"YOU YOURSELVES ARE OUR LETTER": A FEMINIST AND DECOLONIZING

APPROACH TO 2 CORINTHIANS

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ABSTRACT

"You Yourselves Are Our Letter":

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Ph.D. Dissertation by

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This dissertation, "You Yourselves Are Our Letter": A Feminist and

Decolonizing Approach to 2 Corinthians, argues that a feminist decolonizing approach to

2 Corinthians enables readings that are ethically and historically viable. This work

assumes that 2 Corinthians reflects diversity and debate between Paul and this early

community of Christ over questions of how best and who best to lead. I examine how

questions of community identity and leadership are situated within broader discourses of

power in the Roman imperial and patriarchal contexts of the first-century Mediterranean.

My approach to this text envisions the marginalized in Corinth as empowered by a

message of the upheaval of contemporary power structures and thus, as actively

participating in community debates. I explore the ways in which Paul's rhetoric is

dependent on various gendered, classed, and imperial symbol systems. By assuming the

dialogical presence of strong and diverse wo/men leaders in the community, I argue that

it is possible to develop counter-readings to ones that assume Paul's singular authority.

This dissertation will be the first monograph-length feminist decolonizing

interpretation in the scholarship on Second Corinthians. It also contributes to

conversations about the formation of early Christian identity by suggesting that various

aspects of identity performance can shift in ways that are dependent on complex contexts and relationships. When Paul is moved out of the center of scholarly inquiries, questions from and about ancient and modern communities come to the fore. In the first two chapters, I situate my decentering project within the history of New Testament scholarship on this text and introduce the feminist decentering and decolonizing method I will use. The next three chapters focus on key passages within 2 Corinthians where this approach proves particularly productive. While the majority of scholarship on 2 Corinthians has represented the identities of the various figures in the letter, including Paul, as if identity is a fixed category, this dissertation assumes that identity is constructed, multiplicative, and malleable along shifting gender, ethnic, imperial, and class spectra. From a position within feminist decolonizing New Testament studies, this project shows how the letters of Paul are sites of debate and diversity.

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INTRODUCTION

WRITINGS ON THE LETTER

"You are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all,"

Paul exclaims to the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 3:2.[1] Paul's letters acquaint readers with the

Corinthians; however, interpreters often read 2 Corinthians and other Pauline letters with

an interest in Paul's identity, his beliefs, and his practices. If they happen to ask questions

about the community or about the other apostles in Corinth, interpreters frequently

assume Paul's perspective and authority in their conclusions. Feminist and decolonizing

work has identified and challenged these assumptions in Pauline scholarship. In a recent

joint analysis, Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre and Laura Nasrallah reasserted the feminist

argument that scholarship on Pauline literature needs to shift the focus away from the

character and thought of Paul and onto the communities of the letters in order to

understand ancient and modern communities as sites of debate, perspectival differences,

and productive collaborations.[2] Taking up this charge, this dissertation argues that

approaching Pauline literature with a feminist decolonizing critical rhetorical method,

one that decenters Paul and privileges the community, enables readings that are both

ethically responsible and historically plausible.[3] Focusing on the letter of 2 Corinthians,

my analysis also challenges static notions of subjectivity and relationships in the letter

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[1] "ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ὑμεῖς ἐστε, ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν, γινωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγινωσκομένη ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων." All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

[2] Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre and Laura Salah Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul: Toward a Feminist and Decolonizing Approach to the Letters of Paul," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 161–74.

[3] I will define the terms "feminist" and "decolonizing" and distinguish them from their closest neighbors in the second chapter.

and in the history of scholarship to analyze the way that identity constructions participate

in complex and interacting forces of empire, gender, ethnicity, class, and slave/free

status. By occupying the slips and shifts in these interactions, it is possible to envision

historic potentialities of the community members speaking back to Paul and to each

other, even in writings by Paul. In this introductory chapter, I initially identify the

problem of othering and identification in Paul's writings and in the scholarship.[4] Then, I

describe how my dissertation seeks to address these problems by using a feminist

decolonizing and decentering approach. I conclude this introduction by outlining the

dissertation's main contributions and summarizing the chapters.

<u>The Problem of Othering</u>

In 2 Corinthians, Paul uses passionate polemics to distinguish himself from

others. I am not the first scholar to wonder about the events in the community that might

have incited this rhetoric. However, in reading these polemics, many scholars leave

unquestioned Paul's constructions of the community or the rival apostles. Their focus on

Paul or on trying to determine the order of various fragments of the text often does not

leave time for active critiques of these constructions.

Eking out space for identity often involves taking a stance against another. In

other words, "the self is projected in the first place in order to answer the glance of the

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[4]   Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies*
      (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the
      Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Fortress Press, 2007); Cynthia Briggs
      Kittredge, "Rethinking Authorship in the Letters of Paul," in *Walk in the Ways of
      Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, ed. Shelly Matthews,
      Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre (Harrisburg: Trinity Press
      International, 2003).

other."[5] Identity formation is a political act. The polemics Paul employs participate in what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza terms a *discourse of othering*, or the multifaceted tendency to either vilify or idealize difference as otherness for the sake of establishing identity.[6] Such a tendency often involves rhetoric of identification in which there is an occlusion of difference as disparate things are brought into a unity.[7] This politics of othering saturates New Testament texts. In the first-century Mediterranean context, a group's ability to define itself in relation to others was often a matter of life or death. As the Roman Empire expanded due to the growing number of conquered peoples and territories, different groups were forced to live together in unity. In the Jewish diaspora of the Roman Empire of the 50s (the context for the Corinthian correspondence), the borders that might distinguish one group from another and indicate identity could be both porous and fixed.[8] Moments of interaction required different strategies for self-definition or passing as another.

As groups often identified themselves in contrast to others, they regularly constructed and employed dualistic thinking and systems. Schüssler Fiorenza roots this pattern in the development of the political *ekklēsia*, which promised democracy to all, but practiced governance by some, denying political inclusion to non-propertied women, slaves, and foreigners.[9] The ideological justification for these exclusions was, and still is,

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[5]   Monica Fludernik, "Identity/alterity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 261.
[6]   Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 180.
[7]   Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 85.
[8]   Denise Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
[9]   Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 72.

expressed in binaries set up between men and women, adults and children, freeborn and slaves, etc.[10] These dualistic relationships are asymmetrical and unequal, as one side in this set is always labeled inferior.[11] Setting the standard for such a system in antiquity was the Roman *paterfamilias*, who was free, owned land, and was the head of the household, over his wife, children, and slaves. The *paterfamilias* became the normative, universal subject. Appeals were made to nature, fate, and the gods as to why he was in power and why these differences existed between this subject and others. Dualistic discourse covers up the levels of differentiation, and differentiated oppression, by collapsing such differences into a unity.[12]

This discourse of othering is employed throughout Paul's letters, including 2 Corinthians, with gender playing a significant role. Throughout the letter, Paul constructs himself as the father of the community (11:2) and characterizes the community as an errant daughter (11:3), and as his children (6:13). As he does so, he appeals to natural lines of descent and to God to justify the subordination of women to men, community to apostle.[13] Similarly, he presents himself as a traveling and threatening military leader (10:4–6) to the indigenous Corinthians and their lands (10:12–18). This displays the assumption that those with military weaponry should have power over other lands and peoples. These relationships are concretized and theologized as he claims divine

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[10] Ibid., 84. See Ephesians 5:21–6:9 and Colossians 3:18–4:1 for additional examples of these binary relationships in the New Testament.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 1, fn1. Schussler Fiorenza coins the term "kyriarchy" from the Greek κύριος, to refer to "domination by the emperor, lord, slave-master, father, husband, elite propertied colonizing male." She also considers this term synonymous with empire. I will employ this term throughout the dissertation, and will discuss it in more detail in the second chapter.

[13] Shelly Matthews, "2 Corinthians," in *Searching the Scriptures*, vol. 2 (London: SCM Press, 1995), 196–217.

authority, and establishes asymmetrical relationships of imitation to represent the ideal relationship with God. His use of tactics of identification and othering help him negotiate his role in the Corinthian *ekklēsia*.

The rhetoric of identification and othering is also at work in much of the critical scholarship on Paul's letters. Schüssler Fiorenza has gone so far as to claim that "this drive to coherence, unity, and identity is the motivating methodological and ideological force in Pauline studies."[14] Scholars go to great lengths, often breaking apart and rearranging the texts, to preserve their version of Paul's theology. The unsavory parts are either moved around to appear in a better light or thrown out as non-Pauline interpolations. In 2 Corinthians, this can be seen in the immense amount of discussion over letter fragments, their order, or reasons for their unity. For example, interpreters debate whether 2 Cor. 10–13 should follow 2 Cor. 9 or whether it was written between 1 Corinthians and 2 Cor. 1–9. The positivistic ethos of the politics of othering can be seen in the fact-finding and the collection of data about the other—other times, other peoples, other places—to draw conclusions. In 2 Corinthians scholarship, this often takes the form of trying to root out and identify any opponents of Paul. As Schüssler Fiorenza points out, "The construction of 'opponents' sees them in negative terms as working over and against the authority of Paul and the integrity of the gospel."[15] The questions asked by these scholars—Whom is Paul opposing? What beliefs and practices did they espouse? Where did they come from?—and the answers they propose—Jews, "Gnostics," Hellenistic Jewish Christians, divine men, etc.—assume that the other can be identified,

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[14] Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 85. She sees it "expressed in the positivistic ethos of 'scientific' exegesis as well as in the essentializing tendencies of Pauline the*logy."

[15] Ibid., 104.

differentiated, and segregated. It also assumes that others are threatening opponents to Paul and his power.

Furthermore, many scholars tacitly deny the rhetoricity of the letters of Paul when they see the texts as windows onto the past or as representative of Christian orthodoxy.[16] The 'linguistic turn' in biblical studies discourages the practice of mining ancient texts for historical data, since biblical texts, like all other texts, are constructions of reality for particular situations and agendas. The basic problem for historians after the linguistic turn is the relationship between text and "reality." As Johnson-Debaufre argues, "Whatever we say we know about the past is always a narration or a text of the past and not the past itself."[17] The linguistic turn challenges the notion that biblical scholars or historians can recover the 'real' histories of wo/men from rhetorical texts written about these wo/men. When Pauline scholars do not take this linguistic turn seriously and view the text as a window on the past, they reinscribe kyriarchal relationships of the text. As Schüssler Fiorenza articulates: "By mystifying and occluding the rhetoricity of Pauline language and text, the defense of Paul is able to privilege the 'masculine' hegemonic voice inscribed in Pauline texts, rather than to particularize and relativize this voice by reconstructing a varied assembly of voices and arguments."[18] Considering the rhetoric of the text challenges the universal application of Paul's writings that removes them from their social-rhetorical contexts of debate.

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[16] Ibid., 88.

[17] Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, "Historical Approaches: Which Past? Whose Past?" in *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*, ed. Joseph A. Marchal (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 17.

[18] Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 88–89.

By personally identifying with this apostle figure, scholars are co-implicated in the continuation of this kyriarchal legacy. This tendency "re-inscribes malestream relations of privilege and orthodox relations of exclusion by inviting readerly identification with Paul and his arguments," thereby enabling these scholars to claim Paul's traditional authority for themselves.[19] When they present Paul as having authority for all times and places, scholars perpetuate the notion that female and indigenous subordination and kyriarchy are natural and divinely sanctioned. Often likening Paul to modern missionaries, scholars accept and praise Paul's travel to Corinth and his monetary collection from them and from other communities. On the other hand, interpreters view other leaders in Corinth as ethnically and regionally different and dangerous rivals.[20] This frequently corresponds to an identification of the Corinthians as wild, indigenous, and feminized peoples, who need proper religion and male leadership.

In particular, these relationships are reinscribed when feminist and postcolonial scholars are criticized for identifying with figures other than Paul (such as the

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[19] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 185.

[20] Dieter Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians: A Study of Religious Propaganda in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 315–17; Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 926; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 29. Dieter Georgi writes of how Paul may have seen the targets his polemics as dangerous: "Paul sees his very existence threatened by these intruders, for they attack his function as a missionary, the center of his life." Margaret Thrall distinguishes between Paul's critics in 1 Corinthians, "indigenous members of the Corinthian church," and his critics in 2 Corinthians, "Jewish Christians...who had penetrated into the Corinthian congregation." C.K. Barrett characterizes the so-called opponents as "Jews, but Hellenistic Jews, who imitated the style of propaganda used by the inspired figures of the Hellenistic world." Such characterizations demonstrate a politics of othering.

Corinthians), or for situating Paul within a complex context, as one among many.[21]

Landmark feminist studies such as Schüssler Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her*, and

Antoinette Wire's *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, persevere under attacks on their

legitimacy as historical biblical scholarship.[22] In her work on the Corinthian

correspondence, Wire's critical analysis of the text places Corinthian women prophets,

rather than Paul, at the center of interpretation. Wire combines critical theories of

rhetoric, social history, and feminism to make an effective social reconstruction of these

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[21] Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 104; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 20–38. Indeed, feminist and postcolonial scholars have always had to fight for their seats at the biblical scholarship table. Membership data for the 2014 Society of Biblical Literature states that women make up 23.9% and men 76.0% of members. In terms of ethnicity, 4% are of African descent, 5.1% are of Asian descent, 88.9% are of European/Caucasian descent, 1.8% are of Latin descent, 0.1% are of Native American/Alaska Native/First Nation descent and 0.1% are of Native Hawaian/Oceanian descent. There has been extensive growth in the numbers of international members in the SBL, with the most significant difference (+228.1%) in the number of African members in SBL over the last 10 years, from 2004 to 2014. This data was self-reported, and includes responses from only 39.6% of members. *SBL Member Profile November 2014*, Membership Sociodemographic Data (Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/memberProfileReport2014.pdf. For select sociodemographic information from from 1987 and 1999, see *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 20.

Discussions of the history of the field have frequently occluded the grassroots history of feminist and postcolonial biblical scholarship. In her landmark Presidential Address at the 1987 national meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Schüssler Fiorenza asserts: "Feminist biblical scholarship has its roots not in the academy but in the social movements for the emancipation of slaves and of freeborn women," 21. Maps of the field in paradigms of biblical studies have often left out the biblical readings from outside the academy. Schüssler Fiorenza warns against this practice: "Such an eclipse of biblical interpretations is questionable not just in terms of feminist but also in terms of postcolonial emancipatory concerns, for both feminist and postcolonial studies derive their strength not primarily from the academy but from social-political movements for change," 38.

[22] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983); Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction Through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

female prophets.[23] She assumes that Paul, as a good rhetorician, would argue in a way that would measure his audience at every count, using their own language and images to move them in the right direction.[24] Yet, Wire is regularly accused of too much speculation, imagination, and mirror-reading. Ben Witherington, for example, says that one major problem of Wire's analysis is that she does not assume that Paul's assessment of the historical situation is accurate and, instead, sees his assessment as rhetorical.[25] Furthermore, when Wire assumes that the Corinthian women prophets are in opposition to Paul, she is critiqued for mirror-reading, or "assuming that what Paul affirms is the opposite of what his opponents believed," a method that Jerry Sumney denounces in his argument about the use of proper historical-critical methods in 2 Corinthians.[26] More subtly, although Wire has produced one of the only texts on the Corinthian correspondence that might elucidate the female half of the Corinthian audience within the text, her work is consistently left out of malestream studies of 2 Corinthians. When it is included, it is primarily in the form of critiques against her work, which is a continuation of the politics of othering within scholarship on 2 Corinthians. As scholars identify with Paul, any scholarly identification with others in Corinth seems to represent a threat to Paul's authority, and results in the reproduction of defenses of kyriarchy in modern scholarship.

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23   Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 5.
24   Ibid., 3.
25   Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995), 344, fn 44; Witherington's method is based on Jerry L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 85–125.
26   Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 344; See also Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*.

Changing the Focus

This centering on Paul and the attempts to maintain a monolithic view of his identity are disrupted by attention to others in the text. Centering the Corinthians can change the questions of inquiry and challenge the politics of othering in the biblical text and in the scholarship. While Paul constructs the community as an errant daughter who is under the manipulations of false apostles, I wonder how the historical wo/men and slaves of Corinth might have been present, even in the midst of silence or invisibility. How can a text by one author reflect these debates and these peoples? How might interrogating Paul's constructions enable a rethinking of the complexity of the scene in Corinth?

In this dissertation, I argue that a feminist decolonizing approach can be used to decenter Paul and place him in a dynamic context of interactions and identity reasoning with a diverse group of peoples in imperial Corinth. This approach decenters the historical reconstructions that assume a progression toward Christian orthodoxy, where Paul represents Christian tradition and all others represent heretical offshoots. This decentering work is accompanied by the assumption that Christian identity was not monolithic or predetermined, but was something that was and is in constant negotiation and construction over time. In 2 Corinthians, this results in a reading that deconstructs the traditional narratives of Paul as the divinely sanctioned hero fighting for the obedience and love of the feminized, wayward, and vulnerable Corinthians against the villainous and foreign false apostles. Instead, multiple and diverse Corinthians are envisioned to interact with Paul in dynamic ways for various contexts.

I argue that the letter can be seen as a dialogic text that reflects the negotiation of boundaries and identities in controversial debates about community leadership, authority,

and practice. These negotiations are glimpsed through the narratorial choices of the text, where, through Paul's constructions and symbol systems, counter-narratives can be envisioned. Through envisioning the afterlives of the text, it is also possible to imagine how the narratorial choices continue to be read and misread in a variety of ways that inform and shape present readings. I ground this envisioning work in historical and textual parallels that can suggest how wo/men from various subject positions might interact with the text. I think with the diversity of the community in my reinterpretation, pointing out that a slave woman prophet might respond differently than a child, or a wealthy patron, or a traveling woman minister to constructions of Paul as a father of the community, for example.

Many ancient texts, such as 2 Corinthians, do not mention wo/men explicitly.[27] So, the question of what can be said about or for these invisible and silent wo/men looms large over any study that hopes to take the diversity of Paul's audience into account. Several helpful approaches include adopting postcolonial theories to strategize a type of theoretical third space between rhetoric and reality, considering characters in texts as

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[27] Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 7–8, fn21. I am adopting this way of writing "women" with a slash (wo/men) after Schüssler Fiorenza, who describes her strategy as follows:

> In order to lift into consciousness the linguistic violence of so-called generic male-centered language, I write the term "wo/men" with a slash, in order to use the term "wo/men" and not "men" in an inclusive way. I suggest that whenever you read "wo/men," you need to understand it in the generic sense. Wo/man includes man, "s/he" includes "he," and "female" includes "male." Feminist studies of language have elaborated that Western, kyriocentric (that is, master, lord, father, male centered) language systems understand language as both generic and as gender-specific. Wo/men always must think at least twice, if not three times, and adjudicate whether we are meant or not by so-called generic terms, such as "men," "humans," "Americans," or "professors." To use "wo/men" as an inclusive generic term invites male readers to learn how to "think twice" and to experience what it means *not* to be addressed explicitly.

embedded in socio-linguistic frameworks and relationships, or even seeing the representations of women in male-authored or male-centered texts as representing the ways female presence leaves its trace on these male authors or characters.[28] But, feminist scholars like Schüssler Fiorenza and Johnson-DeBaufre assert that it is still necessary to continue "gazing on the invisible," as this work does not go far enough. As Johnson-DeBaufre describes in her work on 1 Thessalonians, for many scholars, "the feminist scholarly recuperation of the wo/men of the past is old news and is often viewed as remedial and theoretically quaint. However, the case of the Thessalonian wo/men suggests that their invisibility is still as much our problem as a problem of the data."[29] Thus, it is important to continue to identify and critique the politics of othering in scholarship and biblical texts, and also to envision and recover alternative stories to Paul's. Schüssler Fiorenza concurs: "Although these traditions are submerged, they are still 'readable' and indicate that the democratic ethos of the *ekklēsia*—the public assembly or congress—was at work in a community living under Roman rule in an urban

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[28] e.g., Andrew Jacobs, "The Lion and the Lamb: Reconsidering Jewish-Christian Relations in Antiquity," in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam Becker (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Elizabeth A. Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn,'" *Church History* 67, no. 1 (March 1, 1998): 1–31; Virginia Burrus, "Is Macrina a Woman? Gregory of Nyssa's Dialogue on the Soul and Resurrection," in *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Graham Ward (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

[29] Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, "'Gazing Upon the Invisible': Archaeology, Historiography, and the Elusive Women of 1 Thessalonians," in *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonike: Studies in Religion and Archaeology*, ed. Laura Salah Nasrallah and Steven J. Friesen (Cambridge: Harvard Theological Studies, Harvard Divinity School: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2010), 92. See also Amy Richlin, *Arguments with Silence: Writing the History of Roman Women* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

colonial center such as Corinth."[30] Feminist biblical scholars must continue to push the

limits of academic discourse to reinvigorate the field.

Contributions and Chapter Summaries

        This dissertation contributes to a number of scholarly conversations. It is situated

in the midst of debates about the future directions of feminist and decolonizing biblical

studies. As the first monograph-length feminist and decolonizing (or postcolonial) study

of 2 Corinthians, I hope that it will open new avenues of inquiry for 2 Corinthians

scholarship. Particularly, I hope that it will inspire additional feminist and decolonizing

work with this text, in the same way 1 Corinthians and other Pauline texts have benefitted

from feminist and decolonizing analyses. In addition to contributing to these

conversations, this project also adds to narrative work on Pauline texts. Rather than

placing Paul as a thinker or character within a metanarrative of salvation history, this

approach envisions Paul as narrator and as one among many voices in the production and

narration of the text. Relatedly, this dissertation develops identity studies work in Biblical

studies and Early Christianity by approaching with a constructionist and narrative

approach to identity rather than assuming an essentialist or dispositional approach to

identity.

        These contributions will take shape throughout the dissertation. In the first chapter

I provide a critical analysis of the history of scholarship on 2 Corinthians, while chapter 2

describes my methods and framework. I look at particular texts within 2 Corinthians to

illustrate my arguments. In chapters 3–5, I will analyze three passages within the letter

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[30]   Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 105. She emphasizes the importance of
       this work: "Hand-in-hand with a critical deconstruction of the kyriarchal arguments
       of Paul must go a critical recovery of the *ekklēsia* traditions which are also inscribed
       in the Pauline correspondence and in other early Christian texts."

where these choices reflect identity reasoning in action. These moments display the claiming of identities and the drawing of boundaries. By approaching them with a hermeneutics of suspicion, they can also be used to envision the ways identities and boundaries might have been drawn otherwise.

Chapter 3 focuses on 2 Corinthians 1:1–2:13. Initially focusing on the opening verses of 2 Corinthians, I attend to the rhetoric of suffering and speech that construct Paul in the image of Christ and powerful speaker while constructing the Corinthians as passive and in need of direction regarding speech to God. While at first glance, this may seem like a more or less typical Pauline introduction, investigation of the narratorial choices in the passage demonstrate that it sets the stage for the relationship dynamics of the rest of the letter. At this early point, the letter reflects the imperial context and the kyriarchal discursive strategies that are developed throughout the letter. Paul situates the Corinthians within the Roman province of Achaia. He immediately discusses oppression faced on account of his work. He sets up a framework wherein God is a kyriarchal alternative emperor whose son Jesus has suffered on earth. Paul, like Jesus, also suffers as God's emissary. The Corinthians are presented as voiceless and reliant on Paul's voice to invoke God's comfort and consolation. In understanding this system as one way to draw boundaries in a dialectic relationship with others who might draw them differently, it is possible to envisage alternative theological systems where the Corinthians are actively and diversely present.

Chapter 4 moves to the middle of the letter to focus on 2 Corinthians 5:1–7:4. Here, the rhetoric of bodies and homes serve to construct an ideal of Corinthian Christ followers as passive and obedient to the Lord of the home, which is located elsewhere.

This section of the text focuses on resurrection, but a close look at the narratorial choices suggests that additional boundary lines are being debated in Corinth. In language of domestic life and bodily practices, Paul discusses domestic relationships, his relationship with the community, and relationships with God. This serves to naturalize the kyriarchal system Paul initiates in the first section of the letter, concretizing God's power as kyriarch of the home, Paul's power as God's representative on earth, and the Corinthians' powerlessness as vulnerable wo/men and children. Again it is possible to envision alternatives to this description of theo-domestic boundary lines wherein the Corinthian wo/men and children are not vulnerable in their homes but instead work toward an egalitarian system of domestic life and theology.

Chapter 5 turns to the end of the letter to focus on 2 Corinthians 10–13 to assert the dialogic nature of the text. Here, Paul constructs himself and others in multiple and malleable ways using kyriarchal symbol systems to promote himself as speaker and leader, and challenge other would be prophets and leaders. This section is the rhetorical climax as Paul's narratorial choices come to a head in a full display of identity reasoning. Building on the previous images and symbol systems, Paul constructs his identity and constructs Corinthian identity in dialectic relationship: as he displays power as a militant imperial general in God's empire and a jealous father, the Corinthians are silent lands and an errant, voiceless daughter. Yet, this section also shows the malleability of identity reasoning as Paul also describes himself as a fool and as out of control when speaking about visions. This is in relation to the potential power and wisdom of the visionary experiences of the Corinthians as Paul constructs them as false and misguided. Here

again it is possible to conceptualize differently from Paul's constructions and think instead of the potentially powerful speech of the Corinthians.

The conclusion brings together a vision of a Corinthian *ekklēsia* of wo/men who cross Paul's boundary lines or have drawn boundary lines otherwise. It also reflects on how feminist decolonizing identity reasoning can have important resonances for interpreting other Pauline letters in ways that decenter Paul and focus on the communities. Finally, seeing a multi-vocal text that reflects debate and diversity rather than monolithic authority in the ancient Corinthian *ekklēsia* does not just change a picture of the past. Thus, this conclusion also envisions readers as continuing the struggle for an *ekklēsia* of wo/men who are not voiceless territories upon which boundary lines are drawn but rather see, speak, and preach for themselves. In envisioning alternative pasts, this feminist decolonizing approach will set out a vision for overcoming struggles against modern contexts of globalization and kyriarchal oppression.

This study persists in claiming not only that wo/men are there, shaping the text and present in the historical community, but also that feminist and decolonizing perspectives have been here all along, whether or not they are easily recognized in the history of scholarship. Before theory, before canon, before Christianity itself, wo/men were there. And wo/men and feminist scholarship will continue to be there long past this study as well. Let this analysis be, then, not only a resurrecting of past and partial visions of Corinthian wo/men and of feminist decolonizing biblical criticism, but a vision for the future, as well.

