much of what has been asserted in academic circles has been accepted rather uncritically. Many of the sources used in this thesis simply presume the truth of the composite nature of 2 Corinthians, simply citing those who have made the assertions. It is satisfying to note that many contemporary scholars are calling the presumptions and accuracy of partition theories into question. Indeed, in view of the 17 centuries of precedent supporting the compositional unity of 2 Corinthians, those who assert that 2 Corinthians is a collection of letters and letter fragments need to assume a more significant share of the burden of proof. As Keener writes:

> Arguments for any work's composite character must bear the burden of proof. . . .In general, a straightforward reading of a work as a unity is more historically probable than any particular competing hypothesis; this does not necessarily make it highly probable, but simply more probable than specific hypothetical reconstructions, any one of which individually is less probable than the straightforward reading.

[7] Personal conversation with Dr. Jeffrey Oschwald.

[8] Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 32.

Final Summation

> Although rhetorical criticism can cast light on the unity of a letter, as with 2 Corinthians, it does not seem to be adequate to establish or disprove authenticity of a letter as a whole, . . . [9]

For about 1700 years, the church interpreted 2 Corinthians as a compositional unity. However, in response to the challenge of partition theories, the traditional view needed to be reexamined. A number of compelling responses which defend the traditional view, or at least recognize that a reasonable case can be made for the traditional view, have recently appeared. Among them is the recognition of the apparent presence of Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions.

This thesis concludes that, in spite of varying philosophical presuppositions, which may lead various interpreters to construe the available textual and historical evidence to support either multiple- or single-letter interpretations, "*the Apostle Paul's use of ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions supports the compositional (i.e. literary) integrity 2 Corinthians.*" It seems clear that Paul was aware of, and probably skilled in, rhetoric – both at the micro- and macro-levels – perhaps more at writing speeches (in the form of letters) than in delivering them, and then, using them more as substitutes for personal appearances. If, as this thesis asserts, Paul used macro-rhetoric in 2 Corinthians, it seems that it is only proper to interpret it as such in order to understand his intentions in the letter and to understand how his first "readers" heard and interpreted it, including its compositional unity.

[9] Kennedy, 156.

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