CHAPTER 1

ANALYZING SCHOLARSHIP ON 2 CORINTHIANS

AND PAULINE LITERATURE

In this chapter, via a critical analysis of the history of scholarship on 2

Corinthians, as seen through the lens of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's four paradigms of

biblical studies, I will argue that scholarship largely tends to assume Paul's authority, the

stability of identity, and the central role of a conflict in shaping 2 Corinthians.[1] The

ubiquity of these assumptions in scholarship on 2 Corinthians signals the importance of

the feminist decolonizing approach to this letter that I will elucidate throughout the

remainder of the dissertation.

2 Corinthians is a text written by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians.[2] As an

occasional letter, it discusses issues that are particular to Corinth and Paul's relationships

with various people in Corinth. Two major questions have long occupied scholars of this

text. The first question asks about the nature of a conflict between Paul and the

Corinthians (or, in some cases, individual Corinthians) over Paul's role in the

community, especially as compared to other would-be leaders.[3] Paul's frequent defensive

and animated tone, his use of boasting language, and his comparisons with others stand

out within the Pauline corpus. The second question asks how the text should be

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[1] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 19–55.

[2] "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Timothy the brother, to the *ekklēsia* of God which is in Corinth, with all the holy who are in all Achaea [Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ, καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφός, τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ οὔσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ, σὺν τοῖς ἁγίοις πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ·]" (2 Cor. 1:1).

[3] 2 Corinthians 10:7–18, for example, shows Paul defending his role in the community in comparison to others who might be gaining attention there.

organized. Along with 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians forms the canonical Corinthian

correspondence between Paul and the *ekklēsia* in Corinth. 1 Corinthians is largely

presumed to be one continuous text written toward the beginning of Paul's

correspondence with Corinth shortly after his founding of the *ekklēsia*.[4] In contrast,

scholars have long debated how 2 Corinthians fits with 1 Corinthians in terms of textual

organization, history, and theology.[5] While there are some possible early references to 2

Corinthians in the first and second century writings of Clement of Rome, 1 Tim 2:13-15,

Ignatius, and Polycarp, the first substantial attestation is by Marcion who includes it in

his canon.[6] Yet, scholars have questioned the letter's literary integrity for a number of

reasons that will be explored in this chapter.

Paradigms in 2 Corinthians Scholarship

Even though these two foci direct much of the scholarly inquiry on this text, the

particular questions scholars ask and the ways in which they propose answers indicate the

paradigm of biblical studies within which they operate. Paradigms of biblical studies map

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[4] Many scholars assume that an additional letter from Paul to Corinth precedes 1
Corinthians, based on Paul's comments in 1 Cor. 5:9: "I have written you in my
letter…(Ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ)" and in 1 Cor. 5:11: "But now I am writing
you…(νῦν δὲ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν)." It is also assumed that there has been a letter from the
Corinthians to Paul (1 Cor. 2:9 and 7:1), as well as potential in-person reports (1 Cor.
1:11). It is likely that multiple letters existed and other instances of contact occurred.

[5] David Edward Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia:
Westminster Press, 1987), 208–10.

[6] Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the
Corinthians*, 2–3, 44–45. Thrall cites the following ancient works for their possible
references to 2 Corinthians. *1 Clement* 5:6 potentially references 2 Cor 11:23–33. 1
Tim 2:13–15 potentially references 11:1–3. Ignatius' *Letter to the Philadelphians* 6.3
may pick up on the themes of 2 Corinthians 1:12; 11:9; or 12:14–16. Polyarp's *Letter
to the Philippians* 2:2 may echo 2 Cor. 4:14, while 6:2 might reference 2 Cor 5:10.
Marcion's inclusion of 2 Corinthians is attested by Tertullian, especially where
Tertullian makes polemical use of 2 Cor 3.6–18 and 4:1–7 in *Adv. Marc.* V xi; PL 2
cols. 498–500, and of 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 in *Adv. Marc.* V xii; PL 2 cols. 501–2.

the disciplinary field.[7] According to Schüssler Fiorenza, "a paradigm articulates a common ethos and constitutes a community of scholars formed by its institutions and systems of knowledge."[8] In her analysis, a paradigm not only consists of the methods scholars use, but also the theoretical framework they bring to their work. Rather than engaging in the continued debate on the two questions that have predominated in 2 Corinthians scholarship, I will analyze the history of scholarship according to Schüssler Fiorenza's outlining of the doctrinal-fundamentalist, the scientific positivist, the postmodern cultural, and the rhetorical-emancipatory paradigms. The following review of these paradigms will establish a foundation for my analysis.

Doctrinal-fundamentalist methods and frameworks form the first paradigm of biblical studies. This paradigm is characterized by the assumption that the Bible, and in this case, Paul's letter to Corinth, is the "word of God" for everyone. The goal is to establish the one true Christian divinely ordained meaning of the text. In this paradigm, identity is coherent and often, monolithic: Paul is viewed through his apostolic subjectivity, while the Corinthians and others are defined by Paul's representations of them. In much of this scholarship, the Corinthians and others who disagree are wrong and heretical. There are reasons for perpetuating this politics of othering: "By identifying 'the

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[7] These paradigms consider the present landscape of biblical studies. Two major presentations of paradigms have gained popularity in the last 30 years: one by Fernando Segovia and the other by Schüssler Fiorenza. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 17–55; Fernando F. Segovia, "Introduction: And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues: Competing Modes of Discourse in Contemporary Biblical Criticism," in *Reading from This Place*, ed. Mary Ann Tolbert and Fernando F. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). Segovia's paradigms are largely restricted to a discussion of critical methods, which assume a location in the academy and can elide biblical studies work beyond the academy. He assesses four of these paradigms as follows: historical, literary, cultural criticism, and cultural studies.

[8] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 38.

enemy' and by scapegoating the deviant 'others,' they seek both to alleviate people's

helplessness in a world that seems to be coming to an end and to promise salvation and

success to those who have a claim to righteousness."[9] In terms of the tension and conflict

noted in the letter of 2 Corinthians, the assumption from this paradigm is that this conflict

is due to Corinthian heretical tendencies which are evident in both practices (i.e. domestic

practices, prophesying) as well as theological beliefs (i.e. kyriarchal v. egalitarian or

other models of theology).[10]

     The second paradigm is the "scientific" positivist paradigm. This paradigm, like

the first, also attempts to address world fears with certitude, but it does so by way of

presenting its interpretations as based on objective science. Here again there is the

assumption that there is one true single meaning of the text and that there is one version

of history as it really happened, which produces claims of universality (i.e. the text means

one thing throughout time to all people). In 2 Corinthians scholarship, this framework has

often featured "scientistic" methods that claim scientific objectivity to gather the data for

identifying the text, the Corinthians, Paul's opponents, Paul himself, and determining the

historical trajectory. Again, Paul and others in the text are coherent subjects, where Paul's

representations form the basis for identifying himself and others in the text. Scholars

identify the various sources and fragments of the text by tracing the tone, the ideas, etc.,

to determine the correct order of the letter fragments. This work is often features a drive

toward unity in which scholars dissect and reconstruct the text to preserve their version of

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[9] Ibid., 40.

[10] People from this paradigm would be unlikely to worry much about the question of the text's organization, as the text is all thought to be the inspired word of God and the inspired tradition has organized it according to God's will.

Paul's theology.[11] By discovering the original order of the text, scholars assume they can interpret Paul's meaning and the history of the community.

The third paradigm is the Postmodern Cultural paradigm. This framework challenges the objectivity posited by historical-criticism and rather, assumes that there are multiple possible meanings of the text and that it is impossible to identify one universal meaning. This framework is characterized by the linguistic turn in scholarship as mentioned in the preceding section. This paradigm "does not understand historical sources as data and evidence but sees them as perspectival discourses constructing a range of symbolic universes."[12] In better elucidating symbolic universes, scholars often consult a wide range of methods including "critical theory, semiotics, reader response criticism, social world studies, and poststructuralist literary analyses."[13] In 2 Corinthians scholarship, scholars often combine this framework with methods from the second paradigm. Thus, scholars interpret Paul's letter using anthropological data or social theory to make claims about the social world—styles of itinerant ministry, for example— and situate Paul and Paul's letter within those worlds. Scholars from this framework also assume that the text may have multiple entry points, gaps, and interpretations. Theoretically, this paradigm could see subjectivity as a construction of the text, where Paul and others in the text do not exist outside of the world of the text. However, more frequently, the drive toward coherence means that scholars ground a coherent picture of Paul and others in the text in the social theories they employ.

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[11]   Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 86.
[12]   Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 43.
[13]   Ibid.

Finally, the fourth paradigm is the rhetorical-emancipatory paradigm. Where the first two paradigms assume one true meaning for the text and the third paradigm assumes many multiple meanings, the fourth paradigm assumes that there are multiple meanings, but that not all of them are ethically or politically neutral. By centering modern reading communities, scholarship privileges interpretations that are emancipatory and liberating in those communities. Its motivation is political and ethical, and it "understands biblical texts as rhetorical discourses that must be investigated as to their persuasive power and argumentative functions in particular historical and cultural situations."[14] This framework often accompanies feminist and decolonizing approaches. This paradigm often sees subjectivity as distinct from the rhetoric of the text and thus, in interpretations of Paul's letters, seeks to place Paul in a complex context of other characters and individuals who may also have complex identities beyond their rhetorical constructions.[15] Biblical scholarship from this paradigm also recognizes that texts have afterlives in their histories of interpretation that can be harmful. Thus, this scholarship both focuses on critiquing the dehumanizing rhetoric of the text and its legacies in scholarship, as well as on envisioning alternative pasts, presents, and futures that the text or previous scholarship has ignored.

These four paradigms are not mutually exclusive as scholars may use various methods and frameworks throughout their work. It is for this reason that I will now focus on methods as I discuss this history of scholarship. However, the fact that various theoretical frameworks are at play should also be at the forefront of the discussion. In

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[14] Ibid., 44.

[15] Ibid. This paradigm "deploys rhetorical analysis and the rhetoric of inquiry in order to assess the emancipatory implications and impact of biblical texts and contemporary interpretations of the Bible."

particular, it is important to note that much of the scholarship on 2 Corinthians claims one

true meaning for the text, either from a doctrinal-fundamentalist perspective or a

"scientific" positivist paradigm. In other words, it participates in the drive toward

coherence, unity, and identity that Schüssler Fiorenza decries. The result is that for much

of the scholarship, Paul represents the best source of knowledge – either in terms of his

relating God's word or his position as historical figure. These scholars tend to assume

that if we can just get back to what Paul meant, then we can discover either divine

inspiration or the historical truth, or both. This leads to a focus on Paul, his situation, and

his thought world, and to the othering of the Corinthians and other leaders in the

community. The following analysis will identify and critique these tendencies, while also

learning from and expanding on this scholarship.

From Doctrine to Discipline

In this section, I will explore the historical-critical questions and methods in

scholarship on 2 Corinthians. The development of biblical studies into an academic

discipline saw a resulting shift in the opinion of the significance of the conflict in 2

Corinthians from marginal to central. Scholars frequently focus on a conflict between

Paul and the Corinthians over the extent to which the Corinthians are willing to listen to

Paul and his presentation of the gospel.[16] Passages that are central to this conflict include

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[16] I have been significantly aided by Georgi's review of the premodern commentaries on
      2 Corinthians. See Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 1. Before
      the turn toward scientific methods and the invention of the academic discipline of
      biblical studies, the conflict between Paul and his opponents was not considered a
      central focus of the letter. In fact, in early doctrinal-fundamental biblical
      interpretation, these disputes were of marginal importance. According to John
      Chrysostom, Paul writes because he is late to visit them. Since he is writing anyway,
      he also follows up on a few of the issues from his earlier letter including the casting
      out the man who had committed fornication (1 Cor. 5), the collection (2 Cor. 8–9),

2 Cor. 10:10 where Paul reports that others regard his speech as contemptible and 2 Cor.

2:17 where Paul contrasts himself to peddlers of God's word. Consequently, the

emergence of historical-critical methods inspired a mission for the facts on Paul's

opponents and the targets of his polemics in 2 Corinthians.[17] The goal is to acquire and

analyze data on the Corinthians and other groups mentioned in the letter to establish the

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and the reception of Titus. Chrysostom writes, "For it was right that, as when they were in fault he rebuked them, so upon their amendment he should approve and commend them. On which account the Epistle is not very severe throughout, but only in a few parts toward the end." Thus, for Chrysostom this is mostly a letter of commendation, with a few "severe" parts at the end, mainly directed at "Jews who thought highly of themselves." John Chrysostom, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philipp Schaff, vol. 12, 1 (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1956), 1. See Homily 1 on the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.

Similarly, John Calvin sees Paul's purpose in writing the letter to be equal parts on account of his lateness, and also because the first letter, "was not productive of so much benefit as it ought to have been; and farther, that some wicked persons, despising Paul's authority, persisted in their obstinacy." John Calvin, Calvin Translation Society, and Christian Classics Ethereal Library, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 199. As Georgi writes, "In the eyes of these commentators, the polemics in 2 Cor. were merely an appendix to those found in 1 Cor.," 1. At most, a conflict over church practices and theology in portions of 2 Corinthians was seen as an inevitable, and relatively insignificant, part of the development of Christianity. In line with the first paradigm of biblical studies, these early works assume that as communities moved toward an inevitable Christian orthodoxy, there were bound to be different opinions, which had to be stamped out. Rather than the full-scale heresy that they saw in Paul's Letter to the Galatians, however, these early interpreters saw the Corinthians as proud, contemptuous, and reckless. See Georgi's description of Calvin's distinction between Paul's approach to heresy in Galatians versus his approach to inappropriate pride in 2 Corinthians. In Georgi's words, the polemics in 2 Corinthians were, to these early interpreters, evidence of a purge "of a minority which was somewhat stubborn and slow of mind," (1).

[17] Seeing this conflict as the central concern of the letter has inspired particular historical-critical questions: e.g., Who is opposing Paul and what was the nature of the conflict? How was Paul's role as the apostle to the gentiles challenged and reasserted? Frequently, scholars have been curious about the theological nature of the conflict: What was Paul's theology? What role did this play in the conflict? Was he challenged and persecuted because of his Christ-like practices or beliefs? How does this conflict affect his mission plans? What were his opponents' beliefs and practices?

objective interpretation of the text. Writing in the mid-19th century, Ferdinand Christian

Baur focused on the polemics in 2 Corinthians as the climax of Paul's disputes with an

opposition movement who disagreed with Paul on theological and policy matters.[18] Not

distinguishing between Paul's interlocutors in 1 and 2 Corinthians, Baur used 1 Cor.

1:11–12 to develop a profile of Paul's opponents in Corinth.[19] He saw two types of early

Christians: "(1) the law-obedient, particularistic Jewish Christians led by Peter

(Judaizers) and (2) the law-free, universalist Gentile Christians led by Paul

(Paulinists)."[20] Furthermore, Georgi explains how "Baur was convinced that the

controversy arose with a visitation of Judaizers to the Pauline community (as was their

custom elsewhere). These intruders rapidly found followers in Corinth."[21] Several

portions of Baur's theory influenced scholarship for many years: 1) the centrality of the

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[18] Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, ed. Klaus Scholder (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1963); Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 2. See also Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

[19] Baur, *Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben*; Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 926.

[20] Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 2; Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976). The assumptions that Jews are characterized as law-abiding and particular, while Paul and his followers represent a new Christianity that is law-free (or spirit-based) and universal have been shown to be incorrect and racist with the scholarly intervention known as the New Perspective on Paul, which was first developed by Krister Stendahl. Among many other things, this New Perspective asserts that Paul is not a Christian, but lives and dies as a Jew. Unfortunately, the legacies of this anti-Judaism in scholarship on 2 Corinthians persisted for many years after Baur. Even characterizing the practices of the Corinthian community as "early Christianity" during the time of Paul's correspondence with them could be seen as problematic. The New Perspective influences what Johnson-DeBaufre points to as a recent shift in the field: "A significant trend in the historical study of the letters of Paul can be broadly characterized as an effort to de-Christianize Paul by re-Judaizing him." Johnson-DeBaufre, "Historical Approaches: Which Past? Whose Past?," 18.

[21] Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 2.

conflict in 2 Corinthians, 2) the role of differing theology and practice in this conflict, and 3) the assertion that the opponents came from outside of Corinth.

However, there were some questions. Scholars asked how the discussion of the *pneuma,* seen as prominent throughout 2 Corinthians, fit into Baur's theory. Additionally, Baur's assumption that Paul's opponents were Judaizers failed to make sense to scholars who assumed that an emphasis on circumcision and the law were major components of Judaizing. Neither of these topics receives much attention in 2 Corinthians as compared to Galatians or Romans. Thus, at the turn of the century, Wilhelm Lütgert argued that Paul's polemics were directed at "Gnostics," who focused on divine spiritual or pneumatic knowledge as salvific.[22] Lütgert asserted that all opposition to Paul in Corinth derived from this one group with a different theology—the "Gnostics."[23]

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[22] Wilhelm Lütgert, *Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth : ein Beitrag zur Charakteristik der Christuspartei* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1908), 41–101; Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 4. Scholars have critiqued the term "Gnosticism" in recent years as a term made up by heresiologists to distinguish between slightly different beliefs and practices in early Christianity in order to denounce them. Walter Bauer's work changed the field by asserting that modern scholars saw the diversity of early Christianity through the lens of an orthodox tradition that denounced as heresy any beliefs which were not represented by later Christian tradition.Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity.* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); Michael Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Karen King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[23] Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 4; Wilhelm Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1907); Lütgert, *Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth*; Richard Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions: Their Basic Ideas and Significance* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1978). In addition to Lütgert, these history of religions scholars asserted that Gnosticism was a movement that developed alongside early Christianity around the same time that Lütgert began making similar assertions about the situation in Corinth.

Kirsopp Lake questioned the assumption of a monolithic anti-Pauline oppositional front in Corinth and argued that Paul's opponents were different in 1 and 2 Corinthians.[24] Scholarship for many years afterward assumed that Paul directs his remarks at pneumatics or "Gnostics" in 1 Corinthians, while in 2 Corinthians Paul is opposing Judaizers, who may have had "Gnostic" tendencies. Adding to this theory, Hans Windisch argued that, while the remarks in 1 Corinthians are directed at members of the Corinthian community, by the time of the writing of 2 Corinthians, Jewish traveling preachers had taken over the opposition.[25] The debates over whether and to what extent the opponents in 2 Corinthians were "Gnostics" or Judaizers extend into the mid 20th century.[26] The emphasis on the theological differences of the opponents continues in a

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[24] Kirsopp Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul.* (London: Rivingtons, 1911); Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 6.

[25] Hans Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924); Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 6.

[26] Rudolf Bultmann, *Exegetische Probleme des Zweiten Korintherbriefes : zu 2. Kor. 5, 1–5; 5, 11–6, 10; 10–13; 12, 21* (Uppsala: Wretmans, 1947); Rudolf Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, ed. Erich Dinkler, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985). Rudolf Bultmann's commentary is an edited collection of his course lectures notes from the 1950s and 1960s. In spite of their late publication, many of Bultmann's thoughts on the letter were known through a few published articles and his students' lecture notes. Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth : An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1971). Cf. Ernst Käsemann, *Die Legitimität des Apostels : eine Untersuchung zu II Korinther 10-13* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956). Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*; Werner Georg Kuemmel, Paul Feine, and Johannes M Behm, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. Andrew Jacob Mattill, 14th ed. (London: SCM Press, 1966). Bultmann and Walter Schmithals followed the arguments of Lütgert, Richard Reitzenstein, and Wilhelm Bousset, regarding a "Gnostic" movement in Corinth. Ernst Käsemann on the other hand, asserted that the opponents in 2 Corinthians were not "Gnostics" and emphasized (following Baur and Windisch) what he saw as their Jewish or even Palestinian origins and focus on tradition. See Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 7. Rather than attempting to identify Paul's opponents or more about the Corinthians, some scholars focus on Paul himself as key to interpreting the tension in 2 Corinthians. For example, Bultmann

slightly new direction with Georgi's work. While the opponents of 2 Corinthians were outsiders who "believed in Jesus Christ" Georgi asserts that they "were shaped by Hellenistic-Jewish Apologetics," who were distinct from the Corinthian Gnostics of 1 Corinthians.[27] Thus, Georgi offers a third theological possibility regarding the targets of Paul's polemics.[28] He also asserts that it was their theological beliefs that led to their

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asserts that an exegesis must focus on equating Paul to the "word of proclamation" since the apostolic office is the office of proclamation and "the sole concern is the question of the relation between the community and the apostle," (16–17). This is based on how he sees Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 13:3 that Christ is speaking in him as shaping the relationship between the apostle and the community and as a defense against the opponents. While Paul is not a man, but the very "word of proclamation," the community, in contrast, is only important in terms of its relation to Paul:

> For an introduction to 2 Corinthians it is not necessary to sketch a picture of Corinth and the Christian community there—in contrast to 1 Corinthians, in which concrete questions of community life are discussed. The conditions of the Hellenistic metropolis of Corinth with its social, moral, and religious problems do not play a role, nor is there any echo of the actual questions which agitate the community.

The apostle's relationship to the community is jeopardized by people who opposed Paul's theological understanding of his apostolic office.

[27] Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 315–17. For Georgi, theological differences supplied both the reason for the conflict and the reason for the additional letter. He focuses on 2 Cor. 2:14–7:4 and 2 Cor 10–13 to assert that 2 Corinthians was written because of the influence of intruders who had theological beliefs that differed from those held by Paul and the Corinthians. Georgi explains: "Both Hellenistic-Jewish Apologetics and Jewish speculative mysticism, which later turned into Gnosticism, were parts of or at least indebted to the Jewish wisdom movement. Corinthian Gnosticism either originated in Jewish Gnosticism or was connected with it through some pagan links." He identifies the 2 Corinthian opponents as Hellenized Jews, whose hybrid theological existence enabled them to build up prestige as they competed against other ministers before arriving in Corinth.

[28] Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 29. Barrett argues that, along with Georgi, this third category is introduced by Käsemann, *Die Legitimität des Apostels*; Gerhard Friedrich, "Die Gegner Des Paulus Im 2 Korintherbrief," in *Abraham Unser Vater*, ed. Otto Betz, Martin Hengel, and Peter Schmidt (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963); Günther Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969). Barrett agrees with Georgi's identification of the false apostles as Hellenistic Jews. His assertion that the "super-apostles" differed from the "false apostles" is based on Käsemann's work.

characterization as super-apostles because they felt empowered through their union with

God as offered in popular mystery religions.[29] Barrett adds an additional factor to this list

by positing that the "false apostles" (2 Cor 11:13) differed from the "super-apostles," (2

Cor 11:5) whom he identifies with the Jerusalem group of James, Peter, and John.[30]

Thus, much of this scholarship focuses on discovering the theological orientation

of Paul's opponents, and often classifies people into groups based on theological

differences, attributing both the letter's purpose and the matter of any conflicts to these

differences. This sometimes leads to the blurring of lines between the first and second

paradigm of biblical studies, when the scholar's own Christian religious beliefs seem to

provide the motivation for his or her conclusions about history. For example, Barrett

identifies the so-called "false apostles" as "Jews who insisted on their Jewishness" but

who "adopted Hellenistic characteristics" as a result of being "in Corinth in an

environment in which Gentiles were exercising a fundamentally Gentile judgment on

apostolic claimants, and applying Hellenistic criteria in order to determine who were and

who were not apostles."[31] As a part of this argument, he must distinguish between the

beliefs of this group, the beliefs of the Corinthians, and those of Paul as representative of

Christian tradition. Arguing from his interpretation of 2 Cor.13 and Galatians, he states:

> This is the issue that lies behind Paul's wrestling with false apostles, and
> his wrestling for the Corinthian church. The Corinthians' failure to

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[29] Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*; Calvin J. Roetzel, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 36.

[30] Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 30; Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 327. This differentiation leads Witherington to ask "Was Paul an isolated maverick in early Christianity whom most of the early *apostoloi* opposed or to whom they gave at best only guarded approval?"

[31] Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 30.

> understand him was a measure of their failure to understand Jesus; Paul
> and Jesus alike they estimated "according to the flesh" [Galatians 5:16].[32]

Like Paul himself, Barrett contrasts Paul's behaviors, which are exemplary of his

apostleship and reflective of his true Christology, with those of the "false apostles,"

whose boasting and aggression are a result of their beliefs in the "other Jesus" (2 Cor.

11:4).[33] Because he views this situation through the lens of Christian tradition and canon

in which Paul is authoritative, he also bolsters Paul as the apostle of true Christianity.[34]

Barrett's agreement and replication of Paul's rhetoric exemplifies the politics of

identification in this scholarship by obscuring the rhetoricity of Paul's writing. This

enables Barrett to claim that the one meaning of the letter is evident in his interpretation.

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[32] Ibid., 48.

[33] Ibid., 49. Barrett lists Paul's behaviors as follows:
> Paul's apparently alternating subservience (ourselves your slaves, 6:5) and
> stubborn insistence upon his rights and status (e.g. 1 Cor. 9:1ff; 2 Cor. 10:11,
> 13:10), his refusal to commend himself which looked so much like self-
> commendation (3:1; 5:12; 10:12; 12:19), his refusal to take gifts from the
> Corinthians when it seemed so natural, and such an appropriate mark of mutual
> affection, that he should do so (11:7-11; 12:13), his playing the fool over visions
> and revelations when he knew very well that he was playing the fool (12:1,11),
> his vision of triumph in the midst of an unsuccessful mission (2:14), his
> superiority to Moses, whom he recognized as the mouthpiece of God (3:13),
> above all, his paradoxical description of his ministry..... all this makes sense only
> when viewed in the light of Christ crucified, who is the Lord.

[34] Ibid., 32–33. Barrett's convictions about the ancient community are exemplified in
this quote: "It would have been natural for Paul simply to give up the ungrateful,
unruly, unloving, unintelligent Corinthians, and leave them to their destiny...But he
was the slave of Christ (Rom 1:1; Phil.1:1); this made him the slave of his people too
(4:5), and from this service there is no remission." These negative characterizations of
Paul's opponents continue with modern scholarship. This timelessness is especially
dangerous given the identification of these opponents with Jews. The fact-finding
mission about Paul's opponents becomes a question of who are Christianity's
opponents, and quickly leads to a broader denigration of other peoples.

The concern that scholarly conclusions are too subjective and not based on sound methodology has been raised at a few points in the history of 2 Corinthians scholarship.[35] One of the more recent historical-critical works to focus on the identity of the opponents assumes that by narrowing down the methodological approach to the question, scholars will be able to reveal the opponents, and beyond: "A sound method will enable us to identify Paul's opponents more securely. This will, of course, help us to understand more clearly the historical context of his letters, and hence to understand those letters themselves, Paul's ministry, and indeed, the history of the early church."[36] Jerry Sumney breaks down methodological issues and questions in the works of several historical-critical scholars who attempt to identify the opponents of 2 Corinthians. The three main concerns are about how to reconstruct early Christianity, how to assess sources other than the letter to identify the opponents, and how to use different types of passages within the letter to identify the opponents.[37] Sumney compares several scholars' methods of

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[35] Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary On Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul*, ed. George W. MacRae (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 26, fn236; Anton Halmel, *Der zweite Korintherbrief des Apostels Paulus* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1904); Johannes Weiss, *Das Urchristentum*, ed. Rudolf Knopf (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917); Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*. In his analysis, Betz argues that Halmel's major complaint was that most scholars focused on chapters 10–13 without taking the rest of the letter into account. Weiss directed the majority of his critiques at the debate concerning partition theories. Sumney's more recent work is focused on historical-critical approaches to the question of the identity of the opponents.

[36] Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 11.

[37] Ibid., 13–14. Sumney's list of questions is as follows:
1. Issues connected with reconstructions of early Christianity
   a) What materials are valid as sources for constructing the history of a movement? The focus here is on the date of evidence relative to the situation being described.
   b) What is the proper function of a reconstruction when identifying opponents in view in a particular letter? This includes whether we can presuppose that Paul faces a single front of opposition in all of the

answering these questions to "the canons of critical historical method" in order to

"develop a coherent method of identifying opponents."[38] Some of the conclusions he

reaches assert, "Reconstructions can be used only after it has been made clear that

opponents are mentioned in the text," and, "The identification of opponents cannot be

based on the assumption that we know the historical situation Paul is addressing better

than Paul himself. We should assume Paul's assessment is accurate unless there are

strong reasons to think otherwise."[39] While Sumney's analysis can identify some of the

assumptions and diversity in scholarly answers to these questions, he considers scholarly

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churches to which he writes letters.

c) What bearing does the possibility that Paul misunderstood his opponents have on the process of identifying those opponents from his letter?

2. Issues that involve the use of sources other than the primary text to identify the opponents,
   a) Should a given Pauline letter be analyzed individually or in conjunction with other Pauline letters?
   b) What are the valid ways to identify parallel passages in the Pauline corpus and in non-Pauline material?
   c) What is the legitimate use of parallels found in the Pauline corpus and in non-Pauline material. [*sic*]

3. Issues that involve assessing types of passages within the primary text when identifying opponents.
   a) Do some kinds of passages yield better information about the opponents than other types? For example, should explicit statements about opponents carry more weight than perceived allusions to them? This issue involves asking whether we should exclude some passages within the primary text when identifying the opponents of that text.
   b) What is the appropriate use of mirror exegesis (the technique by which one attributes characteristics to the opponents which are the opposite of Paul's statements)?

[38] Ibid., 73; Fred Morrow Fling, *Outline of Historical Method* (Lincoln: J. H. Miller, 1899); Geoffrey Barraclough, *History in a Changing World.* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955); David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies; Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977). These are Sumney's guides for historical methods.

[39] Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 85–125; Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 344–345; Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*.

or methodological diversity a problem. This reflects an assumption in line with the second paradigm of biblical studies that underlie this work: methods should be tools for narrowing down meaning and answers rather than as tools for multiplying meanings and interpretations.[40]

In the quest for scientistic certainty in historical methods Sumney's guidelines perpetuate a politics of othering within Corinthian scholarship that discounts feminist and decolonizing work, in particular. For example, Witherington employs Sumney's guidelines for historical-critical work in his socio-rhetorical commentary. He singles out Wire's feminist rhetorical critical approach to 1 Corinthians as problematic based on an "overuse of mirror-reading," discussed in 3b above.[41] The assumption of the accuracy of Paul's assessment is problematic for any scholars who approach with a hermeneutics of suspicion. It also allows interpreters to identify with him and his authority in presenting and defending their interpretations.

As scholars continue to argue about the identities of Paul's opponents, popular theories conclude that they are:

1) Judaizers, similar to the ones Paul faced in Galatia
2) "Gnostics," or pneumatics
3) Hellenistic Jewish Christian divine men or itinerant preachers[42]

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[40] Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 9. Sumney ties his search for the proper method to finding meaning at the beginning of his introduction when he states, "the more we know about Paul's opponents, the more we know about the historical context of his letters, and therefore, about the meaning of those letters."

[41] Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 231–32. Witherington describes Wire's approach as follows: "A.C. Wire conjures up the old image of the chauvinistic, repressive Paul as a foil for arguing for a radical feminist group of mostly well-to-do celibate Corinthian women prophetesses, which Paul is trying to bring back in line by most of his arguments throughout 1 Corinthians." While Witherington says the problem is mirror-reading, his characterization of her critical feminist work is firstly a defense of his version of Paul.

[42] Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*

4) Distinguished from the "super-apostles"
5) Traveling itinerant preachers who come from differing class and
social settings
6) People who have differing expectations regarding friendship and
enmity behaviors.[43]
7) Some combination of several of these groups who have joined
forces: "Intruders made common cause with disaffected members
of the church at Corinth, and reinforced each other's opposition to
Paul."[44]
8) The wrongdoer and/or Gaius[45]

While scholarship continues to produce new theories, it also faces new cynicism: "One

could even ask whether this [identifying the opponents] is really necessary in order to

understand Paul's main concern."[46] Even though this cynicism does not keep interpreters

from the quest, it does suggest the need for alternative interpretive questions.[47] The focus

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(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982). I will consider this theory later in the chapter.

[43] Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 6–7. Lambrecht states that even if social theories can elucidate the opposition, there must be hidden theological differences: "we must ask whether the opposition on the part of the Corinthians and the intruders is not motivated by deeper, more christological grounds."

[44] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Keys to Second Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 82.

[45] Laurence L. Welborn, *An End to Enmity: Paul and the "Wrongdoer" of Second Corinthians* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011); Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 343. Witherington posits that there have been at least fourteen different proposals about Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians. Unfortunately, he does not list them. Following Sumney, he sees this diversity of opinions as problematic and as a direct result of scholars not reflecting on their methods. For additional discussion on this history of scholarship, see Adams and Horrell, *Christianity at Corinth*.

[46] Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 7.

[47] Ibid., 11; Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1. The cynicism does not tend to extend to questioning Paul's authority. Thrall comments on the tendency within scholarship to assume that "the apostle was always in the right and that the Corinthians were always in the wrong," and that this "is hardly fair to the Corinthians." She then asserts that "there is some degree of fault on each side" and encourages readers to try to understand both. However, her next move is to claim that the importance of 2 Corinthians lies "in the portrait of Paul and in the light cast upon his theological thinking." The Corinthians and any others seem to have been forgotten, then, for the majority of the commentary. They turn up again when she treats the topic of "the nature of the opposition Paul was attempting to

on a conflict between two or three opposing parties and the search to define them often

assumes static group identities, which fails to account for diversity within these groups or

changes according to context. [48] Coupled with the trend of scholars identifying with

Paul's authority and replicating his discourse of othering, this focus also frequently

results in the dismissal of diversity within scholarship. This dissertation affirms the value

of multiple perspectives and approaches by envisioning different models of community

interactions through identity reasoning in 2 Corinthians.

Partition and Unity Theories

In the generation of scholars that preceded F.C. Baur, Johann Semler proposed

that 2 Corinthians is composed of several different fragments.[49] This ignited a firestorm

in 2 Corinthians scholarship that continues today in studies from the second paradigm.

Here is a break down of the various partition theories, after over 200 years of this

debate:[50]

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counter" in an essay added to the end of her two-volume commentary. She reserves five paragraphs on the "viewpoint of the Corinthians," on pages 942–43, before closing her essay with a section entitled "Paul's viewpoint." While some of these caveats mark an important shift in recent historical-critical approaches to this letter, a feminist decolonizing approach can make significant contributions to this scholarly conversation. See Johnson-DeBaufre, "Historical Approaches: Which Past? Whose Past?"

[48] Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 104. Schüssler Fiorenza describes these challenges and opportunities: "The construction of 'opponents' sees them in negative terms as working over and against the authority of Paul and the integrity of the gospel, whereas the ekklēsia approach sees Paul as one among many and tries to show that his rhetoric seeks to obfuscate his relative status."

[49] Johann Salomo Semler, *D. Io. Sal. Semleri Paraphrasis in secundum Pavli ad Corinthios epistolam. Cvm notis, et latinarvm translatiovum excerptis.* (Halae Magdebvrgicae: impensis C.H. Hemmerde, 1776); Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 3–36. On the history of scholarship of partition theories, I am relying heavily on Betz's narration.

[50] Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 47–49. This list is significantly based on the one composed by Thrall.

1) 2 Corinthians as one unified letter.[51]
2) 2 Corinthians as two letters: Chapters 10-13 as a separate letter
   a. Chapters 10–13 are earlier than the rest of 2 Corinthians.[52]

(Not unlike the numerous partition theories of 2 Corinthians, there are other versions of this breakdown of scholarship by other scholars.) Thrall has extensive commentary on these various partition theories as well as corresponding proposed chronologies, p. 3-77.

[51] e.g., Albert Klöpper, *Kommentar über das zweite Sendschreiben des Apostel Paulus an die Gemeinde zu Korinth* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1874); A. Hilgenfeld, "Paulus Und Korinth," *Zeitschrift Für Wissenschaftliche Theologie* 31 (1888): 159–206; H.J. Holtzmann, "Das Gegenseitige Verhaltniss Der Beiden Korintherbriefe," *Zeitschrift Für Wissenschaftliche Theologie* 22 (1879): 455–92; James Denney, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians.* (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1894); Georg Heinrici, *Das zweite Sendschreiben des Apostels Paulus an die Korinther* (Berlin: Hertz, 1887); Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*; Kuemmel, Feine, and Behm, *Introduction to the New Testament*; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962); Niels Hyldahl, "Die Frage Nach Der Literarischen Einheit Des Zweiten Korintherbriefes," *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 64, no. 3–4 (1973): 289–306; Frances M. Young and David Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988); Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 333–43. Witherington, a proponent of seeing 2 Corinthians as one letter, points specifically to the works of Betz and Georgi to argue that partition theories often assume "that an abstract reconstruction and rearrangement of a text's various parts should govern the interpretation of the text in regard not only to things like Paul's opponents, but also to the collection," p.343 fn41. Despite using similar rhetorical methods to Betz's, Witherington comes to an alternative set of conclusions. In particular, he argues for the unity of the letter as an example of judicial or benefaction rhetoric, based on comparisons with other ancient texts and rhetorical forms. See Frederick W. Danker, *II Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 18ff. A certain letter of Demosthenes, "which has a dramatic shift in tone with an emotional harangue at the end," is used by Witherington to argue that chapters 10–13 should not be separated from the rest of the letter, pp. 333–38. See Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians*.

[52] e.g., Adolf Hausrath, *Der Vier-Capital-Brief des Paulus and die Korinther.* (Heidelberg: Bastermann, 1870); 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); Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul.*; Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians.* (New York: Scribner, 1915); See Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 12. Adolf Hausrath argued persuasively that "in every case the discussion in 2 Cor 10–13 reflects an earlier stage in the controversy when compared with 2 Cor 1–9, and concluded that chapters 10–13 preceded chapters 1–9." James Kennedy suggested that 2 Corinthians should only refer to what had been known as 2 Corinthians 10–13, and that what had been referred to 2 Corinthians 1–9 should be referred to as 3

b. Chapters 10–13 are later than the rest of 2 Corinthians.[53]

c. 2 letters consisting of 2:14–7:4 with 9–13 and 1:1–2:13 with 7:5–8:24.[54]

3) 2 Corinthians as three or more letters:

a. Chapters 1–8 remain undivided and chapters 10–13 are later; 9.[55]

b. Chapters 1–8 remain undivided and chapters 10–13 are earlier; 9.[56]

c. Chapters 1–8 are divided, and 2:14–7:4 are separate from 10–13; 9.[57]

Corinthians.

[53] e.g., Richard Batey, "Paul's Interaction with the Corinthians," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84, no. 2 (1965): 139–46; Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*; F Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, 1st American ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977); Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984).

[54] e.g., Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*.

[55] e.g., Semler, *D. Io. Sal. Semleri Paraphrasis in secundum Pavli ad Corinthios epistolam. Cvm notis, et latinarvm translatiovum excerptis.*; Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*; Friedrich, "Die Gegner Des Paulus Im 2 Korintherbrief"; Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*.

[56] e.g., Friedrich Gustav Lang, *2 Korinther 5, 1–10 in der neueren Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973); Jean Héring, *The Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Epworth Press, 1967); Christian Hermann Weiße, *Philosophische Dogmatik oder Philosophie des Christenthums* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1855). Christian Weisse suggests that there were actually three fragments that were pieced together by a redactor, and composed in this order: (1) chapters 10–13; (2) chapters 8 and 9; (3) chapters 1–7.

[57] Günther Bornkamm, "The History of the Origin of the So-Called Second Letter to the Corinthians," *New Testament Studies* 8 (1962): 258–64; Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*; Willi Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament: An Approach to Its Problems* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968); Hans-Martin Schenke and Karl Martin Fischer, *Einleitung in die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1978); Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 22. Günther Bornkamm claims that any reconstruction of the events in 2 Corinthians depends on how the interpreter sees the discussions of 1 Corinthians develop. Thus, seeing a need for reconciliation, he claims that a redactor used a letter of reconciliation as a frame into which he arranged the other fragments. He argues for the division and ordering of the letter fragments as follows: 2 Cor. 2:14–7:4 (except an interpolation in 6:14–7:1) consists of an early apology, written after 1 Corinthians; 2 Cor. 10–13 is the intermediate letter or the letter of tears; 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16 is dubbed the framing "letter of reconciliation."[57] Bornkamm also argues that chapter 8 is a recommendation of Titus, and chapter 9 is a portion of a letter addressed to the churches of Achaia regarding the collection. Bornkamm partially attributes the compilation of the letter fragments out of their chronological order to "an early Christian convention that warnings against heretical teachers are placed at the end of a piece of writing, in accordance with the belief that the appearance of such people is a sign heralding the end. The opponents of 2 Cor. 10–13 would be seen in this light." Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 47; Bornkamm,

d. Chapters 1–8 are divided, and 2:14–7:4 is attached to 10–13; 9.[58]
e. Each of the following are letters, often in this order: 8; 2:14–7:4; 10–13:10; 1:1–2:13, 7:5–16 and 13:11–13; and 9.[59]

4) 1 Corinthians should also be included in partition theories of 2 Corinthians.
a. Six letters[60]
b. Nine letters[61]

Once scholars raised the question of fragments, the next challenge was to determine the order in which the fragments were composed, as this would best indicate Paul's intended meaning. After Semler's suggestion that 2 Corinthians 10–13 was a distinct fragment, many scholars focused on these four chapters and assumed that they could understand any other problems in the rest of the epistle by separating chapters 10–13 from the rest of the letter. Seeing the letter through the lens of a conflict between Paul and his audience, scholars tended to focus on the change of psychological moods that they posited between 1–9 and 10–13. While Paul appeared encouraging in the majority of the letter, he seemed much angrier in the last four chapters.

At the beginning of the 20th century, scholars began to attend to literary aspects of style, genre, and forms of classical rhetoric, such as evidenced in ancient epistolary forms, when breaking up the letter into fragments.[62] Seeing various fragments as

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"The History of the Origin of the So-Called Second Letter to the Corinthians."

[58] Philipp Vielhauer, "Oikodome: Das Bild vom Bau in der christlichen Literatur vom Neuen Testament bis Clemens Alexandrinus" (Universität in Heidelberg, 1940).

[59] Margaret Mary Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993); Roetzel, *2 Corinthians*, 30–35.

[60] Johannes Weiss and Frederick C. Grant, *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period A.D. 30–150* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).

[61] Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*.

[62] Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*; Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 17. Rhetorical criticism should be distinguished here from feminist rhetorical criticism. While Windisch, Betz, Witherington, and others use rhetorical critical methods to place Paul's writings within a historical literary context of classical rhetoric, feminist rhetorical criticism focuses on and critiques Paul's attempts to claim power over

evidence of deliberative rhetoric, advisory letter, apologetic letter, etc., led to different

partition theories, different orderings of the letter fragments, and different reconstructions

of Paul's history with Corinth. The following is a compilation of the major sites for

debate in the canonical text, whether by psychology, historical construction, or literary

aspects of the text.[63] Scholars debate:

1) A change in tone and rhetorical posture from thankful to defensive between 9:15 and 10:1.
2) The interruption in 2:13 of Paul's travel narrative concerning his search for Titus and his trip to Macedonia, which seems to continue in 7:5.
3) The "lumpish disruption" of Paul's argument caused by 6:14–7:1, "with strongly non-Pauline language."[64]
4) The repetition of information about the collection for the offering for Jerusalem in 8 and again in 9.
5) The contradictions in Paul's confidence (7:16) or lack of confidence (11:19–21; 12:20–21) in the Corinthians.
6) 2 Corinthians 12:17f. discusses Paul's having already sent Titus and the brother while 8:6, 17f. discusses sending Titus and the brother in the present tense.
7) 2 Corinthians 2:3–4 refers to Paul's having written out of anguish and with many tears, which is a challenge to the identification of 10–13 as the letter of tears, unless 10–13 precedes 2:3–4. This has encouraged some scholars to posit an additional lost letter, which may find some support in 1 Corinthians 5:9.
8) If the harsh fragment of 2 Corinthians 10–13 is composed at the end of the Corinthian correspondence and Romans is composed shortly thereafter, how can Paul's report of the Corinthians be so positive in Romans 15:26–27, which reports that Paul is in Corinth and "the collection is ready, the delegation has gathered, and he reaps praise on believers in Achaia"?[65]

While many scholars are persuaded by partition theories, others argue for seeing 2

Corinthians as one letter. Indeed, the prevalence of seeing 2 Corinthians as many letter

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others through his rhetorical strategies and techniques of persuasion.

[63] Roetzel, *2 Corinthians*, 24–35. My compilation is not exhaustive.

[64] Ibid., 25.

[65] Ibid., 28.

fragments has made it so that "the traditional view of the unity of the epistle represents nothing more than another theory in need of positive proof, and … its exponents cannot rely on the naïve assumption that it is the natural state of the letter."[66] Many of the arguments for unity have consisted of critiques of fragmentation scholarship as being too speculative and, that scholars will never know for certain either way.[67] Others have pointed out that many canonical letters are complicated, but that this does not necessarily mean they must be split apart into fragments based on the ways modern scholars understand them.[68] More pointed are the critiques that "the chronological order in which one arranges the hypothetically reconstructed text will affect, if not dictate, how one will interpret its different parts."[69]

The ordering of the text fragments as well as a scholar's seeing the text as a whole or as several fragments is frequently determined according to assumptions about the historical course of the conflict between Paul and others in Corinth. The stakes are especially high when considering whether Paul's last correspondence with the Corinthians ends with chapters 10–13, where Paul seems to be at odds with the community, with no clear path toward resolution. A unified text suggests that Paul and his gospel may have been rejected. Scholars who want to assume Paul's masterful

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

[67] Heinrici, *Das zweite Sendschreiben des Apostels Paulus an die Korinther*; Kuemmel, Feine, and Behm, *Introduction to the New Testament*; Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 32–35. While I am partially adopting Betz's discussion of unity theories, it should be noted that he may be biased in his presentation of them, given his own focus on only two chapters, which he sees as two additional and distinct fragments.

[68] Hyldahl, "Die Frage Nach Der Literarischen Einheit Des Zweiten Korintherbriefes"; Nils Alstrup Dahl and Paul Donahue, *Studies in Paul : Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1977), 38–39; Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 32–35.

[69] Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 343; Matthews, "2 Corinthians."

ministerial skills and authority are especially loath to leave things in this state. In

particular, scholars seeing 2 Corinthians through the lens of Christian tradition and a

straightforward progression toward an orthodoxy want to see Paul's version of theological

beliefs and practice as winning over any wayward beliefs that might be taking root in

Corinth.[70] Betz suggests that this division in the scholarship mirrors a split between

liberal and conservative attitudes toward the biblical text, where liberal scholars are

willing to challenge tradition and canon to find multiple letter fragments within 2

Corinthians and conservative scholars attempt to preserve the tradition by maintaining the

integrity of the letter.[71] However, in more recent years, these lines are not as easy to draw

due the increase in methods used to approach 2 Corinthians. The largely historical-critical

and source-critical arguments concerning fragmentation may simply not interest scholars

concerned with other aspects of the letter, such as how it is interpreted by modern

readers, for example.[72]

On the other hand, a scholar's leanings toward the letter's unity may not

necessarily reflect conservative theological impulses to maintain the traditional text or

canon. Indeed, as Betz helpfully points out, "proponents of hypotheses of partition and of

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[70] Chrysostom, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*; Calvin, Calvin Translation Society, and Christian Classics Ethereal Library, *Calvin's Commentaries*. This hearkens back to Chrysostom and Calvin's assumptions that the conflict was just a necessary bridge to cross on the way to Christian orthodoxy.

[71] Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*; Matthews, "2 Corinthians," 199.

[72] Guy Nave, "2 Corinthians," in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*, ed. Brian K. Blount et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007). In his commentary, Nave focuses on how African-American readers may interpret the letter. While he still hypothesizes a theory of letter fragmentation and reordering, it is the experience of the readers that is given priority.

unity unconsciously employ the same types of arguments, turning them first to one

purpose, then to another."[73] He elaborates:

> Three kinds of observations seem to underlie whatever proposals are found
> in these works: (1) breaks in the train of thought, (2) discontinuities in
> reports of events, (3) sudden changes in the tone of the presentation. The
> counter-arguments are equally speculative, based on deductions from (1)
> the underlying structure of Paul's thought, (2) reconstruction of the course
> of events, (3) Paul's psychological state at the time of composition. None
> of these arguments operates at the level of the text itself, but on
> hypothetical constructions lying beneath the text: the train of thought, the
> plan of the letter, the course of events, and psychology.[74]

Betz's interest in "the level of the text itself" supports his analysis of 2 Corinthians 8 and

9 in comparison with classical rhetorical forms.[75] While he hints that such methods will

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[73] Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 26.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*. Betz's commentary builds on Windisch's rhetorical
approach and Bornkamm's ordering of the letter fragments according to historical
reconstruction of the events in Corinth. Betz himself focuses (only) on 2 Corinthians
8 and 9 as two separate letter fragments. Using a detailed literary analysis that
considers the conceptual structure, classic rhetorical form, terminology, and theology
of the texts to compare them with other ancient literary forms, Betz argues that
chapter 8 is a combination of an advisory (v. 1–15) and administrative letter (v.16–
23), while chapter 9 fits the genre of advisory letter. Yet Betz's choice of focus and
his conclusions are in part determined by his assumptions about how he understands
"the great crisis" (to use his term) between Paul and the Corinthians. Using Romans
15:25–32 to reconstruct a version of the historical situation that immediately follows
2 Cor. 8 and 9, he concludes that the collection in Corinth has been completed and,
"the great crisis," which had interrupted the collection, has been resolved. Betz sees 2
Cor. 10–13 as the climax of this crisis and Paul's second apology. These three
chapters follow Paul's first apology in 2 Cor. 2:14–6:1 and 7:2–4. A letter of
reconciliation, seen in 2 Cor 1:1–2:13, 7:5–16, 13:11–13, finally resolves this conflict.
"Corinthian anti-Paulinism," Betz argues, consists of several charges against Paul,
including a charge of corruption regarding the collection by "the wrongdoer" of 7:12,
and can generally be characterized as questioning Paul's legitimacy as an apostle. See
also Käsemann, *Die Legitimität des Apostels*. The advisory and administrative letters
of chapters 8 and 9 are sent, finally, with Titus, to begin the collection again after the
reconciliation letter and the resolution of the crisis. At each step of the way, Betz's use
of literary and rhetorical methods shapes his historical reconstruction of the conflict
and his interpretation of Paul's shifting relationships with the Corinthians. As he
reconstructs the letter fragments, he reconstructs history.

liberate him from the types of arguments that have previously been made, his theory is still based on assumptions about the history of the events in Corinth, even if he finds support in other classical sources. Adding rhetorical critical methods merely adds a focus on what might be considered another aspect of Paul as a coherent, rational subject—his rhetorical training and choice of rhetorical tool. While comparing the rhetorical forms Paul uses to other ancient letters and forms situates Paul within a socio-historical context, this methodology is not immune to a focus on and assumptions about the importance of a conflict within Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians.[76] Thus, in these debates about the partition or unity of the letter, whether they use source or rhetorical critical tools, scholars reconstruct the text according to their assumptions about conflicts in early Christianity and the identities of the various parties involved.

This secondary question of the partitioning of 2 Corinthians is ultimately beholden to the first question regarding the historical situation of Paul's conflict in Corinth. The assumptions are in line with those of the second paradigm of biblical studies: If only scholars can get back to the original text then they will be able to understand Paul's intended meaning and reveal the one true history and the one true interpretation of 2 Corinthians. If it is not possible to determine the original text, the question then becomes whether this discussion of partition theories matters to modern

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[76]   Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 336; Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians*. The problematic assumption that Witherington points to in Betz's scholarship—that "the ordering of the text should govern the interpretation of the text in regard not only to things like Paul's opponents, but also to the collection"—could also be said of Witherington's arguments for unity. Witherington's arguments for unity are dependent on his assumption of the importance of the conflict. He adopts Young and Ford's arguments that the entire letter "must be seen as a form of apologia—a defense of Paul's apostleship," which Paul presents to the Corinthian audience.

readers. In his commentary, Calvin Roetzel asks this same question: "Why not simply read 2 Corinthians as it is? Why run the risk of falsification through an appeal to a not-provable hypothesis?"[77] He answers that first, "there is no alternative," by which he means that every interpreter constructs the text in some way. His second answer is that "such constructions are necessary to try to understand more accurately the world of the text." Roetzel offers no further explanation on this point. His final answer poetically hints at the imaginative work of any historical reconstruction in "conjuring the narrative of a text" in order to "reveal the tensions and vitality of the interaction between Paul and this small cell of believers."[78]

Roetzel's questions revitalize 2 Corinthians scholarship that can seem weighed down in the work of untangling a "rats' nest."[79] Roetzel recognizes that each interpreter may understand the text differently, even while he also suggests that there is one true narrative to be conjured or that the task of the interpreter is to reveal Paul's interactions with the Corinthians. Yet, what might be the cost of rehashing the history of partition theories every time someone is interested in 2 Corinthians? Is this not a gate-keeper to 2 Corinthians scholarship whereby if someone can show proper understanding and respect of the partition theories of old whilst also making reasonable claims of her own, then and only then can she offer a valuable reading of 2 Corinthians? Rather than Roetzel's goal of revealing Paul's interactions with the Corinthians, I join with scholars from the third and fourth paradigms in claiming a goal for scholarship that is shaped by robust debate and diversity of perspectives. With this goal, the emphasis is on multiplying potential

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[77] Roetzel, *2 Corinthians*, 33–35.
[78] Ibid., 34.
[79] Ibid., 24.

questions of the text rather than rehashing the same questions. An additional goal from the fourth-paradigm is a political-ethical one, in which biblical texts are powerful sites for envisioning and understanding the meaning making processes of the past, present, and future. Thus, when I interpret this text, I have modern communities in mind who use the text in its canonical form. While I think it historically unlikely that the text was composed in its current form, I know its form for modern Christian readers. Thus, this study will privilege that form.

Social Scientific and Cultural Studies

Another important wave of 2 Corinthians scholarship involves attempts to situate Paul and the letters' recipients within socio-historical and cultural contexts. In this section, I will consider several important works that complicate the understanding of the relationships between Paul and the Corinthians from the previous sections by identifying and challenging social systems of language and meaning to multiply possible interpretations. This scholarship has brought various social and cultural theories and methodologies to bear on their analyses of the letter.[80] One direction of such research compares Paul's writing style to the rhetorical style of his contemporaries and compares his organization of the letter to ancient rhetorical style guides. This technique is useful for social analyses that ask how texts express various social conventions and factors. For example, many fruitful studies of 2 Corinthians focus on how friendship or enmity

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[80] Johnson-DeBaufre, "Historical Approaches: Which Past? Whose Past?," 20. This expansion of focus has taken place across the field: "A second significant trend in a historical approach to the Pauline letters has been to repoliticize Paul, that is, to consider the ways that Paul's letters can be read as instruments of political and economic organizing and ideology rather than as theological treatises."

behaviors are conveyed.[81] Similarly, some studies consider how Paul's texts fit into social

conventions for discussing illness and other discourses of the body.[82] Another direction

analyzes class and other socioeconomic variables in Corinth with social-scientific

theories and archaeology.[83] This section will explore a sampling of this scholarship from

the third paradigm.

In a sociological approach, the conflicts in Corinth do not occur over the clash of

differing theological beliefs, but rather, are products of broad social processes and

circumstances.[84] One such approach sees a conflict between different styles of

community leaders who come from different social classes. For example, Gerd

Theissen's signal work argues that "there were two types of primitive Christian itinerant

preachers, to be distinguished as itinerant charismatics on the one hand and community

organizers on the other. The most important difference between them is that each adopts

a distinctive attitude to the question of subsistence."[85] He then breaks down each type by

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[81]   Peter Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987); L. L. Welborn, "The Runaway Paul," *Harvard Theological Review* 92, no. 2 (1999): 115–63.

[82]   A. E. Harvey, *Renewal Through Suffering: A Study of 2 Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

[83]   Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*. J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983). Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen, *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[84]   Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, 18. In Theissen's work, a focus on conflict takes on new meaning. According to his translator John Schütz, "Theissen sees the conflicts at Corinth not in terms of the traditional exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians, by which they are regarded as evidence for the clash of theological ideas, but in terms of this broader sociological understanding of conflict and integration." Scütz argues that Theissen's understanding of terms like "conflict" and "integration" are influenced by sociology and Marxist functionalism.

[85]   Ibid., 28. He also characterizes the first type as developing in the social setting of Palestine and represented in Corinth by Peter and Apollos, while the second type of

describing them as varying according to socio-political, socio-economic, socio-ecological, and socio-cultural factors. Furthermore, he argues that this conflict between the two types of preachers mirrored the class divisions in the Corinthian congregation. In accepting support from the wealthy members of the congregation, Paul's competitors would have resources, such as large houses for meeting, at their disposal and the patronage of people with high social standing. In contrast, the community organizer Paul, in his refusal of support from the Corinthians, introduces "a different form of apostolic legitimacy" that establishes independence from donors and a willingness to risk destitution as signs of his legitimacy.[86] However, situating the conflict within social settings does not free scholars from their assumptions of Paul's authority. While Theissen argues that both positions are comprehensible, he also implies that, in contrast to his opponents, Paul's theological arguments could be of greater scope because he was not dependent on others for his living.[87] Thus, while Theissen's social analysis complicates an understanding of a conflict between Paul and other preachers by seeing it within a context of class structures and differing approaches to ministry and itineracy, it tends to privilege Paul's approach. Such scholarship straddles the line between the second and the third paradigms of biblical studies in that Theissen situates Paul within the social world, which suggests that there are different perspectives on the letter and its circumstances, while also assuming that Paul's way represents the best perspective on ministry in Corinth.

Paul and Barnabas arises in an urban, Hellenistic setting.

[86] Ibid., 53. Schütz describes this as a difference between the Jesus movement and Pauline Christianity, 18.

[87] Ibid., 53–58.

In addition to situating this conflict within class structures, another wave of sociological methods places Paul's relationship with the Corinthians within social relations discourses in antiquity. Peter Marshall's analysis of friendship and enmity considers "the background to Paul's refusal of the Corinthian offer of aid and the origin of the enmity relationship which followed" by investigating "the conventions of giving, receiving, returning and refusing of gifts and services, and the traditional expressions of enmity such as invective and shame."[88] He looks at philosophical treatises on friendship to consider how social behaviors, as discussed in the letters and elsewhere, convey friendship or enmity. Then, he uses this information to describe the situation in 2 Corinthians in terms of social relations:

> a. Paul in the beginning committed himself to a relationship of trust, i.e., one of friendship by self-commendation.
> b. His refusal to commend himself a second time and the mistrust of the Corinthians suggested that he was held to be responsible for a breach of that trust.
> c. His Corinthian enemies and the rival apostles became friends by mutual recommendation and, according to the conventions of friendship, joint enemies of Paul.[89]

He concludes that the offer of aid was intended as a gift, and thus, of friendship. By refusing it, Paul refused the friendship and dishonored the donor. Marshall defends Paul's refusal as understandable "in the context of social division and factionalism in Corinth." This is on account of "a. his right as a free man to choose for himself; b. his wish not to burden or injure others by acceptance; c. his analogy of the friendship of parent and child to his responsibility as the parent-apostle in Corinth."[90] Yet, in spite of having the grounds for refusing, Paul's refusal of support could have been understood as a

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[88]   Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, xi.
[89]   Ibid., 396–97.
[90]   Ibid., 397.

declaration of enmity. However, social discourses like friendship and enmity build a binary that masks as much as it reveals. Are friendship and enmity the only two options? Is there no middle ground? By beginning with an assumption of a conflict that is left unresolved at the end of a unified letter, his study asks how Paul and the Corinthians became enemies. Such starting assumptions reflect the perpetuation of a politics of othering in this scholarship. Using a hermeneutics of suspicion in conjunction with this analysis could push this study beyond a politics of othering. If the Corinthians did not agree with or appreciate Paul's seeing himself as a parent-apostle, this could certainly factor into their interpretation of his refusal of support. Furthermore, this study assumes that the entire congregation had a stake in Paul's refusal of an offer of aid. But such an assumption does not adequately take into account the diversity in the community.

Laurence Welborn uses a combination of exegetical, rhetorical, sociological, archaeological methods to respond directly to Marshall's work. Now, the enemy has a name and, in a fortunate turn of events and text fragments, is no longer an enemy at all! Welborn begins by considering a certain "wrongdoer" mentioned in 2 Cor. 2:5–11 (τις λελύπηκεν) and 7:12 (τοῦ ἀδικήσαντος).[91] While many scholars traditionally assume that this is the same wrongdoer of 1 Cor. 5 who is cast out of the church for incest, Welborn argues that this is not the same person. Welborn attempts to identify this person, their offense, and the resolution of the problem. Certain social conventions about friendship

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[91] Welborn, *An End to Enmity*. These two passages mentioning the "wrongdoer" are parts of Therapeutic Epistle in Welborn's reconstruction of the letter fragments. He suggests the following divisions and order for 2 Cor.: 2 Cor. 8, Appeal for Partnership in the Collection; 2 Cor. 10–13, Polemical Apology; 2 Cor. 2:14–6:13; 7:2–4, Conciliatory Apology; 2 Cor. 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 Therapeutic Epistle; 2 Cor. 9, Appeal for Partnership in the Collection. This is quite similar to the reconstruction proposed by Betz, his professor.

and reconciliation set out the frame for Welborn's argument: "Paul does not mention the name of his enemy [the "wrongdoer"] because he is following a rhetorical convention well established in the Greco-Roman world."[92] Only after they reconcile can Paul mention the name of his enemy, which he does in Romans 16. Welborn asserts the following:

> The wrongdoer was a member of the Corinthian church; he was influenced by Jewish-Christian opponents of Paul; his offense took place on the occasion of Paul's second visit to Corinth; the wrong was an injury in which money was somehow involved; the context of the injurious action was the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem; the Corinthians were somehow complicit in the wrong done to Paul.[93]

From this starting point, Welborn uses reconstructions of the social setting of Corinth, socio-rhetorical conventions about enmity and reconciliation, and a process of elimination of the Corinthians named in Paul's letters, to assert that this person was probably the wealthy freedperson Gaius Novius Felix.[94] He reaches this conclusion because Paul mentions "Gaius" in Romans 16:23 as his host and the host of the whole church. This implies that Gaius is wealthy, which suggests an offense related to money and patronage. It also makes sense of Paul's tone and strategy in 2 Cor., in which Paul shows deference to this person. Welborn argues that Paul's periphrastic and respectful polemic against this person should be distinguished from his less respectful polemic against the apostolic opponents (11:13–15).[95]

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[92] The quick succession from "a person who causes pain" (τις λελύπηκεν) in 2 Cor. 2:5–11, or "a person who causes harm or acts against the law" (τοῦ ἀδικήσαντος) in 2 Cor 7:12, to "wrongdoer" and, finally, to "enemy" reflects a drive toward a discourse of othering. The attempt to map this interaction onto conventions of friendship and enmity as well as onto historical reconstruction may expedite this successsion.

[93] Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 22, fn95.

[94] Ibid., 307.

[95] Ibid., 151. Welborn points to the use of the singular in 10:7, 10, 11; 11:16; 12:6 for

The relationship is repaired by Paul's efforts, as is shown in Romans 16:23, when Paul has accepted aid and is hosted by Gaius. Furthermore, Paul's relationship with the Corinthians has also been restored, as is evidenced by the resumption of the collection for Jerusalem. Welborn assumes a polarized conflict between Paul and a Corinthian enemy, which leads to a polarized conflict between Paul and all of the Corinthians, and which Paul ultimately resolves, it is assumed, with his excellent ministerial abilities. In these assumptions Welborn participates in the politics of othering that characterize Paul's arguments. Furthermore, Welborn assumes monolithic identities for Paul and for others in Corinth when he posits easy answers to the questions of how the conflict begins and ends. It would be convenient if this person were one of the handful of named individuals from Corinth in Paul's letters, and one of the few names surviving in the archaeological record. However, it is also possible that the community was more complex than this interpretation allows.

Another recent iteration of this type of work brings Paul's identity into conversation with Greco-Roman discourses of travel. Recent work by Timothy Luckritz Marquis focuses on 2 Cor. 1–9 to consider how Paul variously positions himself within these discourses. He writes, "The success of Paul's mission depended on his ability to acknowledge the many valences of his itinerancy and rhetorically refashion them."[96] Luckritz Marquis sees in 2 Cor. 1–9 an example of how Paul strategically uses travel discourses and a traveler identity to create a new social movement in Corinth. Paul's theological mission of social change is considered in the context of the Roman Empire.

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support. (This is not to be confused with the use of the singular in 11:4 and 20, which is meant to single out one of the opponents as a sort of "pretentious parasite").

[96] Timothy Luckritz Marquis, *Transient Apostle: Paul, Travel, and the Rhetoric of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

Relying particularly on the work of post-Marxist theorist Ernesto LaClau, Luckritz

Marquis considers how the diverse community mirrors Paul's rhetorical situating of

himself as wanderer in 2 Corinthians 1–9.[97] One of Paul's major tasks in Corinth was to

unite a diverse community into one body: "Paul's letters offer a glimpse of a new social

movement for which the figure of the leader—the apostle—centered and oriented the

diverse subject positions comprising his communities."[98] While Luckritz Marquis is not

the first scholar to bring Marxist and post-Marxist theories of social organizing to

interpretations of Paul's letters, he considers Paul's rhetorical self-fashioning as traveler

in ways that challenge monolithic concepts of identity and point to a multiplicity of

interpretations of 2 Corinthians. In claiming a post-critical stance, however, Luckritz

Marquis largely sidesteps the ethical questions of biblical studies work, and thus, can be

primarily situated within the third paradigm.[99]

A Political-Ethical Turn

Scholarship situated in the fourth paradigm of biblical studies privileges not the

ancient apostle, community, or alternate leaders, but modern communities. Johnson-

DeBaufre describes this effort from a historiographical standpoint:

> The ideological critique of history and the efforts to restore a range of
> people to history together represent a wide-ranging effort to change the
> subjects of history, that is, to reconsider who benefits from the telling of
> history and to revise whose past we tell.....If we interpret Paul as part of
> the communities of Christ rather than as their creator and sole
> spokesperson, he does not have to always be right or the hero of the story.
> Because the writing of history is never only about the past, this de-
> centering of Paul makes room for contemporary people to engage the

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[97]   While Luckritz Marquis seems to consider the community as mirroring Paul, he does
not cite the feminist work of Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, that has been
heavily critiqued for mirror-reading.

[98]   Luckritz Marquis, *Transient Apostle*.

[99]   Ibid., 11.

questions of the communities of Christ as they resonate in new but equally diverse social contexts rather than to focus on what Paul alone thought or did.[100]

This decentering can be a powerful strategy to change how people approach this letter. Guy Nave's African-American commentary alternates back and forth between encouraging the identification of the modern African-American reader with Paul or with the Corinthians.[101] He roots his questioning of Paul's authority in the experiences of black slaves who question how their white slavemasters' interpretations of Paul's letters emphasize that slaves should obey their masters. Nave also thinks with African-Americans who stood up to oppression in the Civil Rights movement when he asserts: "Paul's *letters* do not represent the definitive voice of Christianity."[102] Nave also moves Paul from the slavemaster position to the freed slave position with whom the reader is supposed to identify: "Paul refused to allow the criticisms of others to cause him to doubt or question the legitimacy of his ministry. He was confident of his calling, just as Richard Allen, a freed slave and the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, was confident of his calling."[103] For Nave privileging the modern African-American

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[100] Johnson-DeBaufre, "Historical Approaches: Which Past? Whose Past?," 22–23.

[101] Nave, "2 Corinthians," 308. Nave describes how he privileges the modern reading communities:
> The conflicts in Corinth resonate with those played out in many present-day congregations: conflicts over ministerial authority; and integrity; the right of congregations to challenge ministers and the appropriate response of ministers to such challenges; issues of financial compensation for ministers; the appropriate use of wealth and financial resources; competition between ministers; the nature, style, and definition of ministry; and the meaning of discipleship and suffering.

[102] Ibid., 309.

[103] Ibid. See also William Andrews, *Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women's Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).According to Jarena Lee's autobiography, Richard Allen was also the AME bishop who first denied Jarena Lee the right to preach in church, and then changed his mind upon hearing her preach. Here is an excerpt from her powerful written response

community involves the strategic use of multiple interpretations of the text and of the characters of the text, including Paul and the Corinthians, to benefit this community.

Feminist critiques of Paul's claims to power are sparse when it comes to 2 Corinthians. This is in spite of claims that it is Paul's most passionate fight for authority and power.[104] As Shelly Matthews points out, there was no comment on this text in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *Woman's Bible*, and "feminist work on 2 Corinthians has advanced little since Stanton's time."[105] This is probably because women are not specifically mentioned or addressed in 2 Corinthians, the way they are throughout 1 Corinthians. However, as Matthews asserts, "all biblical texts require feminist analysis because women were and are affected by *all* the texts of their culture, and because feminist concern for liberation requires attention to all forms of patriarchal

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to Allen and the church laws that hindered her:

> O how careful ought we to be, lest through our by-laws of church government and discipline, we bring into disrepute even the word of life. For as unseemly as it may appear now-a-days for a woman to preach, it should be remembered that nothing is impossible with God. And why should it be thought impossible, heterodox, or improper for a woman to preach? seeing the Saviour died for the woman as well as for the man. If the man may preach, because the Saviour died for him, why not the woman? seeing he died for her also. Is he not a whole Saviour, instead of a half one? as those who hold it wrong for a woman to preach, would seem to make it appear. Did not Mary *first* preach the risen Saviour, and is not the doctrine of the resurrection the very climax of Christianity - hangs not all our hope on this, as argued by St Paul? Then did not Mary, a woman, preach the gospel? for she preached the resurrection of the crucified son of God.

While Allen might be a parallel for Paul, Lee could be seen as a parallel for early female preachers in Corinth who had to fight against critiques from strong male leaders in order to fulfill their own sense of calling.

[104] Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 327. Witherington displays the potential stakes of this letter: "A case can be made that Paul was nearly at war with other Jewish Christians, probably from Jerusalem, who were going around and trying to sabotage his work in Galatia, Corinth, and perhaps elsewhere."

[105] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible.* (New York: Arno Press, 1895); Matthews, "2 Corinthians," 196.

oppression."[106] There are a few exceptions, predominantly in the form of short

commentary articles.[107] In her commentary, Matthews takes Wire's work on 1

Corinthians as inspiration for envisioning the continued presence and participation of

women in Corinth through 2 Corinthians, an example I will follow in this dissertation.[108]

She also critiques Paul's claims for power through familial metaphors within this text by

reading his rhetoric with a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion. Continuing in this vein,

Caroline Vander Stichele argues that Paul's argumentation in 2 Corinthians is dependent

on existing sexual stereotypes, which has contributed to a history of sexism and

discrimination of women because of the authority ascribed to Paul's letters.[109] Her

commentary emphasizes the symbol system Paul applies throughout this letter, which I

will also discuss.

Similarly, postcolonial biblical scholarship does not tend to focus on this text.[110]

If postcolonial work happens to focus on 2 Corinthians, it is often limited either in terms

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[106] Matthews, "2 Corinthians," 196.

[107] Matthews, "2 Corinthians"; Caroline Vander Stichele, "2 Corinthians: Sacrificing Difference to Unity," in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*, ed. Luise Schottroff (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2012). There are also two commentaries from women's studies: Sandra Polaski, "2 Corinthians," in *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002); Jouette M. Bassler, "2 Corinthians," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012). There is also one commentary on the Corinthian correspondence from queer studies: Holly E. Hearon, "1 and 2 Corinthians," in *The Queer Bible Commentary*, ed. Deryn Guest (London: SCM, 2006). One monograph-length exploration of the Corinthian correspondence that applies feminist work is Cavan W. Concannon, *"When You Were Gentiles": Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). See chapter 4 for further discussion of this work.

[108] Matthews, "2 Corinthians"; Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*.

[109] Vander Stichele, "2 Corinthians: Sacrificing Difference to Unity," 752–53.

[110] Christopher Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes*

of length, its focus on one or two chapters. This is surprising given the anti-imperial

history of the Greek city of Corinth.[111] However, there are a few notable exceptions, and

important insights can be gained from considering these works.[112] Richard Horsley's

article-length postcolonial commentary on the Corinthian correspondence frames Paul's

ministry in Corinth in terms of his anti-imperial stance.[113] He surveys several passages

for their indications of this stance, including those that discuss Paul's suffering (2 Cor.

1:8–9, 4:7–23, 6:4–8, 11:23–27), his international collection for the poor in Jerusalem (2

Cor. 8-9), and the reference to Roman triumphs (2 Cor. 2:14–16). Occasionally, the

Corinthians are placed at odds with Paul's anti-imperialism in Horsley's reading,

particularly regarding spiritual beliefs and practices. For example, in contrast to Vander

Stichele, Horsley reads the dualistic language of 2 Cor. 4:13–5:5 as originating with the

Corinthians, which Paul uses to accommodate them in this restatement of the

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(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011). In this collection of essays that use postcolonial approaches to interpret Pauline texts, 2 Corinthians does not feature as the primary text in any of the essays, in contrast to 1 Corinthians, Romans, Galatians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians. In other words, 2 Corinthians and the single chapter letter of Philemon are the only undisputed letters of Paul that are omitted.

[111] See chapter 3 for additional discussion of this history.

[112] Sze-kar Wan, "Collection for the Saints as Anticolonial Act: Implications of Paul's Ethnic Reconstruction," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 191–215; Brad Ronnell Braxton, "Paul and Racial Reconciliation: A Postcolonial Approach to 2 Corinthians 3:12–18," in *Scripture and Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 411–28; Richard A. Horsley, "1 and 2 Corinthians," in *A Postcolonial Commentary On the New Testament Writings*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (London: T & T Clark, 2009). While not explicitly postcolonial, the following commentaries claim an international perspective. Sze-kar Wan, *Power in Weakness: Conflict and Rhetoric in Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000); Ukachukwu Chris Manus, "2 Corinthians," in *Global Bible Commentary*, ed. Daniel Patte and Teresa Okure (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004); J. Ayodeji Adewuya, *A Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2009).

[113] Horsley, "1 and 2 Corinthians."

resurrection. This contrast indicates the particular opportunities and challenges of

feminist decolonizing work on 2 Corinthians that is attentive to multiplicative levels of

oppression, including gender-based oppression.

Sze-kar Wan identifies Paul's collection among gentile Christ followers for the

poor Jews in Jerusalem as a site for postcolonial exegesis. He reads 2 Corinthians 8–9

alongside other Pauline letters to argue that all of Paul's zeal for the collection for the

Jerusalem saints can be considered anticolonial acts. Wan states that his work "is not

strictly postcolonial, but in some aspects it does coincide with the goals of postcolonial

studies in which ethnic integrity, self-determination, anti-colonial, and anti-imperial

concerns are all inextricably intertwined."[114] This complex intertwining inspires Wan's

argument that "the collection lay at the heart of Paul's concern with redefining Jewish

group boundaries to include gentile converts."[115] Paul's inclusion of gentiles signals that

"he constructed an all-embracing sociopolitical order that stood in contradistinction to

and in criticism of colonial powers."[116] Wan's article points to the complexities of turning

postcolonial attention to ethnicity, economic concerns, travel, mission, and group

boundaries within Paul's interactions with gentiles in Corinth and other *ekklēsia*—a set of

subjects I will discuss in various ways throughout this dissertation.

Brad Braxton's article asserts the importance of reading biblical texts alongside

modern communities of readers who still face the effects of colonial legacies of religious

and cultural imperialism and racism. While acknowledging the colonial legacy of Paul's

letters, particularly for slaves, Braxton asks how parts of these letters might yet provide

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[114] Wan, "Collection for the Saints as Anticolonial Act: Implications of Paul's Ethnic Reconstruction," 192, fn5.

[115] Ibid., 192.

[116] Ibid.

healing comfort or theological energy for contemporary racial reconciliation.[117] Inspired

by his work in Ghana and England as a Bray lecturer, Braxton reads the veil of 2

Corinthians 3:12–18 as representative of the veil of colonialism and fundamentalism that

inhibits conversations about reparations for the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. In this reading,

Paul asserts that the lifting of the epistemological veil that distorts people's perceptions

of the world takes place through the presence of the Spirit of the Lord. The presence of

this spirit can signal freedom and transformation for ancient peoples in Corinth, and for

modern readers across the globe. Yet, Braxton's article also implies that these same

passages can be read in differing and even opposing ways, and that the interpreter makes

choices about when and how to "play jazz" with various readings for particular reading

communities.[118] Similarly, in this dissertation I will also attend to the multiple

interpretive possibilities of passages and histories in 2 Corinthians, critiquing kyriarchal

legacies while also envisioning hopeful alternatives.

This dissertation contributes to this scholarship by approaching this text from a

rhetorical-emancipatory framework that embraces a political-ethical aim. Paul is not the

only voice and I will not assume that his voice represents the voice of God, the one voice

of history, or the one voice of best social practice on matters either in Corinth or for

today. Rather, I assume that there are multiple interpretations and subject positions, and

that some of them deserve some additional focus because they have consistently been

silenced or elided. But the aim is not just to flip the focus (i.e. now wo/men have the only

important voice which represents God's or history's voice), but rather to consider new

questions. It is also to look at questions from earlier scholarship with an awareness of

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[117] Braxton, "Paul and Racial Reconciliation."
[118] Ibid., 421.

these additional interpretive possibilities because multiplying these meanings enables readers to envision meanings for oppressed and elided peoples today.

Finally, a feminist decolonizing study of 2 Corinthians is necessary because of how Paul's rhetorical situating of himself and of the Corinthians and others in Achaia within identity discourses of power have high stakes. Paul begins the letter discussing the oppression he and others have faced, presumably on account of their practices and socio-political locations. In the context of this discussion, he sets out a kyriarchal power structure wherein God is an emperor, Paul is God's emissary through Jesus, and the Corinthians are to imitate Paul obediently. Rather than giving thanks for them, he asks for their silent help and gratitude, after asserting that it is for them that he suffers oppression (2 Cor. 1:1–2:13). Even though Paul does not wish to boast, this letter is a strong defense of his work, his methods, and his goals to unite the community in Corinth, even if some of their voices are to be silenced and their diversity sacrificed. Some of their diversity seems especially evident in domestic practices, and thus, Paul draws on a naturalized kyriarchal structure in gendered discussions of the home and bodily practices (2 Cor. 5–7). After encouraging them to give to his charity of choice (2 Cor. 8–9), he can no longer contain his polemics (2 Cor. 10–13). Other would-be community leaders are at odds with Paul's own approach and Paul responds with personal attacks. Using a form of identity reasoning to navigate the rhetorical situation strategically, Paul presents himself at both the top and bottom of a kyriarchal pyramid, as imperial general (2 Cor. 10), then domestic *paterfamilias* (2 Cor. 11), and then finally, as low as a wayfaring slave, while presenting the Corinthians as silent fertile disputed lands and as sexually transgressive daughter. This culminates in a discussion of the practice that most offends Paul—the

Corinthians are speaking of visions of God (2 Cor. 12). In response, Paul speaks foolishly of visions. He closes the letter with a warning: as God's emissary, he is coming (2 Cor. 13). This dissertation argues that interpetations need not replicate Paul's constructions and his politics of othering. This chapter has introduced the need for a feminist decolonizing approach to 2 Corinthians. The next chapter will explain my feminist decolonizing and decentering methods and further elucidate my argument, while chapters 3–5 demonstrate my interpretation of key passages of 2 Corinthians.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARD A FEMINIST DECOLONIZING APPROACH TO 2 CORINTHIANS

> All the acts of the drama of world history were performed
> before a chorus of the laughing people. Without hearing
> this chorus we cannot understand the drama as a whole.
>   —M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*

In this chapter, I will outline a feminist decolonizing approach that has as its goals

the identification of kyriarchal systems of oppression in the text and history of

scholarship, and the articulation of emancipatory discourses and spaces in the past,

present, and future. The tendency for scholars to identify with Paul and to safeguard

Paul's authority perpetuates kyriarchal systems in the interpretation of 2 Corinthians and

other letters of Paul. Instead, this approach decenters Paul by placing him within a

complex social context, thereby also decentering hegemonic biblical scholarship. I

emphasize the textuality of identity by combining critical social theories of identity with

literary theories of narrative to envision identity as dialectically constructed,

multiplicative, malleable, and rhetorical. Rather than seeing 2 Corinthians as a window

into Paul's mind or past, this approach envisions historical possibilities that might arise

out of approaching the letter as a dialogic text.[1] In the following sections, I will review

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[1] Theorizing a text as dialogic as opposed to monologic suggests that the text is
produced in dialogue with others. In thinking of the relationality of texts and authors,
I am influenced by the work of Mikhail Bakhtin's work in *The Dialogic Imagination*.
Bakhtin challenges assumptions about literature and language, and thus, how to
understand the world. He discusses "heteroglossia," or the idea that at any given time
or space there are many conditions that determine the meaning of a word. Because
words are enmeshed in a giant web of contextual meaning (i.e. heteroglossia), they
are related to and affected by other words, images, and concepts (i.e. "dialogism").
These theories are always related to how language works within society: "A word,
discourse, language or culture undergoes 'dialogization' when it becomes relativized,

the terms and histories of the three methodological components of this approach—

feminism, decolonizing/postcolonial, and identity theories.

A *Feminist* Decolonizing Approach

In this section I give my reasons for describing this work as feminist. First I

define feminism and feminist biblical studies, and I explain why I privilege this term over

"gender criticism" for this study. Then I consider the histories of various feminisms and

of feminist biblical studies before reviewing several critical feminist hermeneutical

strategies. Lastly, I look at the challenges and opportunities for feminist biblical critics in

engaging the letters of Paul.

"Feminist," the first term in my feminist decolonizing approach, is frought with

various meanings and histories. A popular slogan states that "feminism is the radical

notion that wo/men are people."[2] As Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues, this slogan is

useful because it "accentuates that feminism is a revolutionary political concept and, at

the same time, ironically underscores that at the beginning of the twenty-first century,

feminism should be a common sense notion."[3] Formally, she defines feminism as "a

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de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things. Undialogized language is authoritative or absolute." M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, University of Texas Press Slavic Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 427. Thinking of 2 Corinthians as a dialogic text assumes that it reflects debate rather than Paul's authority.

[2] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001), 54–64; Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 12–13, fn40; Joseph A. Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven: Women, Gender, and Empire in the Study of Paul*, Paul in Critical Contexts (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 127, fn4. In *The Power of the Word*, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza states: "This definition is generally attributed to Chris Kramarae and Paula Treichler but I could not find a source to substantiate this attribution." Joseph Marchal substantiates this claim, but asserts that the name is "Cheris" rather than "Chris" Kramarae.

[3] Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 12–13.

movement and theory for the economic, social, political, and religious equality, rights, and dignity of all wo/men. It is focused on the struggle of wo/men against domination, exploitation, oppression, and dehumanization."[4] This definition describes feminism as not just visionary, envisioning a world in which women are people, but critical, calling out the behaviors that are condemnable to feminists. Furthermore, the word "struggle" also alludes to the difficult work of feminist movements and the many wo/men who work for justice and equality against oppression.[5] In its struggle against the oppressions wo/men face, feminism has expanded as wo/men have named the multiplicative nature of gender oppression in relation to race, ethnicity, nationality, class, economic status, gender, sexuality, and even species. This complexity and the multiplicity of feminist, womanist, mujerista, and other wo/men's voices suggest that there are a variety of feminisms and that it is part of the project of feminist work to engage, learn from, and deliberate among differences.

Feminist biblical criticism grows out of the feminist movement, and shares in its challenges and expansions.[6] Thus, "feminist criticism is not a single method for reading but rather both a set of political positions/strategies as well as a contested intellectual realm."[7] Feminist criticism is distinguishable from gender criticism, which focuses on the

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4   Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 209.
5   Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*, 127, fn5; Mary Ann Tolbert, "Defining the Problem: The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics," *Semeia*, no. 28 (1983): 115. Marchal asserts similar reasoning in his partial adoption of Mary Ann Tolbert's definition of feminism. He states: "another feminist scholar notes that 'at the very least, feminism, like other liberation movements, attempts a critique of the oppressive structures of society."
6   For more information on the history and present of feminist biblical studies, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed., *Feminist Biblical Studies in the 20th Century: Scholarship and Movement*, Bible and Women 9.1 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014).
7   Bible and Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven: Yale University

role gender dynamics play within a text, but is critiqued for not consistently engaging

political or ethical challenges.[8] A signal work on gender critical studies identifies gender-

criticism's aim: "to explicate contextually the integrated and complex nature of gendered,

sexed, and sexual identities, both ancient and modern."[9] While this dissertation

interrogates complex functions of gender identity using feminist gender criticism, I

describe it as "feminist" because, as it uses feminist methods and frameworks, it is rooted

in the political feminist movements that struggle against the oppression of wo/men and

radically assert that wo/men are people.[10]

Feminist biblical scholars identify seven hermeneutical strategies of interpretation

for a critical feminist hermeneutics of liberation.[11] The first is a *hermeneutics of*

Press, 1995), 234.

[8] Ibid., 239, fn12. The Bible and Culture Collective argue that the term "gender activism" was coined by Margot Badran to "denote activism on behalf of women even when the activists themselves do not call themselves feminists and, indeed, may well reject the term." However, the idea that one's gender identity is complex and performative rather than stable and fixed complicates a fixed notion of woman, one which feminism may have assumed in its earlier stages. As Stephen Moore argues, gender "denotes the cultural product of a complex set of symbolic practices that mark (most) human subjects as either masculine or feminine." Stephen Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces In and Around the Bible* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 13.

[9] Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla* (T & T Clark International, 2009), 5. See also Julia M O'Brien, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Gender Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[10] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Feminist Biblical Studies in the 20th Century*.

[11] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 165–205; Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 31, fn77; Bible and Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible*, 247–54. *The Postmodern Bible* articulates several questions asked in a feminist hermeneutic: 1) questions of recuperation, which assume that women were present throughout history and attempt to find and tell their stories, 2) questions of suspicion, which assume that the biblical texts are inherently shaped by androcentric biases and read to reveal these biases and critique them, 3) questions of survival, which ask how social and political institutions and forces are involved in systems of power and domination, and 4) questions of performance, which ask how gender is performed and functions within a

experience, which focuses on the ways experience is determined and socially constructed. The common experience for wo/men in religion "has been that of exclusion, silencing, and marginalization."[12] A hermeneutics of experience reads for the ways this marginalization appears in androcentric biblical texts and challenges wo/men to read 'otherwise.'[13] The second strategy in a critical feminist hermeneutics of liberation asserts that feminist interpreters need to *read against complex systems of domination* that oppress not only based on sex or gender, but also based on race, class, nationality, species, etc. These systems of oppression interact in multiplicative and compounding ways, leading Schüssler Fiorenza and others to prefer the term "kyriarchy" to "patriarchy."[14] This strategic lens within feminism has strong resonances with other hermeneutical methods that read against various systemic forms of oppression, and open up the way for overlapping methods and strategies in struggles against domination. A third hermeneutical strategy is to approach the biblical texts with suspicion, rather than with obedience, awe, or consent. This *hermeneutics of suspicion* critically examines the text and its history of interpretation to see how its ideological basis functions to further systems of domination and oppression.[15] This strategy is complemented by a *hermeneutics of ethical and theological critical evaluation*, which adjudicates "how much a text encodes and reinforces structures of oppression and/or articulates values and

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text.
[12] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 195.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 118–24; Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 1, fn1.
[15] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 175–76. Schüssler Fiorenza states, "In short, since readers align themselves with the dominant voice and model presented by the kyriocentric text, a hermeneutics of suspicion critically analyzes such dominant strategies of meaning making." The ideological basis of the text refers to this underlying system and voice by which meaning is produced.

visions that promote liberation."[16] This critical evaluation points toward a positive vision of the past, present, and future for an *ekklēsia* of wo/men.[17]

The next three hermeneutical strategies help to flesh out that vision. A *hermeneutics of memory and remembering*, "attempts to recover wo/men's religious history and the memory of their victimization, struggle, and accomplishments as wo/men's heritage."[18] A *hermeneutics of creative imagination* "seeks to generate utopian visions that have not yet been realized, to 'dream' a different world of justice and well-being."[19] Finally, a *hermeneutics of transformative action for change* "explores avenues and possibilities for changing and transforming relations of domination inscribed in texts, traditions, and everyday life."[20] I will draw on each of these seven strategies in various ways throughout the dissertation.

The letters of Paul pose specific opportunities and challenges for feminist biblical scholars. The perspectives of feminists are crucial in analyses of the particular debates in the Corinthian correspondence around authority, leadership, sexuality, and the formation and maintenance of an in-Christ community.[21] Cynthia Briggs Kittredge highglights the

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16 Ibid., 177.
17 Ibid., 70–75; Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 101. The *ekklēsia* of wo/men is theorized as an egalitarian system and space. It is the utopian opposite of empire that has not yet been a lived reality. See also Elizabeth A. Castelli, "The Ekklēsia of Women And/as Utopian Space: Locating the Work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in Feminist Utopian Thought," in *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 36–52.
18 Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 176.
19 Ibid., 179.
20 Ibid., 186.
21 Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, "Corinthian Women Prophets and Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl*, ed. Krister Stendahl and Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 104. Kittredge argues similarly that feminist critique is particularly important for 1 Corinthians, "a letter whose 'situation'

significant methodological contributions of Wire, Schüssler Fiorenza , and Elizabeth Castelli to feminist work on the literature and communities of Paul.[22] First, by pairing critical theories of rhetoric with feminist hermeneutics of suspicion, these scholars read Pauline literature against the grain and not at face value, "to distinguish between the rhetorical situation constructed by Paul and the historical situation."[23] Second, they consider gender as a central category in their analyses. They argue that women have been "historical agents who contributed to the formation of early communities of Christ-believers, rather than as "topics" addressed by biblical writers."[24] Third, they do not assume Paul's authority, but recognize the role of the letters in developing Paul's authority. Following in their footsteps, I will use these feminist strategies to interpret the conflicts of 2 Corinthians "not simply as reflecting conflict between an orthodox Paul and heretical or heterodox opponents, but as rhetorical arguments that can be read with a method that makes audible different voices in debates about early Christian beliefs and self-understandings."[25]

The development and usage of feminist critical strategies also inspires shifts in approaches to Pauline studies more broadly. Johnson-DeBaufre describes how a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion resonates with and partially shapes three principles of

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and 'opponents' have been notoriously difficult to profile and in which the complex of sexuality, marriage, prophecy, asceticism, and authority is clearly of central importance."

[22] Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power*, 1st ed., Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991).

[23] Kittredge, "Corinthian Women Prophets and Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians," 103; Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 197–201; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*.

[24] Kittredge, "Corinthian Women Prophets and Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians," 103–04.

[25] Ibid., 103.

historical approaches to Paul's letters. The first principle is that "language does not describe or reflect reality, it creates and shapes reality."[26] Similarly, as mentioned in the introduction, "whatever we say we know about the past is always a narration or a text of the past and not the past itself."[27] These two principles echo two of those Kittredge highlights in feminist work—to read against the grain of the text and to not take Paul's writings or authority at face value. A third critical principle of newer historical approaches to Pauline epistles is that "what we see depends on where we stand."[28] Johnson-DeBaufre argues that this "interrupts any illusions of objectivity and raises the question of alternative and multiple ways of thinking." This is reminiscent of the feminist hermeneutics of experience highlighted above which urges recognition of how experience, such as the experience of reading or interpretation, is socially constructed. Furthermore, these strategies multiply meanings and open up possibilities for interpretation, as opposed to the methods from the first two paradigms of biblical studies, which attempt to pin down meaning and interpretation.

A Feminist *Decolonizing* Approach

In this section I turn to my description of this study as decolonizing. First, I define postcolonial studies and explain how they can be distinguished from empire criticism and liberation hermeneutics. Then, I consider the histories of these theories and their entrée into biblical studies. Finally, I define "decolonizing" and describe why I prefer it to "postcolonial" in this study of 2 Corinthians, as I discuss the potential pitfalls and possibilities in bringing together feminism and decolonizing theories.

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[26] Johnson-DeBaufre, "Historical Approaches: Which Past? Whose Past?," 15.
[27] Ibid., 17.
[28] Ibid., 16.

The shift to place Paul's letters within their political and socio-rhetorical contexts is accompanied by consideration of the relationship between the Roman Empire and Paul's letters and, more recently, the use of postcolonial theories to do so. Postcolonial studies can be defined as "the academic analysis of colonialism, imperialism, and other related phenomena."[29] Three scholars who are credited with the most influential postcolonial interventions are Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha.[30] Each of these individuals draws scholarly attention to the contexts of the global South in the geopolitical aftermath of WWII. They have done so from literary studies departments in the Western academy.[31] Spivak, in particular, raises awareness concerning the function of gender and sex in colonial oppression. Biblical critics, who recognize that the imperial context within which the biblical texts were composed and the bible's use as a tool of oppression and colonization, bring empire critical questions and postcolonial theories to interpretive tasks. This is because the biblical texts were composed at a time

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[29] Stephen D. Moore, "Paul After Empire," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 9. This collection of essays considers the use of postcolonial theories in the interpretation of Pauline texts. Stephen Moore's introductory essay overviews the entry of postcolonial theory in New Testament biblical criticism. I will draw heavily from this essay in my own overview. Marchal suggests that a connotation of the term postcolonial is that it involves "moving beyond and thus against the heritage and impact of imperial and colonial dynamics." Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*, 6.

[30] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

[31] Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*, 9. Marchal and others have pointed to the overuse and heavy reliance of the theories of these three scholars. Thus, he uses the theories of feminist postcolonial scholars Rey Chow, Inderpal Grewal, Anne McClintock, Sara Mills, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Mary Louise Pratt, and Meyda Yegenoglu in his work.

and in lands where the Roman Empire dominated, and also because of the bible's use as a tool of oppression and colonization.

The main goal of a postcolonial reading is liberation, asking the question: "How can we know and respect the Other?"[32] Postcolonial theories first entered biblical studies with an edited volume on interdisciplinary scriptural readings and with a series of three edited volumes on Paul and empire studies.[33] Empire studies is distinguished from postcolonial and decolonizing studies: while empire studies considers the effects of the Roman Empire on early Christian communities and texts, its theoretical basis is not postcolonial theories, which stem from the postcolonial context of the global South after WWII, but rather Marxist sociology and liberation theologies. Ramón Grosfoguel describes these as (Latin American) postmodern critiques that use Eurocentric theorists and epistemologies to critique Eurocentrism. Empire critical studies on Pauline literature frequently refer to the works of Frederic Jameson, James C. Scott, and Jon Sobrino.[34]

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[32] Musa Dube, "Toward a Post-Colonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible," in *Hope Abundant: Third World and Indigenous Women's Theology*, ed. Pui-lan Kwok (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010), 99.

[33] Laura E. Donaldson, ed., *Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996); Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997); R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *The Postcolonial Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000); Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2004).

[34] Susan Abraham, "Critical Perspectives on Postcolonial Theory," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 31; Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*

R.S. Sugirtharajah's critique of liberation hermeneutics from a postcolonial view is important for distinguishing postcolonial studies from empire studies.[35]

Postcolonial studies and decolonizing studies can also be distinguished from one another. Generally, the differences are in the histories of their conversation partners and the resulting force of their critiques. Working with the theories of Walter Mignolo, Grosfoguel describes decolonizing and postcolonial critiques as aimed at Eurocentrism from the perspective of subalternized and silenced knowledges, as opposed to critiques grounded in Eurocentric epistemologies. In terms of their histories, decolonizing terminology comes from Latin American Subaltern Studies, whereas postcolonial terminology stems specifically from South-Asian critiques of Eurocentric colonial historiography of India.[36] Latin American world-systems analyses tend to emphasize critiques of the structures of global capitalism using social scientific theories.[37] Postcolonial theorists tend to use literary and cultural studies to aim critiques at colonial cultures and agents. Grosfoguel asserts the need for pluriversal critical language of decolonization that "builds a decolonial universal by respecting the multiples [*sic*] local

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(Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994). Abraham argues that "all ahistorical and nonpolitical forms of postcolonial theory are simply instantiating the domesticating agenda of Western academia."

[35] Moore, "Paul After Empire," 17; R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); R. S Sugirtharajah, "From Orientalist to Post-Colonial: Notes on Reading Practices," *Asia Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (1996): 20–27. Moore describes Sugirtharajah's critique of liberation hermeneutics as threefold: first, they do not recognize that the Bible can be both liberative and oppressive; second, they do not always respect other religious traditions, even among the poor; third, they tend to critique economic oppression while ignoring the multiple forms of oppression.

[36] Ramón Grosfoguel, "Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality," *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, no. 1 (2011): 3.

[37] Ibid., 17.

particularities in the struggles against patriarchy, capitalism, coloniality, and eurocentered modernity from a diversity of decolonial epistemic/ethical historical projects."[38] This involves activating broad epistemological canons, engaging in critical dialogue between different political and epistemic projects, and thinking seriously "from and with subalternized racial/ethnic/sexual spaces and bodies."[39] I prefer the term decolonizing because I see it as conversant with these goals.

Similar to Sugirtharajah's critique of liberation hermeneutics, postcolonial feminist biblical scholars Musa Dube and Kwok Pui-lan critique Western feminist biblical studies, and propose points for further collaboration.[40] Their critiques focus on Western scholars' tendency to overlook the intersectional nature of colonial oppression in biblical studies.[41] Colonization frequently includes oppression based on sex, but also race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, and class, which doubly and triply affect wo/men of the Third World. Kwok Pui-lan points to several blind spots in feminist biblical criticism. First, a historical-reconstruction model of feminist criticism seeks to recover the lives of women in the development of early Christianity, but it tends to focus on female leaders or elite women, while neglecting female slaves or women from lower classes.[42] Additionally, feminist social-scientific studies of women's daily lives in antiquity frequently overlook the local, regional, and other submerged traditions within the empire.

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[38] Ibid., 32.

[39] Ibid., 4.

[40] Musa Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000); Pui-lan Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).;

[41] These critiques come in spite of Schussler Fiorenza's early development of the term and concept of "kyriarchy" to acknowledge the way forms of oppression can intersect and multiply.

[42] Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 86.

They also fail to notice the contribution of gender to the maintenance of imperial and

kyriarchal systems of oppression.[43] Kwok critiques feminist rhetorical models for not

always considering the relationships between imperial and ecclesiastical rhetoric. Finally,

critical feminist conversations do not always include Third World wo/men and wo/men

from other religious backgrounds.[44]

However, the collaborative spaces between feminist and postcolonial studies are

lush and fruitful, and there are many common interests.[45] Kwok suggests five points of

contact and shared tasks for postcolonial feminist scholars, who can:

1) Consider the relationship between the sex and gender symbol
   systems to class systems, state power, and imperial domination.
2) Focus on women "in the contact zone" in their interpretations and
   "present reconstructive readings as counternarrative."
3) Investigate interpretations to see if their readings "support the
   colonizing ideology by glossing over the imperial context and
   agenda, or contribute to decolonizing the imperializing texts for the
   sake of liberation."
4) Subvert dominant patriarchal interpretations by centering ordinary
   readers and their contributions
5) Investigate the role of social background and location, and the ethical
   implications of interpretation.[46]

These five tasks point to the two-pronged role of feminist postcolonial biblical critics not

only to interrogate and critique kyriarchal and colonizing discourses when developing

counter-interpretations and counternarratives of wo/men in antiquity, but also to

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43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 87.
45 Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*, 21. I am not alone in combining feminist and
    postcolonial hemeneutical lenses. See also Kathleen Wicker, Althea Spencer Miller,
    and Musa Dube Shomanah, *Feminist New Testament Studies: Global and Future
    Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Dube, "Toward a Post-Colonial
    Feminist Interpretation of the Bible"; Tan Yak-hwee, "Postcolonial Feminist Biblical
    Criticism: An Exploration," in *Feminist Biblical Studies in the 20th Century:
    Scholarship and Movement*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Bible and Women 9.1
    (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 281–92.
46 Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 81–84.

challenge these same ideologies in the history of scholarship.[47] Johnson-DeBaufre and

Nasrallah add to these points an attention to the complexities of and multiple experiences

with imperialism.[48] In their work to decenter Paul from interpretations and turn the focus

onto communities, this point is especially salient as they consider the multiple subject

positions groups may occupy under empire. In their words, "the Pauline letters represent

the creation of structures of interdependence and identity among competing but

subordinated subjectivities in the context of empire."

    With these shared goals and tasks in mind, I take a feminist decolonizing

approach to 2 Corinthians in this dissertation.[49] Using "decolonizing" as opposed to

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[47] Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*, 23; Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 201. Dube poses four questions for use in a feminist decolonizing approach to biblical texts and scholarship:
1) Does this text have a clear stance against the political imperialism of its time?
2) Does this text encourage travel to distant and inhabited lands, and how does it justify itself?
3) How does this text construct difference: is there dialogue and liberating interdependence or condemnation of all that is foreign?
4) Does this text employ gender and divine representations to construct relationships of subordination and domination?

Dube's questions, while serving as a guide, do not attempt to control meaning or interpretation, but rather open up space for interpretations with the goal of liberation. These questions are raised in response to particular experiences of colonialism, where some people use political, military, and economic power and tools to control and subjugate others while occupying their lands. Dube's first question suggests that imperialism looks different at different times. Thus, the text should be situated within a political and historical context to determine the particular force that imperialism presents in that context. Dube's second question acknowledges the role that travel and occupation of land tend to take in colonialism. This factor is often overlooked by Western academics who have not had people from other lands, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds in power over them. The fourth question is especially relevant for biblical texts that frequently attempt to explain and represent the divine in various ways.

[48] Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul: Toward a Feminist and Decolonizing Approach to the Letters of Paul," 170.

[49] Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, 126. Schüssler Fiorenza describes her choice of decolonizing terminology: "I have used an eclectic syncretism of methods

"postcolonial" opens up disciplinary space across literary and social scientific studies,

and across multiple epistemic and political projects. While "feminist" should already

imply the struggle against racial and imperial oppression, this has not always been the

practice in feminist analysis. Adding "decolonizing" to "feminist" in my approach

symbolizes an awareness of the legacy of colonialism and racism within feminism, and

the attempt to fight those systems of oppression. On the other hand, my preference for the

term "decolonizing" over "postcolonial" signals that, in addition to postcolonial theorists,

I will use a combination of methods and theorists in pursuit of a critical feminist

hermeneutics of liberation.[50] This term also signals a resistance to the legacy within much

postcolonial theory to ignore gender-based oppression and concerns, and a critical

awareness of the ways bodies and spaces act and are acted upon in oppressive systems

and cultures. Thus, both terms—"feminist" and "decolonizing"—are necessary for

characterizing the approach I will use in my critique of the scholarship and the text of 2

Corinthians. By claiming a connection to both feminist and decolonial movements, I am

also asserting my commitments not only to consider the ancient Roman imperial context

of early Christian communities, but also to recognize the modern realities of imperial

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and theories—including postcolonial ones—and have named this epistemological paradigm a *critical feminist interpretation for liberation*. Such a critical emancipative rhetorical approach could appropriately be called *decolonizing* but not *postcolonial* in the strict sense of the word." Marchal, on the other hand, uses feminist postcolonial terminology: "In the end, I continue to utilize the term *postcolonial* to describe the efforts of this present project because, as a distinctive set of approaches and interventions, postcolonial studies has proved to be a key resource in identifying and resisting imperial and colonial forces, often as they overlap and coincide in gendered, eroticized, racialized, and/or ethnic dynamics." Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*, 9.

[50] For scholars who discuss decolonizing, see Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000); Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Eduardo Mendieta, *Decolonizing Epistemologies Latina/o Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

globalization, domination, and kyriarchal violence, and envision alternate paths for the future.

Identity Reasoning and Rhetoric

As part of its feminist decolonizing orientation, this project also utilizes an interdisciplinary view of identity that bridges the work of social theorists and poststructural literary critics with feminist and decolonizing studies. This view of identity distinguishes this dissertation and interpretation from much of the work on social identity in biblical studies and early Christianity. The majority of scholarship on identity seeks to apply the theories of social scientists to biblical or ancient texts, often in an effort to determine the identity of characters or groups in the text or history. This work often comes from the first three paradigms of biblical studies.[51] While the majority of scholarship on 2 Corinthians assumes fixed identities and relationships, some strands of identity theory from social psychology and sociology suggest that people construct multiple identities that are malleable along shifting gender, ethnic, imperial, and class spectra. In contrast to studies that assume an essentialist or dispositional perspective on identity, my interpretation privileges a constructionist perspective on identity. In this constructionist perspective "identities are regarded as the product of negotiation, interpretation, and presentation rather than biologically preordained, structurally given, or dispositionally determined."[52] I see this perspective on identity from within the fourth

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[51] As a socio-cultural paradigm, the third paradigm contains possibilities for both static and fixed understandings of identity. These understandings derive from particular social models that are applied to the text and the characters. There is the potential for multiple constructed identities when viewed through certain social or literary theories.

[52] David A. Snow, Sharon S. Oselin, and Catherine Corrigall-Brown, "Identity," in *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, ed. George Ritzer (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005), 392. In contrast, an essentialist perspective "reduces the source of identity to a

paradigm of biblical studies in that it deconstructs the politics of othering and logics of

identity that obfuscate critical differences. It is a model of identity that allows for change,

flexibility, and difference. Additionally, these ideas of constructed identity fit well with

the rhetorical work of historians after the linguistic turn, who consider "the textuality of

the past" rather than "an object known as the 'past itself.'"[53] After considering some of the

relevant studies by socio-linguists and others who consider how these dynamics of

identity negotiation interact with language and text, I will reflect on the implications of

this work for biblical studies and studies in early Christianity that question modes of early

Christian and Jewish group definition. Finally, I will present an approach to 2 Corinthians

that expands from this work.

Social and Literary Theories

Several concepts from the work of social theorists are relevant for this project on

2 Corinthians. First, identities are constructed, revised, and maintained through the stories

people tell about themselves and to themselves. Over time, identities are pieced together

from various performances. Second, individual and group self-definition happens in

relation to others, and thus is dependent on difference and boundaries. The stories people

tell frequently reflect these boundaries between identity/alterity, self/other,

insider/outsider, either in terms of drawing or redrawing boundary lines, or in crossing

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single determinative attribute regarded as the individual's or collectivity's defining essence." Within this perspective, there are structuralists, who view identity as "rooted in elements of the social structure, such as in roles, networks, and broader social categories, such as social class, ethnicity, and nationality," and primordialists, who view identity as stemming from biological factors such as sex and race. The other major perspective focuses on personality dispositions, assumes that "certain social psychological traits or states predispose individuals to adopt or claim some identities over other possibilities."

[53] Fred W. Burnett, "Historiography," in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation*, ed. A. K. M. Adam (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 107.

them. Third, in as much as they participate in work with boundaries, stories and their narrators also reflect identity as multiple and thus, interacting with a multiplicative system of oppression either by creating, perpetuating, or subverting it.

Narratives reflect processes of identity construction and negotiation. Sociolinguists often ask about the relationship between identity and texts, language, linguistic practices, and narratives.[54] They study the relationships between identity and the language people use to tell stories, asking how stories reflect someone's identity and their relationships to others. In analyzing interviews recorded and collected from Fort Wayne, IN residents, Barbara Johnstone argues that stories are crucial for forming identity. Stories give individual lives meaning, and "meaning is rooted in what is shared by communities of people."[55] The very words people use and the way they use them reflect the social location of the speaker, signaling someone's identity within a community of similarly storied individuals.[56] Markers of identity such as gender and location shape how people present themselves. People use specific details to tie their stories to particular locales and conversations.[57]

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[54] I have been guided in several of the next theoretical steps by the work of Danna Nolan Fewell and Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre. See Danna Fewell, "Making Space: Biblical Storytelling as Social Negotiation" (Presidential Address, Mid-Atlantic Regional SBL, Mount Saint Mary College, NY, March 8, 2014); Danna Fewell, "The Work of Biblical Narrative," in *Encyclopedia of Biblical Narrative*, Forthcoming; Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, "Narrative, Multiplicity, and the Letters of Paul," in *Encyclopedia of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell, Forthcoming.

[55] Barbara Johnstone, *Stories, Community, and Place: Narratives From Middle America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 126–27.

[56] Johnstone also describes how actions such as breathing, sighing, coughing, etc. can signal transitions in the stories or individual storytelling style. While there are standard linguistic conventions, it is predominantly the creative use of convention that demonstrates individual variation and contributes to identity construction.

[57] Johnstone, *Stories, Community, and Place*, 126–27. The types of details that people include in stories reflect their own identities, and may also reflect gender, age, or role

Identities are always shaped and negotiated in relationship. In addition to studying speech patterns and linguistic practices, socio-linguists and literary theorists consider how texts reflect relationships between self and other, identity and alterity. Monica Fludernik argues that the self is formed in a dialectic process with others and as a response to "the glance of the other."[58] Individual actors "negotiate their identities by considering who they encounter and the context in which the interaction occurs."[59] As theorists become increasingly comfortable with ideas of constructed identity, they question the very idea of a singular or core identity because of its construction in dialectic relation to others: "Although narrators generally believe they have a clear identity, that identity is an accumulation of performative stances and memories of past experiences which creates a continuity of self-understanding between roles and between contexts."[60] Judith Butler's work is situated at the forefront of critical theory's engagement in some of these critiques of stable and essential identity. Butler's notion of "gender performativity" asserts:

> What we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a
> sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body. In this

within a family or community. Johnson notices that women tend to provide details of other people involved in the story, and may minimize their own accomplishments—attributing them to fate or to others. Men, on the other hand, tend to emphasize details about their own accomplishments. But narratives can also reflect one's tie to a particular community, and a particular view of that community. In Fort Wayne stories, there is a trend to present the story of the town overcoming a big flood by working together in a display of strength and resiliency. On the other hand, a lack in details may serve a broader goal: "While personal experience stories, rooted in places, tie speech communities together, placeless myths bind larger groups together—ultimately, perhaps, all humanity."

[58] Fludernik, "Identity/alterity," 261.
[59] Michael J. Carter, "Identity Theory," in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, ed. George Ritzer (Malden: Blackwell Pub., 2007), 2225.
[60] Fludernik, "Identity/alterity," 261.

way, it showed that what we take to be an 'internal' feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts...[61]

In other words, she argues that gender identity, at least, is not stable or essential, but is reasserted and reified with each performance of gendered acts. Similar theories about identity construction appear in both critical race theories as well as in certain postcolonial theories.[62]

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[61]   Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), xv.

[62]   Ibid., xv–xvi. This interdisciplinarity, if you will, is acknowledged by Butler in her preface to the 10th anniversary edition of *Gender Trouble*:

> The question of whether or not the theory of performativity can be transposed onto matters of race has been explored by several scholars. "I would note here not only that racial presumptions invariably underwrite the discourse on gender in ways that need to be made explicit, but that race and gender ought not to be treated as simple analogies. I would therefore suggest that the question to ask is not whether the theory of performativity is transposable onto race, but what happens to the theory when it tries to come to grips with race. Many of these debates have centered on the status of "construction," whether race is constructed in the same ways as gender. My view is that no single account of construction will do, and that these categories always work as background for one another, and they often find their most powerful articulation through one another. Thus, the sexualization of racial gender norms calls to be read through multiple lenses at once, and the analysis surely illuminates the limits of gender as an exclusive category of analysis.

Butler also describes resonances with Homi Bhabha's work: "not only the appropriation of the colonial "voice" by the colonized, but the split condition of identification are crucial to a notion of performativity that emphasizes the way minority identities are produced and riven at the same time under conditions of domination." Ibid., 192, fn11; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. See also: Dorinne K. Kondo, *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Judith Butler, "Passing, Queering: Nella Larsen's Psychoanalytic Challenge," in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Dorinne Kondo, *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, eds., *The Politics of Culture in the*

This multiplicity of moments of identity performance, while characterized by their continuity, also allow for change. Stories, and the identities they perform, are malleable:

> As psychologists have shown, the point of much therapy is not to find the truth (there is no truth about the self, just as there is no core self), but to create a story of one's life with which one can live, a story of success, or of hope. By putting a different construction on the same occurrences, one can convert failure, depression, or anxiety into placid confidence in the future.[63]

Furthermore, power dynamics influence and can even be shaped by the way people create, tell, and manipulate their stories, or express the malleability of their self and communal identities. Social norms and power structures not only impact but are formulated and revised within narratives: "speakers create and manipulate social roles and relations as they tell about those relations. Stories do not merely mirror social reality, but rather create it and perpetuate it."[64] Feminist and Womanist scholars note the ways oppression based on social identity roles not only intersect, but can also be multiplicative. In other words, "gender oppression is multiplied by racist dehumanization, multiplied by economic exploitation, multiplied by cultural colonization, multiplied by heterosexist prejudice, multiplied by ageist stereotypes, multiplied by religious demonization."[65]

Shadow of Capital (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

[63] Fludernik, "Identity/alterity," 262.

[64] Johnstone, *Stories, Community, and Place*, 15; Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 17–18. Johnstone's work resonates here with Pierre Bourdieu's theories of linguistic habitus and linguistic capital. Bourdieu's linguistic habitus consists of dispositions "acquired in the course of learning to speak in particular contexts." The related 'linguistic capital' refers to the resources a person would have if they have the ability to speak well in a variety of fields. Yet, the idea of linguistic capital is intricately and complexly wrapped up with power in that, if people can speak well, they can also manipulate the system.

[65] Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*, xxi; Deborah K. King, "Multiple

Combining critical analyses of power with the work of literary theorists suggests that

such a multiplicative system of oppression is reflected in how people talk, write, and tell

stories as well.[66]

Applying Identity Theories to Biblical Studies

Concepts of boundaries between self and other, insider and outsider, resonate

within conversations about the formation of early Christian or Jewish identity.[67]

Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology," *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988): 42–72; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2009. While Schüssler Fiorenza coined the term 'kyriarchy' to name this overarching system, Hill Collins termed the intersecting effects of race, class, and gender a "matrix of domination."

[66] For identity politics, see Michael Ryan, "Identity Politics," in *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, ed. George Ritzer (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005), 393–94. This also raises a question about the role of identity politics in these conversations. The feminist argument about identity politics, that the personal is political, asserts the need to see individual identities within a context of other identities, other people, with whom they interact. Scholars who make identity claims from cultural locations such as the intersections of race, sex, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and nationality, shape social and academic discourses. Their voices call for a shift in social-scientific focus from economic and political analyses, which previously dominated academic discourse, to cultural identities. As Michael Ryan writes, "This assertion of the individual, and especially of those individuals who were outside of the social norm, caused great instability in the comfortable split between the personal and the public, the family and the nation, and the state and the civil worlds." Not only does this shift recognize the importance of context for individual identity, but it also suggests individuals have multiple identity categories to which they areloyal. Ryan explains how these ideas of contextual and multiple identities have been further developed and expanded into relational politics in recent years:

> Identity politics, it is argued, promotes the notion of stable, essential identities and as such privileges difference over the reconciliation of difference. To counter this trend, some theorists have proposed a "relational" politics, which assumes that identity is always the product of relationship and therefore never an essential aspect of a person's identity. In contrast to an identity politics that seeks to assert individuality, relational politics aims to overcome the ever-present threat of interpersonal conflict by privileging the flux relationship and social "conversation" over the stability and privilege of identity.

[67] There are a few major strands of inquiries about identity in biblical studies. The first refers to the use of the interpreter's identity or experience as a hermeneutical lens of interpretation. See Francisco Lozada, Jr., "Identity," in *Handbook of Postmodern*

Historians and biblical scholars consider how groups form, how they might be distinguished from other similar groups, and where and how boundaries are drawn. As I argued in the last chapter, traditional scholarship often sees boundary lines distinguishing Christians as a religious group, based on a variety of definitions of religion. Scholars point to differences in beliefs, such as monotheism, or practices, such as baptism, to assert Christian difference. Alongside challenges to religion as a category in antiquity, boundary lines appear between Christians and civic associations or clubs, between Christians and philosophical schools, or between Christians and households.[68] More recently, scholarly attention has turned to how Christians used collective structures, such as ethnic groups, races, or nations to define themselves.

Much of this scholarship tends to espouse an essentialist approach to identity, whereby Christian identity is defined according to one attribute, for example, belief in

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Biblical Interpretation, ed. A. K. M. Adam (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000). Another strand investigates the formation and maintenance of early Christian identity. See Boyarin, *Border Lines*; Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Buell, *Why This New Race*; Bengt Holmberg, ed., *Exploring Early Christian Identity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity In the World of the Early Christians: Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009). The third involves studying the particular historical identities of a few major figures, with predominant focus on the characters of Jesus and Paul (although others such as Peter, Mary, gospel writers, Judas, Pontius Pilate, etc., receive some attention), or of a few major communities, such as the Corinthian community, the Johannine community, etc. For one example focused on 2 Corinthians, see V. Henry T. Nguyen, *Christian Identity in Corinth: A Comparative Study of 2 Corinthians, Epictetus, and Valerius Maximus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). These studies can look very different depending on how an author frames his/her work.

[68] J. Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

Jesus Christ as savior.[69] Such essentialist definitions frequently also assume rigid views

of boundary lines. Historian Judith Lieu breaks down this distinction in the scholarship:

> It is part of the seduction of identity that the encircling boundary
> appears both given and immutable, when it is neither. Any
> interpretation of identity that prioritizes aspects of territory or
> kinship is prone to seeing boundaries as objective and even
> primordial; those that emphasize human organization, interaction,
> and construction will necessarily have a greater sense of the
> contingency of the boundaries even while acknowledging their
> indispensability.[70]

Thus, if identity is considered something that is constructed in dialectic relation with

others, then the borders between self and other, or between one group and another, are

also in constant negotiation. In other words, "boundaries permit, and indeed encourage

interaction, while providing rules for it; they are not merely defensive but also allow for

trade."[71]

When scholars assume that group identity is built, practiced, and regularly

adjusted, they raise new types of questions in their interpretations of ancient texts and

narratives. Daniel Boyarin and Averil Cameron consider how certain discursive practices

were crucial in constructing and crossing borderlines between Jews and Christians,

orthodox and heterodox.[72] Building off of their work, Lieu sees texts as important not

only for how they construct or maintain boundaries, but also for the ways in which

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[69] Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 13. Lieu describes how different assumptions about identity can affect scholarship: "The essentialism inherent in the initial definition of identity lends itself to a primordialism according to which deeply rooted sentiments and ties predetermine other sets of relationships as non-negotiable." She also suggests that if identity is something that is constructed, perhaps ethnicity and culture are also constructions.

[70] Ibid., 98.

[71] Ibid., 100.

[72] Boyarin, *Border Lines*; Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

practices with texts may have distinguished Christians in antiquity. Much recent work

focuses on certain types of discursive practices for the ways in which they may have

contributed to Christian group definition. Fascinating studies on the rhetoric of folly, of

aliens/outsiders, of violent self-sacrifice, of empire, of heresy and orthodoxy, etc.,

participate in notions of constructed identity and discursive practices.[73] Identity

construction, self-definition, and identity formation are popular topics in biblical and

early Christianity studies. Indeed, some of these studies now include a defense of the

distinguishing characteristics of their analysis.[74] Scholars ask whether there are qualities

that separated followers of Jesus and the emergent religion of Christianity from their

Jewish and Greco-Roman counterparts.[75]

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[73] For the rhetoric of folly, see Laura Salah Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity*, Harvard Theological Studies, no. 52 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). For aliens/outsiders, see Benjamin Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). For violence and self-sacrifice, see Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in Early Christian Era* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Judith Perkins, *Roman Imperial Identities in the Early Christian Era*, Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies (New York: Routledge, 2009).For empire, see the following: Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*; Davina Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*.

[74] Buell, *Why This New Race*. Buell begins her preface with the following query: "Why do we need another book on early Christian self-definition?"

[75] Some questions scholars ask include: How did Christians distinguish themselves? What sorts of language or discursive practices did they use to identify themselves? Were there particular spaces, like the arena, or contexts, like the imperial games or the dinner couch, where they were clearly marked "Christian"? Were there practices along ethnic, gender, or class lines, for example that might be unique to Christians? How were Gentile and Jewish Christ followers different from or similar to each other? Were there differences in terms of moments in life or social practices—at birth, schooling, writing, reading, and rhetorical training, child-rearing, sex, marriage, clothing, in the marketplace, eating and drinking, sleeping, in the army, traveling, in slavery and freedom, in prison, in sickness, care of the elderly, and death and burial? What were the stakes of making these various identity claims?

Some attention focuses on larger collective markers of identity, such as ethnicity, nation, culture, gender, etc. An important study in this vein is Denise Kimber Buell's work on the rhetoricity of texts to consider how ethnicity is both a fixed and fluid dividing line.[76] She coins the term 'ethnic reasoning', which she defines as "the modes of persuasion that may or may not include the use of a specific vocabulary of peoplehood," used by early Christians "to legitimize various forms of Christianness as the universal, most authentic manifestation of humanity."[77] Buell's "reasoning" language is helpful for my purposes because it refers particularly to the rhetorical uses of identity discourses in texts for the purpose of persuasion. As Buell theorizes and studies ethnic reasoning in ancient texts, I will analyze identity reasoning in 2 Corinthians. "Reasoning" connotes persuasion, such as a person may reason with another to persuade him or her to adopt a new view, etc. It also connotes a relationship with language and texts as it references thinking, logic, and words. Furthermore, "reasoning" implies a reason or cause for doing something, which references the stakes and politics behind these strategic moves.

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[76] Buell, *Why This New Race*. See also Caroline Johnson Hodge, "Apostle to the Gentiles: Constructions of Paul's Identity," *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* 13, no. 3 (2005): 270–88; Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Johnson Hodge challenges traditional conceptions of identity that sees Paul's identity as fixed. She uses critical race theory and social anthropology to argue that Paul privileges his in-Christ identity above his practice of the law or his being from the tribe of Benjamin. This privileging is a helpful concept for my work because of the ways in which Paul and the Corinthians may privilege certain aspects of various identities at different moments for rhetorically strategic purposes.

[77] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 2. Buell argues that early Christians used ethnic reasoning to reinterpret language of peoplehood around religious practices to negotiate their identities under empire, to capitalize on the malleable aspects of ethnicity, to make universalizing claims, and to compete with one another in polemical contexts.

As Paul rhetorically constructs and disrupts his own self and group identities, he does so in dialectic processes with others who are similarly engaged in identity processes. In the same way that Buell argues that early Christians could strategically negotiate their racial and ethnic identities for purposes of persuasion, this dissertation assumes that many aspects of identity (ethnic/racial, colonial subjecthood, gender, free status/class) are often strategically negotiated along lines of fixity and fluidity, depending on the rhetorical situation.[78] Building from Buell's work in this way allows for a broad perspective on the dialectic process of identity formation. Boundaries between self and other, identity and alterity, can be drawn at any point along a spectrum of fixity and fluidity. Opening up Buell's model allows for an analysis that is conversant with the work of feminist, Womanist, and postcolonial scholars to see the multiplicative intersections of power that shape identity reasoning.

As this identity reasoning process is rhetorically reflected in texts, considering the textuality of this multi-vocal process is integral to this work. From the perspective of narrative criticism, Danna Fewell echoes some of the above scholarship when she considers how stories, as important devices for forming, sharing, and performing identity, often deal with how and where boundaries are drawn, maintained, or crossed, and the circumstances for their crossing.[79] Fewell points toward clues for approaching biblical

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[78] The move to expand from "ethnic reasoning," which focuses on the language of race and ethnicity, to "identity reasoning," which describes multiple and compounding aspects of identity, necessarily raises the question of parallels within other disciplines and theoretical perspectives. Similar ideas are reflected in concepts of performativity from queer theory, strategic essentialism or mimicry from postcolonial studies, passing from critical race theory and others, or self-fashioning from new historicism. Identity reasoning best expresses the textual and rhetorical aspects of my subject.

[79] Fewell, "Making Space: Biblical Storytelling as Social Negotiation"; Fewell, "The Work of Biblical Narrative." For more on theorizing space in biblical texts and on

texts with these questions in mind. In thinking of the narrator of the text as one who is

constructing the narrative (whether it is a story or not), Fewell considers how this narrator

is engaged in discussions of boundaries and boundary crossing.[80] As the narrator

participates in a dialectic process of identity construction, additional parties may be

assumed to interact with the narrator in this discussion of boundaries. This dialectic

process, between these different perspectives reflected in the construction of the text, then

results in a text that is a site for the social discussion and debate of these boundaries.

Thus, both the world of the text as well as the production of the text are sites for multiple

perspectives and debates about the rules of community formation, maintenance, or

dissolution. Analyzing the narratorial choices in the text may offer glimpses at some of

these debates and their possible participants.[81]

If identity is negotiated in dynamic and dialectic processes that leave traces on the

stories told in texts through narratorial choices, then Paul's letters can be interpreted for

the ways the narratorial choices reflect multiperspectival debates in Corinth. The Pauline

letters are not typically considered narratives. Narratives are stories, with plots, narrators,

and characters, while letters are about communicating information and presenting

arguments. In a strict sense of literary form, 2 Corinthians is a letter and not a narrative.

Narrative approaches to the letters and communities of Paul historically focus on Paul as

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using spatial metaphors to describe textual practices, see Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, "A Monument to Suffering: 1 Thessalonians 2:14-6, Dangerous Memory, and Christian Identity," *Journal of Early Christian History* 1, no. 2 (2011): 91–118.

[80] Fewell, "Making Space: Biblical Storytelling as Social Negotiation," 7–8. Fewell describes how boundaries suggest the limits of stories, the lines between personal and communal identities in the story and in producing the story, and the spatiality of stories.

[81] Ibid., 11.

a character or as a thinker.[82] For the former, there are many versions of Paul that

captivate scholars.[83] As Paul claims, he has become all things to all people (1 Cor. 9:22).

Modern scholars identify and write about many of these Pauls. Additionally, this very

malleability is also studied; as Johnson-DeBaufre argues, "thinking with the multiplicity

of stories entangled with Paul's also insists that the representation of his subjectivity be

conceptualized as located, changing, and in relation."[84]

Scholars also analyze Paul the thinker for his role in the metanarrative of God's

salvation history. Narrative approaches to 2 Corinthians and other letters often focus on

Paul's identification with Christ's sufferings for situating Paul within this

metanarrative.[85] Richard B. Hays's 1983 narrative analysis of Galatians 3:1–4:11 is one

of the first narrative approaches to the letters of Paul. He asserts the presence of this

metanarrative as a narrative substructure within Paul's writings that enables Paul to

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[82] Johnson-DeBaufre, "Narrative, Multiplicity, and the Letters of Paul." I am guided in this section by Johnson-DeBaufre's analysis.

[83] Holmberg, *Exploring Early Christian Identity*; Atsuhiro Asano, *Community--Identity Construction in Galatians Exegetical, Social-Anthropological, and Socio-Historical Studies* (London: T & T Clark International, 2005); Harland, *Dynamics of Identity In the World of the Early Christians: Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities*; V. Nguyen, *Christian Identity in Corinth: A Comparative Study of 2 Corinthians, Epictetus, and Valerius Maximus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker, *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation: Essays in Honor of William S. Campbell* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010); Valerie Nicolet-Anderson, *Constructing the Self: Thinking with Paul and Michel Foucault.* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

[84] Johnson-DeBaufre, "Narrative, Multiplicity, and the Letters of Paul," 2. See also Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*; Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul at the Crossroads of Cultures: Theologizing in the Space-Between*, 2013.

[85] Kar Yong Lim, *"The Sufferings of Christ Are Abundant in Us" (2 Corinthians 1:5): A Narrative-Dynamics Investigation of Paul's Sufferings in 2 Corinthians* (London: T & T Clark International, 2009). Kar Yong Lim provides a brief history of "the narrative approach" to Paul's letters. This history focuses on scholarship that treats Paul as participant in the story of Jesus and salvation. It does not recognize the multiplicity of narrative approaches to Paul's letters that treat Paul as a character or narrator. See Johnson-DeBaufre, "Narrative, Multiplicity, and the Letters of Paul."

highlight the implications of this story for belief and practice in the Galatian *ekklēsia* and elsewhere.[86] Norman Petersen's narratological analysis of Philemon is also influential for thinking of Paul's letters as narratives in ways that move beyond Paul as identifying with Jesus in the story of salvation via sociology.[87]

Johnson-Debaufre points out that multiplicity of particular stories and peoples with whom Paul interacts often poses a problem for narrative critics.[88] However, others recognize this diversity as an interpretive opportunity: "Considering how characters, plots, and intertexts become local and translocal places for diverse identifications and significations opens up an alternative approach to the largely orthodox and universalizing Paul that predominates among both Christian and non-theist narrations of the mind of Paul."[89] I am approaching 2 Corinthians with a similar narrative sensibility of constructed identity. On the structural level, this means that I will see 2 Corinthians as a narrative text that features stories beyond the story of Paul or God's story of salvation. While Paul is

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[86] Lim, *The Sufferings of Christ*, 15–16; Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002). Lim also treats the following in his history of the narrative approach to Paul: Rollin Gene Grams, "Gospel and Mission in Paul's Ethics" (Ph. D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1989); James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1998), 236–44; Ben Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2001); Bruce W. Longenecker, *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002); Thomas Stegman, *The Character of Jesus: The Linchpin to Paul's Argument in 2 Corinthians* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto biblico, 2005). Also in this vein, see N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).

[87] Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

[88] Johnson-DeBaufre, "Narrative, Multiplicity, and the Letters of Paul," 5.

[89] Ibid., 24.

the author of 2 Corinthians, by seeing the letter as a narrative, Paul becomes a narrator.[90]
His arguments and constructions shape the text and the reading experience. Much of my
argument attends to this level of the text and analyzes Paul's narratorial role in
constructing characters and events.

In decentering Paul's narrative and seeing 2 Corinthians as a site of multivocal
narrative collection, the text itself might also be said to narrate in some ways. In a
poststructural narratological sense, as a site of dialectic processes and communication
between people, the text is a site where life stories meet.[91] This strategy places Paul in a
context with others in Corinth, but also with later readers, whose stories also shape their
experiences of the text. In attending to the afterlives of the text and considering the
historic possibilities of the characters, I attempt to treat this level of narration.

Decentering as Decolonizing

I do not pursue this study merely for the purpose of multiplying voices. By
focusing on narratorial choices and the use of identity reasoning, i.e., where the narration
seeks to create, maintain, renegotiate, or cross boundaries, I hope to decenter Paul and
think instead in terms of the communities of which he was a part and within which he

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[90] Following Gérard Genette, Narrative critics tend to distinguish three levels of
    narratives, including the text or narrative itself, the story or signified content, and the
    narration or the act of narrating. Bible and Culture Collective, "Structuralist and
    Narratological Criticism," in *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven: Yale University
    Press, 1995), 83. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca:
    Cornell University Press, 1980). See also Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar V.
    McKnight, *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield
    Academic Press, 1994).

[91] For more on poststructural approaches to New Testament exegesis, see David Jobling
    and Stephen D. Moore, *Poststructuralism as Exegesis* (Scholars Press, 1992);
    Stephen D. Moore, *Poststructural-Ism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault
    at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); Stephen D. Moore, *The
    Bible in Theory: Critical and Postcritical Essays* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical
    Literature, 2010).

operated.[92] There is an equalizing effect in seeing Paul and the Corinthians as

constructed, where Paul's authority is not assumed but restricted to his rhetorical claims.

An additional and essential part of this dissertation also applies a hermeneutics of

remembering and a hermeneutics of creative imagination that together envision the

struggles for justice that take place time and time again when wo/men seek out religious-

political ideals. There is precedent for this kind of visionary work in Corinthian biblical

scholarship. As previously mentioned, Wire argues for the important role of Corinthian

women prophets, rather than Paul, in her work on 1 Corinthians.[93] Her conclusions about

the Corinthian women prophets in 1 Corinthians can help to flesh out a picture of this

group in 2 Corinthians. While many commentators argue that Paul's critics and the issues

considered are different in 2 Corinthians, they do not adequately address Wire's thesis—

that there are female prophetic leaders in Corinth. I will assume that diverse Corinthian

wo/men are present and active in the community, and that the boundaries that are

debated, negotiated, and crossed should be considered in direct relation to the diverse

Corinthian wo/men.[94] Debate and diversity characterize the early Christian communities

and are present within the text.

 Scholars are thinking of new ways to envisage multiple pasts in studies of Pauline

communities and literature that take the linguistic turn into account. Johnson-DeBaufre

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[92]   Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul: Toward a Feminist and Decolonizing Approach to the Letters of Paul," 161–74.

[93]   Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*.

[94]   Ibid., 8–9. Wire states a few of her assumptions: 1) Everything in the letter should be understood in terms of Paul's aim of persuading the Corinthians. 2) Anything Paul says about "human beings, Corinthians, believers in Christ, women, and prophets" can be applied to understandings of women prophets in Corinth. 3) When Paul argues most aggressively, one can assume a different and opposite viewpoint present in the community. 4) The Corinthian women prophets have some role in the rhetorical situation, but the role is not necessarily known and cannot be adequately posited.

develops strategies for envisioning wo/men within the *ekklēsia* of 1 Thessalonians.[95]

Pointing out that it should no longer be necessary to debate whether wo/men were there,

she argues that scholars need to take the presence of wo/men seriously to consider what

difference their presence and diverse perspectives would have made within the

community. This can be done by envisioning the different roles wo/men might have

played in various roles and aspects of life.[96] Diverse wo/men would have come from

diverse ethnic, national, cultural, and class backgrounds as well. Seriously considering

these differences multiplies possible meanings and sharpens historiographical

reconstructions.

This leads to the final piece in fleshing out this historical envisioning work: to

envision "the multiple ways that such a teaching could be heard, regardless of precisely

what Paul meant."[97] Thus, when Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 to practice self-

control, to use Johnson-Debaufre's example, there are a range of ways that this can be

interpreted by various members in the community. Slave wo/men, whose bodies were

often not theirs to control, may hear this differently from slaveowning wo/men, for

example. Unmarried wo/men may hear this differently from married wo/men, and from

widows, and they may act in a variety of ways in response. While this type of approach to

textual or material remains may mean that interpretations and reconstructions are less

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[95] Johnson-DeBaufre, "'Gazing Upon the Invisible': Archaeology, Historiography, and the Elusive Women of 1 Thessalonians."

[96] Wo/men may have been community leaders, patrons, slaves of various kinds and in various settings, freedwo/men, business owners, co-workers. They may have formed traveling teams or companions. Wo/men were wives, sisters, daughters, aunts, grandmothers, widows, children, caretakers in times of illness, death, and birth. It is also possible to think of their roles as food preparers, ritual leaders and participants, musicians, etc.

[97] Johnson-DeBaufre, "'Gazing Upon the Invisible': Archaeology, Historiography, and the Elusive Women of 1 Thessalonians," 95.

conclusive, but they also more accurately portray the complexity of human relationships and life.[98] Focusing on "the creation and contestation of spaces and identities" resonates with the dialectic nature of identity/alterity.[99] This dissertation will combine these strategies for keeping wo/men in focus with an attention to identity reasoning evidenced in the letter's narratorial choices. This work better reflects the complexity of life in the past while also making ethical choices to shift the focus of biblical and historical scholarship from the traditional center and character to the periphery, the margins, and the gaps. Following the identification and critique Paul's kyriarchal rhetoric of othering and various passages of 2 Corinthians, the next three chapters apply these envisioning strategies to make wo/men visible in the counter-narratives and afterlives of the text.

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[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid., 98–99.

CHAPTER 3

ESTABLISHING THE DIVINE KYRIARCHY IN 2 COR 1:1–14

"Thank God I'm alive," Paul expresses in 2 Corinthians 1:3–4. He wastes no time

in telling the Corinthians his sad story. He suffers generally (1:3–7), he suffers in Asia

(1:8–10), and his future promises suffering, too (1:10–12). He does not want the

Corinthians to be unaware of his suffering (1:8). But why not? What is the point of all

this talk of Paul's physical pain? This chapter argues that suffering and speech indicate

contact zones for the assertion of boundaries in debates for communal authority. Through

these images, Paul introduces a kyriarchal system of imitation between God, Christ,

himself, and the Corinthians that he will continue to employ throughout the letter. Paul

constructs himself in the image of Jesus and implies that the Corinthians should imitate

him. He also constructs himself as a powerful speaker in his productive calls to God and

his boasting, which speaks volumes in the face of the Corinthians' controlled prayers.

After analyzing these constructions, I will envision alternative historical possibilities by

considering multiple entry points into these debates about authority and theology.

In the greeting and blessing at the beginning of 2 Corinthians, Paul describes his

role as an apostle to the Corinthians as well as his relationships to the community and to

God/Christ.[1] In addition to listing the name of the senders, Paul and Timothy, Paul

provides a self-description, introducing himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus through the

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[1] These sections are integral in establishing this text as an occasional letter that loosely fits into the rhetorical form and genre of a letter. By including the name of the senders, the recipients, and a greeting, 2 Corinthians 1:1–2 is quite similar in form to 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Margaret Thrall describes that Pauline prescripts frequently consist of: "a) Paul's name and the name(s) of co-sender(s) with self-description, b) name(s) of recipients, and c) greeting containing χάρις and εἰρήνη." Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 79.

will of God.[2] While Paul adds this title for himself in about half of his extant authentic

letters (Romans 1:1, 1 Corinthians 1:1, and Galatians 1:1), Thrall suggests the possibility

that "the term is used where he feels some need to assert his credentials."[3] The letter is

addressed to the Corinthian *ekklēsia*, along with the holy ones in Achaea. Following the

prescript is the traditional greeting, which wishes grace and peace to the letter's

recipients.[4] The next several verses resist easy scholarly classifications, even as they elicit

commentary about this being the most personal of Paul's introductions.[5] While most

Greco-Roman letters feature a thanksgiving in this position, many scholars see 2 Cor.

1:3–11 as forming an introductory blessing in the form of a eulogy or *berakah*. Followed

by additional related material, this blessing functions in much the same way as the

traditional thanksgiving by signaling the letter's major concern or theme.[6] In this case,

the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians and the limits of Paul's role form the

major debates evident in Paul's discussion of suffering and consolation, and speech.

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[2] "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Timothy the brother, to the *ekklēsia* of God which is in Corinth, with all the holy who are in all Achaea [Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ, καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφός, τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ οὔσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ, σὺν τοῖς ἁγίοις πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ·]" (2 Cor. 1:1). All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[3] Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 79.

[4] "Grace to you and peace from God our father and lord Jesus Christ [χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ]" (2 Cor. 1:2).

[5] Peter Thomas O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul*, vol. 49, Supplements to Novum Testamentum (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 233.

[6] Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 208. As David Aune explains, the blessing formula "functions like Paul's thanksgivings by signaling the main theme: the same divine comfort Paul receives by sharing Christ's sufferings can be experienced by the Corinthians in their afflictions." In another approach that assumes the unity of the letter, Ben Witherington uses Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks to argue that this section consists of forensic rhetorical forms: an *exordium* (2 Cor. 1:3–7), *narratio* (2 Cor. 1:8–2:16), before the major *propositio* beginning in 2 Cor. 2:17. In this interpretation, these verses function to "win the audience over and thus gain a hearing." Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 356.

Apostolic Affliction and Oppressive Imitation

When viewed with a feminist decolonizing framework, 2 Corinthians 1:1–14 inscribes an ongoing debate of communal boundaries and authority as manifested in Paul's discussion of suffering (θλῖψις) and consolation (παρακαλέω). This discussion serves to narrate a relationship of imitation and identification between Paul, Christ, and the Corinthians. In spite of scholarly attempts to skirt the problem of power in analyses on this passage, these relational systems are inherently kyriarchal. They also reflect Paul's view of his role as an apostle in the community. In the first part of this section, I will consider the passage's use of suffering and consolation vocabulary, then I will examine imitation and identification rhetoric before analyzing the way the relational system assumed in this description of suffering utilizes imitation rhetoric. In the second part of this section, I will consider additional ways Paul's discussion of suffering serves to situate this passage within an imperial discursive context and reflect on the implications of this discursive strategy.

Immediately following the greeting, Paul praises God as he describes a circumstance in which he relied on God in the midst of suffering and despair.[7] He blesses God for God's role as the father of Jesus Christ, the father of mercy, as the God of all consolation, and, more personally, as the God who has recently given particular consolation to Paul and Timothy.[8] In this extended blessing, Paul uses a "high concentration of suffering- and consolation-words" in the nine verses of 2 Cor. 1:3–11.[9]

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[7]   Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 117.

[8]   "Blessed be the God and father of our lord Jesus Christ, the father of compassionate mercy and God of all consolation, the one who consoles us in all of our distress, so that we may be able to console those who are in any distress through the consolation

After describing the relational system of suffering and consolation in general terms, Paul reiterates this system as he turns to a particular example of the oppression he experienced in Asia. He describes how he despaired of life as he felt the sentence of death in himself (1:9). Paul does not focus on the cruelty of others or the violent acts he endures; rather, he focuses on the emotions and doubts he endures. This serves to make the methods of his endurance, God's consolation, more impressive.

In the depth of his suffering Paul appeals to and trusts God for response and deliverance. Paul relates his sufferings and experience of consolation and deliverance to Christ's. Indeed, Christ is the perfect example; it is Christ who shows that God's comfort and consolation abounds.[10] This passage can be read within the context of Paul's theological argument that there is power through weakness. Wan argues that it is Paul's mystical identification with Christ's sufferings that ultimately encourages him to use the argument of power through weakness. In suffering and receiving consolation from God, Paul identifies with Christ who has suffered and been delivered by God in the recent past. It is so that he and, by extension, the Corinthians, might trust in (πείθω) God that Paul

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by which we ourselves were consoled by God [Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ πατὴρ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν καὶ θεὸς πάσης παρακλήσεως, ὁ παρακαλῶν ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ θλίψει ἡμῶν, εἰς τὸ δύνασθαι ἡμᾶς παρακαλεῖν τοὺς ἐν πάσῃ θλίψει διὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως ἧς παρακαλούμεθα αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ]" (2 Cor. 1:3–4).

9   Terms for affliction or oppression (θλῖψις) appear four times in this passage. Likewise, terms for suffering (παθήματα) also appear four times. Wan, *Power in Weakness*, 35.

10 "Because just as Christ's sufferings abound in us, in this way through Christ's abundance also the consolation response abounds in us [ὅτι καθὼς περισσεύει τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς, οὕτως διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ περισσεύει καὶ ἡ παράκλησις ἡμῶν]" (2 Cor. 1:5).

and Timothy suffered and despaired.[11] They felt the sentence of death within themselves, but this was so they would not trust themselves, but God. This is a statement of significant faith that is separate from Paul's presentation of his wisdom and understanding.

The Corinthians are to imitate this faith. Paul describes his apostolic role as passing along consolation to the Corinthians.[12] As Thrall summarizes, "Paul is able to comfort the afflicted because he himself experiences abundant comfort."[13] His reception of God's consolation in the midst of suffering enables him to comfort and console the Corinthians when they experience suffering: "It is on their behalf that Paul experiences the affliction which is the prior condition of his receiving the comfort which he may then mediate to others."[14] For many commentators, Paul's identification with Christ in oppression and deliverance makes him an apostle and bolsters his claims to power in Corinth. Paul's rhetoric functions to "appeal to the sufferings of Christ which form the

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[11] "But we ourselves felt the sentence of death within ourselves, in order that we would not have trusted in ourselves but in the God who raised the dead [ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου ἐσχήκαμεν, ἵνα μὴ πεποιθότες ὦμεν ἐφ'ἑαυτοῖς ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ ἐγείροντι τοὺς νεκρούς]" (2 Cor. 1:9). The term "πείθω" is frequently translated as "to rely on" or "to trust." In this circumstance, God is the object of trust, rather than Paul or Timothy trusting themselves.

[12] "And if we are oppressed, it is for your consolation and deliverance; and if we are consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you endure the same feeling of suffering that we were also suffering. Our hope is made certain by you, knowing that you are our companions in suffering as well as in consolation [εἴτε δὲ θλιβόμεθα, ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑμῶν παρακλήσεως καὶ σωτηρίας· εἴτε παρακαλούμεθα, ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑμῶν παρακλήσεως τῆς ἐνεργουμένης ἐν ὑπομονῇ τῶν αὐτῶν παθημάτων ὧν καὶ ἡμεῖς πάσχομεν. καὶ ἡ ἐλπὶς ἡμῶν βεβαία ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, εἰδότες ὅτι ὡς κοινωνοί ἐστε τῶν παθημάτων, οὕτως καὶ τῆς παρακλήσεως]" (2 Cor. 1:6–7).

[13] Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 107.

[14] Ibid., 110.

common experience binding Paul and his Corinthian converts together."[15] Paul's

discussion of suffering fits into his larger rhetorical argument for apostolic authority.

Wan asserts that the high concentration of suffering- and consolation-words "anticipates

the so-called 'catalogues of hardships' of 4:8–9; 6:4–5; 11:23b–27, which in the early

church were marks of authentic apostles."[16] Paul's discussion of suffering and

consolation in imitation of Christ not only serves to construct his relationship with

God/Christ, but also shape the ideal for his relationship with the Corinthians, while

supporting his claims to apostolic identity and power.

Feminist and postcolonial scholars have identified and critiqued imitation rhetoric

in biblical passages, asserting that the imagery and language Paul uses to describe his

relationship with the Corinthians and with Jesus need to be approached with a

hermeneutics of suspicion to consider the way power functions. Elizabeth Castelli and

Joseph Marchal argue that imitation discourses are inherently hierarchical and readers

must be wary about giving in to the persuasive power that sees imitation as natural.[17]

Castelli describes the presuppositions of imitation:

> The notion of imitation presupposes at least two important and related things: a
> relationship between at least two elements and, within that relationship, the
> progressive movement of one of those elements to become similar to or the same
> as the other. This relationship is asymmetrical, for imitation does not involve both

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[15] Wan, *Power in Weakness*, 35.

[16] Ibid. Though Wan asserts that Paul did indeed experience serious hardships, the effect of Wan's discussion is to highlight Paul's authentic apostleship and authority.

[17] Castelli, *Imitating Paul*; Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*. While Castelli focuses on the problem broadly, Marchal reads with attention to the imitative rhetoric in Philippians. In her initial work on this topic, Castelli focused only on passages that contained the *mimesis* (or "imitation") root word in them. Following Markus Bockmeuhl's commentary on Philippians, Marchal argues that imitation is a notable theme in Philippians, and using Castelli's work, argues that this rhetoric is powerfully attempting to persuade readers to imitate Paul and Jesus. Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998).

elements moving simultaneously toward similarity, but rather one element being fixed and the other transforming itself or being transformed into an approximation of the first.[18]

When Paul identifies his suffering with Jesus' suffering in 2 Corinthians 1:3–5, he is not setting out an equal relationship between himself and Jesus, but rather, he is claiming to conform himself into an approximation of Jesus. Similarly, when Paul writes in verses 6 and 7 that the Corinthians may experience the same consolation when they are feeling the suffering he feels, this can be interpreted as Paul calling the Corinthians to conform themselves to his own model of suffering and receiving comfort. Rhetoric that argues for imitation of Paul, in either the Pauline literature or in later scholarship, assumes a kyriarchal ideology by assuming that Paul is a model for his readers. Indeed, when Paul's hopes for the future of the *ekklēsia* are tied to the Corinthians' conforming to his experiences of oppression and salvation, he places a positive value on this imitation (1:7). On the other hand, divergence from this model through difference and particularity is thus deemed wrong and (ironically, in this circumstance) dangerous.[19]

Some scholars have argued that this passage does not show imitation rhetoric as much as it shows a notion of identification.[20] This basic thesis argues that Paul is not just imitating Christ's sufferings and calling for the Corinthians to do the same, but is actually bodily participating in these sufferings through a mystic union with Christ. These interpreters use the body of Christ metaphor to understand this fellowship of suffering and resurrection. As the body of Christ, "if one member suffers, all suffer together" (1

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[18] Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, 21.

[19] Ibid., 22. As Castelli articulates, "The ideological force of such a prescription is clear; if imitation and the drive toward sameness are exhorted and celebrated, then difference is perceived as problematic, dangerous, threatening."

[20] Lim, *The Sufferings of Christ*; Wan, *Power in Weakness*.

Cor. 12:26).[21] Any distinction between imitation and identification or mystical union with

Christ and Paul, and subsequently, the Corinthians, does not change the power dynamic,

according to Castelli. Even if Paul uses terms that suggest a direct identification, it does

not change the initial assumption that Christ is the model upon which Paul and then,

subsequently, the Corinthians should base their actions. Rather, it further naturalizes the

power dynamic by assuming that there is no copy left, only the model.

Scholars reinscribe Paul's imitation rhetoric when they place Paul's descriptions

of suffering in a narrative of salvation history. By absorbing the particular stories and

lives of people into a master narrative of Jesus and salvation history, this scholarship

avoids the question of power.[22] For much of this scholarship, the story worth focusing on

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[21] This view is most particularly espoused by C.M. Proudfoot. In this view, Paul
      presents the Corinthians as one body (Christ's body) where each part and person has
      different roles, but Paul embodies a mediating role wherein, "as their missionary and
      pastor, he has had to assume a special amount of suffering on their behalf." The body
      of Christ metaphor involves the complete negation of the self for complete absorption
      into the body of the other(s). C. Merrill Proudfoot, "Imitation or Realistic
      Participation: A Study of Paul's Concept of 'Suffering with Christ,'" *Interpretation*
      17 (1963): 147. Laura Nasrallah argues regarding the body of Christ metaphor in 1
      Corinthians:
          A person's body is defined by the body politic to which it is subject, and in which
          it participates, whether that be the *ekklēsia*, the household, or the state. Talking
          about the body is a means of talking about hierarchy, ordering, and boundaries.
          As Elizabeth Castelli states, 1 Corinthians uses the image of 'one body' to manage
          a variety of bodies, not only constructing boundaries with regard to food and sex,
          but also delimiting the possibilities for the body as a site of power and expression.
      Furthermore, Paul's ranking of spiritual gifts within the body of Christ, where the role
      of apostle is listed above all other roles, functions to set up Paul as an authoritative
      leader while arguing for Corinthian complacence. Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*, 79,
      fn54; Elizabeth Castelli, "Interpretations of Power in 1 Corinthians," *Semeia* 54
      (1991): 209–12.
[22]   In his review and expansion of this work, Lim describes this scholarship as follows:
          These works identify various narrative components (e.g., story of God, story of
          Israel, and story of Jesus) within the narrative dynamics of Paul. These individual
          narratives enlighten and influence each other as Paul responds to different issues
          at different times and circumstances. What has been enthusiastically emphasized

is Christ's, and that of the subsequent "Christening" of Paul, the Corinthians, and humanity.[23] Castelli describes this as a spiritualizing of imitation rhetoric, wherein the hierarchy and symmetry of imitation rhetoric is made abstract and considered in spiritual rather than social terms. As she argues, "What seems to be at stake here is a desire to demonstrate an absolute kind of continuity of tradition, not only between the gospels and Paul, but also between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament."[24] A feminist decentering approach, however, sees an analysis of power as central to understanding the social relationships at work in Paul's discussion of suffering in 2 Corinthians 1.

In experiencing suffering in imitation of Christ, Paul claims weakness while redefining weakness as God's strength. He sets up the terms for this inversion in this introductory passage and continues this theme throughout the letter. He has suffered to the point where he is so weak that he has exhausted his own strength.[25] If he claims any strength now, it is only because God has given him that strength.[26] He characterizes his

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however, is not only that Paul continuously draws on the story of Jesus in his proclamation of the gospel but also that this story functions as a key component in Paul's subsequent communication with his communities. And within this correspondence a key strategy of Paul is to underscore the ongoing implications of the story of Jesus not only in his own life but also in the lives of the communities. Lim, *The Sufferings of Christ*, 24.

[23] Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*, 245–337; Lim, *The Sufferings of Christ*, 19. As Lim reports, Witherington uses the term "Christening of the Believer" in his narrative approach.

[24] Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, 25; Lim, *The Sufferings of Christ*, 25. Lim extends that continuity further, stating, "[The story of Jesus for Paul] is a story that is given an interpretive function that begins and ends beyond the scope of human history."

[25] "For we do not want you to not know, brothers and sisters, about the oppression that happened to us in Asia, that had depressed us exceedingly beyond our strength, that we were in great doubt about life [Οὐ γὰρ θέλομεν ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς θλίψεως ἡμῶν τῆς γενομένης ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ, ὅτι καθ᾽ὑπερβολὴν ὑπὲρ δύναμιν ἐβαρήθημεν, ὥστε ἐξαπορηθῆναι ἡμᾶς καὶ τοῦ ζῆν]" (2 Cor. 1:8).

[26] "But we ourselves felt the sentence of death within ourselves, in order that we would not have trusted in ourselves but in the God who raised the dead. He has rescued us,

own strength as within the realm of divine power—having to rely on God. Paul uses the presentation of his own suffering to bolster rhetorically his own position. Others who may seem strong are only strong in a human realm, but not in the divine realm. Claiming that anytime he looks weak that this is evidence of God's strength is a difficult argument to contradict. When he looks strong he is strong, but when he looks weak he is also strong. Castelli describes this inversion strategy as Paul's placing "two sets of categories, values, or positions in clear opposition." This is in order "to allow the distance that separates them or the irony emanating from that distance to undergird his own position."[27] Paul mainly uses this strategy in regards to strength and weakness in this passage.[28] By distancing himself from those who would claim strength and redefining weakness as strength, Paul finds a way to transfer the force of critiques of his weakness into support for his authority claims. This is a powerful rhetorical move in the broader debate concerning community authority.

Apostolic Affliction and Oppressive Imitation

Postcolonial scholars also discuss imitation and mimicry in their work. In a colonial context, such as the Roman Empire, the process of colonization encourages the

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and will rescue us from such deaths; in him we have hoped and he will rescue us again. [ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου ἐσχήκαμεν, ἵνα μὴ πεποιθότες ὦμεν ἐφ᾽ἑαυτοῖς ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ ἐγείροντι τοὺς νεκρούς· ὃς ἐκ τηλικούτων θανάτων ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς καὶ ῥύσεται, εἰς ὃν ἠλπίκαμεν καὶ ἔτι ῥύσεται]" (2 Cor. 1:9–10).

27 Castelli, "Interpretations of Power in 1 Corinthians," 214. Castelli develops this critical analysis of inversion in her work on ignorance and wisdom in 1 Cor. 1 where she notices that Paul "characterizes his own discourse as explicitly lacking in wisdom, and goes so far as to claim ignorance of everything 'except Jesus Christ and him crucified,' and, in a remarkable rhetorical turn, locates his own discourse squarely within the realm of divine power," (208).

28 The inversion of wisdom and ignorance comes to the fore in the so-called "Fool's Speech" of 2 Cor. 11. Please see chapter 5 for my discussion of this section.

colonized to follow the example of the dominant culture in myriad ways. The colonized

often do this to varying degrees. This process of imperfect imitation is what Homi K.

Bhabha refers to as "mimicry."[29] The colonizers want to cause the colonized to

acculturate, assimilate to the looks, practices, etc. of the colonizers, but they can never

quite do it. It is imperfect because the colonized can never become the colonizer, and so

they can never fully acculturate. They are almost the same but not quite.[30] Some scholars

interpret Paul's use of imitation rhetorics and logics as indicative of his participating in

an effort to colonize the Corinthians or other communities.[31] In the following paragraphs,

I will describe a few ways Paul might be seen as a colonizer in this passage.

It is possible to interpret the narratorial choices in the text as signaling Paul's use

of imperial rhetoric in attempting to claim authority in Corinth. Unlike in 1 Corinthians,

Paul opens this letter by placing the Corinthians within the Roman province of Achaea.

The Corinthian *ekklēsia* is described in two ways in the greeting: their belonging to God

(τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ) and their being with important people in their geographical

region (σὺν τοῖς ἁγίοις πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ). By situating the Corinthian

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[29] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. Bhabha also argues that this mimicry can easily slide over to mockery, where the imitation of the colonizing culture reflects negatively on them.

[30] Or, they are not white, as Bhabha points out in regards to the particular context of India under British colonization. The modern experience of colonization has often come at the hands of white European colonizers to brown peoples and their lands. Bhabha is heavily influenced by the work of Frantz Fanon, for whose *Black Skin, White Masks* he wrote a critical introduction. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

[31] Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*. Scholars have sought to compare many biblical figures with either colonized or colonizing imperial agents, and use postcolonial theories to point to instances of hybridity, ambivalence, or mimicry within biblical texts. For example, a recent volume, *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes*, contains several essays that debate whether Paul was a hybrid figure, whether he collaborated with or resisted empire, and the ways in which ambivalence marks his writings.

ekklēsia with and within the Roman province of Achaea, Paul locates this community within the larger cultural history of this geographic region.[32] For the audience, such a placement might recall a particular history or founding myth. Achaea refers to Southern Greece and the Peloponnese in the middle of the first century, and was also the name of the Roman senatorial province that had been created in 27 B.C.E. by dividing southern Macedonia from its larger mass to the north.[33] Corinth was the capital city of Achaea. Calling forth the name of Achaea also recalls the history of the Achaean League or the Achaean War, in which the Corinthians collaborated with others in their region in disobeying and fighting the Roman Empire. Some in the Corinthian audience may have remembered, through drama or song, their crushing defeat suffered at the Battle of Corinth, which resulted in the imperial razing of Corinth in 146 B.C.E.[34] Situating the Corinthian *ekklēsia* in this imperial province locates the Corinthians within community identity narratives that may evoke the costs of disobedience or the pride of resistance.[35]

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[32] This situating is important in terms of how a people's identity might be constructed. For example, in describing the town of Madison, I might say that it is the home of Drew University, or that it is in Morris County (one of the richest counties in the U.S.). Or, I might call it the Rose City where New York City's roses were grown in the early 20th century. I could also describe its proximity to New York City, the Jersey Shore, or the Delaware Water Gap. I might also simply say that it is in the United States of America or even the Western World. The way I choose to situate Madison and with which area I associate it can greatly change how it is viewed. Some in the Corinthian *ekklēsia* might choose to prioritize identification markers other than the Roman province of Achaea.

[33] Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 87.

[34] Wan, *Power in Weakness*, 16–29. Wan describes this destruction as involving the razing of the city walls, the burning of buildings, the execution of adult males, and selling many others into slavery. While it was never completely uninhabited, the city was officially resettled with Roman veterans and freedpersons by a decree from Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.E.

[35] Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 85–89. After a lengthy discussion of the possibilities for why Paul might

However, in 2 Corinthians 1:1 the Achaeans who surround Corinth seem to

support obedience. The Corinthians are in the context of people Paul esteems as saints or

holy people (τοῖς ἁγίοις). These people are in service to the god who wanted Paul to be

an apostle, he argues. From the first verse in this letter that debates Paul's authority in the

community, the Corinthians are surrounded with those on Paul's side. Not just one, but

two words "πᾶσιν" and "ὅλη" indicate that Paul's influence in the region extends beyond

the Corinthian ekklēsia.[36] This image of the legions with their eyes on Corinth continues

in verse 11, where the Corinthians are instructed to pray so that many other people will

give thanks for and benefit from Paul's gifts.[37] These narratorial choices suggest that Paul

includes having many powerful people under his influence in his claims for authority in

Corinth.[38] Indeed, God, resembling an emperor, also seems to be in Paul's corner as God

wills Paul's apostleship and responds to Paul with consolation and rescue.[39] This opening

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have greeted the Corinthians thus, Thrall concludes that Paul "must have supposed that these other recipients had some knowledge of attitudes and events in Corinth."

[36] "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Timothy the brother, to the *ekklēsia* of God that is in Corinth, with all the holy who are in all Achaea [Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ, καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφός, τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ οὔσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ, σὺν τοῖς ἁγίοις πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ]" (2 Cor. 1:1).

[37] "While you also help us by your prayers, so that thanks may be given on our behalf by many for the gift in us through (the prayers of) many [συνυπουργούντων καὶ ὑμῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τῇ δεήσει, ἵνα ἐκ πολλῶν προσώπων τὸ εἰς ἡμᾶς χάρισμα διὰ πολλῶν εὐχαριστηθῇ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν]" (2 Cor. 1:11).

[38] Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*. Marchal argues for going beyond the question of whether Paul is attempting to assert power in the use of imitation rhetoric. Using Bhabha's theories on the instability of colonial power, Marchal suggests that Paul's power is unstable. The more the colonizer seeks for power over the colonized, the more they rely on the colonized for their power, and thus, the more dependent, paranoid, and uncertain they become. It is possible to interpret Paul's critiques of those he calls super-apostles in light of such paranoia about his authority in Corinth.

[39] Paul introduces himself by saying that he is "an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God (Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ)" (2 Cor. 1:1). He also asserts of God, "He has rescued us, and will rescue us from such deaths; in

passage lays the groundwork for Paul's later presentation of himself as a divine imperial

army general who conquers the earthly wisdom and speech of his opponents in 2

Corinthians 10–13, which will be analyzed in chapter 5.[40] While this first passage

describes Paul's suffering, attention to the narratorial choices open up space to consider

alternative interpretations, including ones that see Paul as a colonizer.

However, many scholars argue that this passage displays Paul as anti-imperial.

Much of this scholarship is rooted in questions and assumptions about the sort of

oppression Paul experienced in Asia.[41] Common suggestions about the nature of this

affliction include illness, imprisonment, or mob violence.[42] Some scholars have linked it

to descriptions in Acts 19 or 1 Corinthians 15 to suggest the scenes of fighting the

Artemis-supporting Ephesian crowd or the wild beasts in the arena. Margaret Thrall

considers several of these options and concludes: "Violent persecution, perhaps in the

form of incarceration, remains the most probable explanation of the *thlipsis*."[43] Imperial

vocabulary of oppression, appeal, mercy, patient endurance, suffering, salvation, rescue,

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him we have hoped and he will rescue us again [ὃς ἐκ τηλικούτων θανάτων ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς καὶ ῥύσεται, εἰς ὃν ἠλπίκαμεν καὶ ἔτι ῥύσεται]" (2 Cor. 1:10).

[40] The comparison between Paul's mission and the Roman Empire is further supported by Paul's allusion to the Roman military processions that paraded through towns in celebration of military victories in 2 Corinthians 2:14–17. See chapter 4 for additional discussion of this passage.

[41] Depending on how one understands the use of the literary plural, Paul's coworkers, such as Timothy, may have also experienced the oppression in Asia.

[42] Harvey, *Renewal Through Suffering*. Harvey asserts that Paul refers to a traumatic event that happened between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians that caused him to question whether he would be alive for the end of the ages. The convention in antiquity was to discuss the psychosocial events that caused ill fortune to come upon the person from either the gods, daimons, or other people, rather than to focus on the symptoms or the ailment. Questions about these psychosocial events contributed to concerns from the community about Paul's ability to lead and his standing with the gods.

[43] Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 117.

despair, death sentence is prevalent as Paul describes his suffering in Asia and his reliance on God for his deliverance and survival.

Neil Elliott argues that Paul's activity and message was thoroughly political and socially relevant. Passages of 2 Corinthians, including 2 Cor. 1:1–11, feature in his evidence. Paul's anti-imperial stance should be obvious, he argues, "once we recall the efforts of the Nabatean king Aretas IV to arrest Paul in Damascas (2 Cor. 11:32–33) and the apparent regularity with which Paul was hauled before civic magistrates, thrown into Roman prisons, and condemned as a menace to public order (Philem. 1, 9, 13; Phil. 1:7, 12–14, 16; 4:14, 1 Thess. 2:2; 1 Cor. 4:9; 2 Cor. 1:8–9, 6:5, 11:23)."[44] By seeing Paul as risking his own life and limb to deliver a message of hope and future freedom from empire to the nations, Paul can be liberated from a history of interpretations that see him, and consequently also his followers and interpreters, as politically irrelevant, argues Elliott. Rather, Paul acts responsibly in the face of social and political injustice for Elliott, and thus, so also should his followers. In another essay that considers Paul's imperial stance, Gordon Zerbe asserts that, along with his millenarian mindframe and politically infused rhetoric in describing the gospel, Paul's experiences of "arrest, imprisonment, torture, and eventually execution at the hands of the Roman *imperium*" show a Paul that is critical toward the Roman Empire.[45] Like Elliott, part of Zerbe's evidence for these arrest, imprisonment, and torture experiences comes from 2 Corinthians, including from this opening passage. Furthermore, these troubles in Asia serve to bolster Paul's apostolic

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[44] Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 183.

[45] Gordon Zerbe, "The Politics of Paul: His Supposed Social Conservativism and the Impact of Postcolonial Readings," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 70.

identity as they "reflect the real perils a first-century Christian missionary like Paul must have encountered."[46]

However, Paul's political identity is shaped in a context of negotiation. Feminist and postcolonial scholarship urges understandings of the multidimensional and complex nature of oppression. Envisioning a complex and multidimensional audience makes it possible to consider a complex Paul who interacts with different people in different ways at different times. As he interacts with the varied and dynamic Corinthians, he can be both kyriarchal and resistant. As a complex figure, it is possible to interpret Paul as ambivalent, displaying hybridity in his own negotiations with empire. Imitating the empire can also be considered a survival strategy for the colonized. In asking for the communities to imitate him, he is also imitating the empire's own use of imitation discourse. Paul's own position in relation to empire is more complicated than just imperial collaborator or colonized resister. He displays moments of hybridity as he both imitates the imperial imitation rhetoric and also proposes new ways of existing and resisting under empire.

By considering oppression as a multiply layered pyramidal structure of kyriarchy, feminist biblical scholar Cynthia Kittredge argues convincingly that empire-critical readings of 1 Corinthians frequently privilege Paul's critiques of Roman imperial society while dismissing any of his reinscriptions of empire or his attempts to subordinate women. Frequently, this scholarship argues that 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, in which women are told to be silent in church, is an interpolation because it does not complement a view of Paul as liberator. In response to such arguments, Kittredge points out how Paul's

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[46]   Wan, *Power in Weakness*, 35.

political language may have sought to shape the internal organization of the *ekklēsia* by simultaneously critiquing some aspects of imperial power systems while upholding others.[47] Rather, "an approach that reads the letter as a rhetorical argument that builds a symbolic universe in which gender relations are constructed can more adequately show how Paul uses imperial language to both subvert and reinscribe the imperial system."[48] Thus, Kittredge analyzes another part of the letter, one that is not dismissed as an interpolation, to assert that Paul reinscribes imperial relationality when he asserts that everything will come under God's subjection, including his son.[49] Against many empire-critical readings, "it is Paul who reinforces the language of subordination typical of the patronage system and it is those with whom he argues in Corinth whose symbolic universe most threatens the imperial system."[50] The same is true for Paul's symbol system in 2 Corinthians 1:1–14. While gender is not directly mentioned in this discussion of communal authority, a reinscription of imperial relationships is central to the passage and to Paul's apostolic authority claims, even as he is describing his own suffering at the hands of the empire.

Just as there are multiple interpretations in modern scholarship, there were different interpretations in antiquity as well. While imitating or identifying with Christ's or Paul's sufferings may have been revolutionary for those who were at the top of the social hierarchy and saw this identification as salvific for the community, the underlying assumption posits Paul as rightful leader in this suffering. Others in Corinth and the

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[47] Kittredge, "Corinthian Women Prophets and Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians."
[48] Ibid., 105.
[49] 1 Corinthians 15:28.
[50] Kittredge, "Corinthian Women Prophets and Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians," 108.

surrounding areas who already felt themselves to be suffering under multiplicative layers of oppression may have understood Christ differently. In discussing 1 Corinthians, Wire asserts that the Corinthian women prophets thought of Christ as a mediator between themselves as agents and God rather than seeing themselves as being owned by Christ as slaves of God. They also saw their lives as dynamic, where they are agents rather than as passively waiting for a messiah to come rescue them. As she argues, "Paul expects them to oppose exchanging this active role for one defined by subordination and exchanging this Christ who is the mediating spirit of God for a Christ who is the cosmic model of submission."[51] If anything, this point is exacerbated in 2 Corinthians 1:1-14, as Paul now asserts a model of a suffering Christ, and asserts that subordinating and even losing themselves to weakness and suffering is the key to life in Christ.

<u>Call, Consolation, and Control</u>

While Paul discusses suffering and his particular affliction in Asia, he also discusses responses to suffering in this passage. As we saw in the last section, these topics fit into the larger negotiations about power and communal authority in the Corinthian *ekklēsia*. In this section, I will argue that the authority to speak is a site for debate in the Corinthian community as manifested in Paul's use of speech and response language in 2 Corinthians 1:1-14. Similar to Paul's discussion of suffering, speech and response language reflects both his theological structure as well as his relationships with the Corinthian audience.

Although speech language is not immediately obvious in English translations of this passage, Paul uses it throughout this passage as he discusses responses to suffering,

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[51] Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 38.

to his letter, and to the Corinthians. The initial respondent in the letter is God. Paul

describes God as "God of all consolation [θεὸς πάσης παρακλήσεως]" (2 Cor. 1:3).

This is a god who can be called upon for aid and comfort.[52] In response to Paul and

Timothy's appeals in the midst of suffering, God is ready to provide consolation when

someone who is oppressed or afflicted calls upon him.[53] It is helpful to see the root of the

word, καλέω, which means, "to call," within παρακαλέω, which is translated as "to

appeal" or "to be appealed to," or within παράκλησις, "consolation or comfort." While

the English translations can multiply the degree of their difference, the words are in the

same semantic field. The juxtaposition of the two terms raises the meaning of παρα. The

most appropriate definition for this prefix that also preserves the rhetorical integrity of

the terms is "from one to another." The Open English Bible translation reflects this

relationality between the call and response, the caller and respondent, saying that this is

"the God ever ready to console." This translation suggests that in order for comfort or

consolation to take place, God must be called upon, appealed to, or invoked. New

Testament scholars should be familiar with the image of the Paraclete, from the Gospel of

John in particular. A paraclete refers to "an advocate who has been called to one's aid, a

helper, an encourager."[54] He/she is "called to one's aid, especially in a court of justice."[55]

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[52] While this word, παράκλησις is often translated as "consolation" or "comfort" in this letter, it is frequently translated as "encouragement" or "appeal" elsewhere. See Romans 15:5. These words have very different connotations in English— "encouragement" suggests happier circumstances than "consolation." See also Psalm 18 for an intriguing parallel.

[53] "The God who consoles us in all of our distress, so that we may be able to console those who are in any distress through the consolation by which we ourselves were consoled by God [ὁ παρακαλῶν ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ θλίψει ἡμῶν, εἰς τὸ δύνασθαι ἡμᾶς παρακαλεῖν τοὺς ἐν πάσῃ θλίψει διὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως ἧς παρακαλούμεθα αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ]" (2 Cor. 1:4).

[54] Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University

God does not just respond to Paul's appeal once, but over and over again.[56] In this passage, Paul demonstrates how he relies on and trusts in God's exemplary response to his appeal in the midst of suffering.

As we saw in the last section concerning suffering, in modeling himself after God, Paul presents himself as someone who can respond when the Corinthians rely on him in the midst of any troubles they might experience (2 Cor. 1:4). God responds to Paul with comfort so that he can respond with this same comfort and fill this same role for the Corinthians. Comparing the vocabulary of 1 Cor. 1 and 2 Cor. 1 further supports a reading that sees the relationality of Paul's terms in 2 Corinthians and that is attuned to the power of these communicative acts. While 1 Cor. 1 contains an abundance of καλέω words, 2 Cor. 1 is overflowing with παρακαλέω words. In 1 Cor. 1, Paul is called (καλέω), the Corinthians are called by God to be saints together with others who call on the name of the Lord (1 Cor. 1:2), and Paul tells the Corinthians to consider their call (1 Cor. 1:26). The general call from 1 Corinthians is exchanged for a relationship specific response in 2 Corinthians. In 2 Cor. 1 he stresses the response and the relationality through παρακαλέω. God is the ultimate responder. Paul responds with God's response, and the Corinthians are encouraged to respond in controlled ways. Switching from καλέω to παρακαλέω, allows for the emphasis on the system of hierarchal and asymmetrical

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Press, 1996).

[55] Ibid.

[56] "But we ourselves felt the sentence of death within ourselves, in order that we would not have trusted in ourselves but in the God who raised the dead. He has rescued us, and will rescue us from such deaths; in him we have hoped and he will rescue us again. [ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου ἐσχήκαμεν, ἵνα μὴ πεποιθότες ὦμεν ἐφ'ἑαυτοῖς ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ ἐγείροντι τοὺς νεκρούς· ὃς ἐκ τηλικούτων θανάτων ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς καὶ ῥύσεται, εἰς ὃν ἠλπίκαμεν καὶ ἔτι ῥύσεται]" (2 Cor. 1:9–10).

imitation relationships, such as we saw in the previous section. Furthermore, when Paul

expresses that his response to them is just like that of God's to him he implies that relying

on Paul's consolation response is the only way of escaping death and destruction (2 Cor.

1:9–10). Paul's claims in debates about authority in Corinth are exemplified as he

presents himself in the model of God the Paraklete. The ideal rhetorical effect is for the

Corinthians to receive Paul's consolation response and, consequently, his claims to

authority.

Speech language also functions within this passage to present Paul as having the

authority to speak and to control speech, while the Corinthians are silent or told what to

say. The authority to speak is one of the contested issues throughout the Corinthian

correspondence. In multiple places throughout this correspondence, Paul claims power

over speech by casting himself as the object of speech and the key speaker. Castelli

makes this argument concerning 1 Corinthians:

> Paul constructs himself in the letter and underwrites his authority as an apostle in
> large measure through the use of self-reflexive language about himself as a
> *speaker*. The majority of the verbs referring to speech in the letter are cast in the
> first-person active voice, referring to Paul himself; further, those referring to
> Paul's discourse are used to authorize his activities and his demands upon the
> community. By contrast, when verbs concerned with communication and speech
> are used in the letter to refer to the Christian community at Corinth or Christians
> in general, they are derogatory, negative, or cast in the passive voice. To put it
> another way, Paul's discursive strategy appears to be to cast himself as the
> grammatical subject of speech.[57]

A similar strategy is still at work in 2 Corinthians. Now it seems that Paul reacts

defensively. He indicates that his speaking ability has been attacked.[58] His argument for

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[57] Castelli, "Interpretations of Power in 1 Corinthians," 205.

[58] "Because, they say, "On the one hand, his letters are fierce and strong, but his fleshly
     appearance is weak and his word contemptible [ὅτι, Αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ μέν, φησίν, βαρεῖαι

the majority of the letter is that while others may boast, Paul boasts in the Lord (2 Cor.

1:12; 3:4–6; 5:12; 10–12).[59] Yet, in this passage, Paul is not comparing his

communicative abilities to the rival apostles' abilities, but rather to those of the

Corinthians. Similar to his attempts to control the Corinthians' speech in 1 Corinthians, in

2 Cor. 1:11 he directs that they should give their prayers of thanks for him.[60] This request

for their prayers should be seen with Paul's discourse of communication in 2 Cor.1:12–

14.[61] He immediately turns to his own communication in verse 12 when he argues that his

boast is rooted in open-heartedness or trustworthiness (ἁπλότητι) that resembles God

(εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ).[62] His writing is his proof of this godly behavior, and his claim for

boasting is the Corinthian community, who, as he reminds them, are dependent on Paul

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καὶ ἰσχυραί, ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενὴς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος]" (2 Corinthians 10:10).

[59] Of the 37 times boasting (καύχησις) is used in the New Testament, 20 of those usages occur in 2 Corinthians. There are 6 more in 1 Corinthians.

[60] Paul constructs the role of the Corinthians to be distinct from his role and from God's role in verses 10 and 11. Paul and Timothy are rescued from the heart of the battle, while God performs the rescuing and is the object of Paul's hopes. As the narrative turns to the Corinthians in verse 11, the gentitive absolute reinforces their distance from the action: "While you also help us by your prayers [συνυπουργούντων καὶ ὑμῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τῇ δεήσει]" (2 Cor. 1:11). Greek textbook writers Hansen and Quinn define the genitive absolute as used, "to describe a circumstance involving a person or thing not otherwise connected with the rest of the sentence, a phrase consisting of a noun or pronoun (and any modifiers) plus a participle (and any objects)...put in the genitive case." Hardy Hansen and Gerald M. Quinn, *Greek, an Intensive Course* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 323. The focus is on Paul's mission, and the prayers of the Corinthians are distinct from this mission.

[61] The majority of 2 Corinthians scholarship posits a break in the passage between 2 Cor. 1:11 and 1:12.

[62] "For this is our reason for boasting, the witness of our knowledge, that we have behaved in the world in open-heartedness and sincerity of God, indeed not in fleshly wisdom but in God's grace, and exceedingly so to you ['Η γὰρ καύχησις ἡμῶν αὕτη ἐστίν, τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως ἡμῶν, ὅτι ἐν ἁπλότητι καὶ εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ σαρκικῇ ἀλλ᾽ ἐν χάριτι θεοῦ, ἀνεστράφημεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, περισσοτέρως δὲ πρὸς ὑμᾶς]" (2 Cor. 1:12). The term ἁπλότητι can also be translated as simplicity, frankness, uprightness, or a liberal literary style.

for their own ability to speak proudly.[63] They are Paul's communicative act, and he is theirs.[64] Yet, what may seem at first glance to be an equal relationship is found to be asymmetrical and hierarchical in Paul's presentation in which he more perfectly imitates the speech of God and attributes the qualities of his speech to God.

This inequality is especially poignant when considering the placement of this sort of discussion within what would normally be the thanksgiving of the letter. Indeed, if the Corinthian readers expect a thanksgiving like the one from 1 Corinthians 1, they would be particularly shocked. In his previous thanksgiving to them in 1 Corinthians, Paul is profuse in his praise for them. He states that they have been enriched in every way by God, in speech and knowledge of every kind, and are not lacking in any spiritual gift (1 Cor. 1:4–8). It is possible that some of them have interpreted this to mean that they have little need of Paul or other authoritative speakers, and have been acting with their own authority and spiritual gifts of preaching, teaching, speaking in tongues, and other interpretive powers. In 2 Cor. 1:1–14, Paul reins in his praise of the Corinthians from the 1 Corinthians thanksgiving that some might have interpreted as his acknowledgment of their gifts and authority. The speech language in this passage suggests that he is now eager to reassert his own authority from the very beginning.[65] Instead, they must give

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[63] "For we do not write to you anything either which you cannot read or also understand, but I hope that you will understand until the end, and just as you have understood us in part, that we are your boast just as even you are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus [οὐ γὰρ ἄλλα γράφομεν ὑμῖν ἀλλ' ἢ ἃ ἀναγινώσκετε ἢ καὶ ἐπιγινώσκετε, ἐλπίζω δὲ ὅτι ἕως τέλους ἐπιγνώσεσθε, καθὼς καὶ ἐπέγνωτε ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ μέρους, ὅτι καύχημα ὑμῶν ἐσμεν καθάπερ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ]" (2 Cor. 1:13–14).

[64] This is reiterated in 2 Cor. 3:2, as I discuss in the introduction and in chapter 4.

[65] Throughout the letter, boasting language frequently appears alongside references to speaking or writing, which suggests the prevalence of these actions in communal debates about authority.

thanks for him and his work before they are to receive thanks or praise themselves (2

Cor. 1:11). Furthermore, if they would like him to boast for or give thanks for them on

the day of the Lord, they should boast for him (2 Cor. 1:14). While some scholars assert

that this reversal signals the close bond between Paul and the Corinthians, this speech

language, like the discussion of suffering discussed above, additionally reinscribes the

kyriarchal relationship system of imitation.[66] Instead of thanksgiving and praise for their

wise speech, their power of speech is controlled as the Corinthians are told what to say

and how to say it.

Just as I showed in the previous section, such a relationship system can be

interpreted in different ways, depending on someone's social status. Indeed, Paul

indicates that interpretation is a site for debate when he asserts that he writes no more

than what they understand and he hopes that they will read and understand until the end

(2 Cor. 1:13).[67] Such a statement coupled with the previous verses (the thanksasking, if

you will) begs the question of whether he is implying that they have misunderstood him

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[66] O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul*, 49:258. O'Brien asserts this strong relationship:
> In other introductory periods a close bond of fellowship between converts and apostle in thanksgiving and petition appears, as Paul offers thanks and intercedes for his readers. At 2 Cor. 1:11 that bond exists, as *the Corinthians*, having Paul's needs clearly presented to them, pray for his deliverance. As their requests are granted and Paul is enabled to carry on his apostolic labours so thanksgiving will be offered.

[67] The ἕως τέλους may refer to the end of days or the end of the letter. I lean into the latter end in my interpretation above, but dwelling on the end of days leads to additional interpretations. Paul asserts that they should thank him in part because on the day of the Lord, which is imminent, Paul and Timothy will serve as references or commendations for them. With the questions regarding Paul's recommendation, mention of the Corinthians' need of Paul's recommendation at the end of days could rhetorically function as a threat. Reading with Philippians 2:16, the communities may rely on Paul to show that they did not run, suffer, work in vain. If Paul does not stand with them, then they have no proof that they are living in Christ.

in previous greeting and thanksgiving sections. He may ask whether they stopped reading

the last letter after the thanksgiving and thus, missed his dictums that assert limits and

controls on these gifts and on the freedoms of wo/men and slaves in the *ekklēsia*. As

Wire, Nasrallah, and others have argued regarding 1 Corinthians, the attempt to control

speech and communications can be read as Paul's attempts to control the speech and

authority of women in particular. Wire argues that the Corinthian women prophets

assumed that women could offer spoken expression of Christ rather than seeing

themselves as subordinate to Paul and other male speakers.[68] Some of the major sources

of conflict in 1 Corinthians have to do with Paul's insistence on his authority as an apostle

in regulating, controlling, and downplaying the importance of Corinthian wo/men who

were revered as authoritative leaders and prophets in the church. He does this in many

ways, including by imposing teachings on marriage or changing one's social status (1

Cor. 7), women being silent in church (1 Cor. 14:34–35), regulating women's clothing

and appearance, especially when speaking (1 Cor. 11:2–16), and the ranking of spiritual

gifts, for which apostle comes before those who prophesy (1 Cor. 12–14). That he does

not speak directly to these women in 2 Corinthians should not lead us to assume that

either the disagreements or the women have gone away. Yet, the majority of scholarship

on 2 Corinthians has failed to adequately take these community members and concerns

into account when attempting to pinpoint a conflict between Paul and the Corinthians, or

Paul and the rival apostles.

As I have argued here, the speech language in this passage is indicative of debates

over Paul's authority in the community. Several scholars argue that the source of the

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[68]   Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 38.

conflict between Paul and the community in 2 Corinthians concerns their different approaches to patron-client relationships. Scholars tend to champion the method of itinerant apostleship they see Paul proposing while dismissing Paul's rivals as the peddlers of God's word Paul describes (2 Cor. 2:17). As Gerd Theissen argues, in accepting support from the wealthy members of the congregation, Paul's competitors would have had valuable resources, such as comfortable meeting houses and important connections. In contrast, Paul proffers a different style of apostleship and ministry wherein the refusal of aid and support shows pure motives as he is willing to risk destitution rather than risk corruption from donors.[69] Similarly, Peter Marshall argues that by refusing Corinthian support, he was rejecting their gift of friendship and dishonoring the would-be patron or friend.[70] The assumption of the Corinthians' support through prayers of thanksgiving reflects this debate around Paul's participation in Corinthian systems of support for community ministers.[71] Furthermore, given my arguments above, I would argue that the regulation of speech is coupled with the regulation of thanksgiving and support. In the same verse where the narrative regulates the Corinthians' speeches to God, it also controls their practices of giving Paul their support and thanks.

Along with the argument about the centrality of gender in the regulation of speech and other disagreements in 1 Corinthians, gender is also a factor within this complex social situation and passage. When scholars posit wealthy men in the community at the nexus of a conflict with Paul over his rejection of a patron-client model of ministry (such

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[69] Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, 53. Theissen also discusses the possibility that this a difference between the Jesus movement and Pauline Christianity.

[70] Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*.

[71] Under the assumption that this section of the letter forms a therapeutic or reconciliation letter, scholars consistently emphasize the partnership between Paul and the Corinthians in this passage.

as Gaius or Crispus), they often assume that women and slaves, wealthy or otherwise, are not key participants in this disagreement.[72] Yet, if previous arguments made by Wire, Castelli, Kittredge, Nasrallah, and others are assumed regarding the particular ways Paul's regulation of speech in 1 Corinthians limited wo/men and slaves, then this control of speech about giving support to Paul may also be particularly directed at female or lower status prophets and leaders.[73]

Decentering in an *Ekklēsia* of Diverse Wo/men

In thinking about suffering and speech as sites for the negotiation of boundaries in debates about communal authority, what are some of the ways boundaries might have been negotiated differently? How might they have been crossed? A decentering approach with feminist and decolonizing assumptions of diversity and difference within an *ekklēsia* of wo/men in Corinth enables the imagining of additional historical possibilities. In his discussion of suffering, Paul sets up a kyriarchal relational system in which the Corinthians are to model themselves after him as he identifies himself with a suffering Christ. As Matthews argues, "a counterexperience predominates in Corinth, one of 'realized eschatology' in which resurrection and riches of the spirit rather than suffering and death are perceived as sources of power."[74] What might a relational structure look like that emphasizes resurrection and the spirit?

It is possible to imagine a more egalitarian system of relationships than the one Paul supposes, where members of the *ekklēsia* support each other and provide comfort

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[72] e.g., Welborn, *An End to Enmity*; Wan, *Power in Weakness*.

[73] e.g., Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*; Kittredge, "Corinthian Women Prophets and Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians"; Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*; Castelli, "Interpretations of Power in 1 Corinthians."

[74] Matthews, "2 Corinthians," 203.

during suffering, in mutual benefit and reciprocity. Certainly, alternatives to Paul's leadership in the form of female or slave prophetic leaders were present in the ancient Mediterranean. The pre-Pauline baptismal formula of Galatians 3:28 functioned in the Corinthian community to further ideas that there is no male and female, slave or free in the leadership and service structures of the *ekklēsia*. April De Conick connects this formula to debates on the interpretation of the creation accounts in Genesis 1–2. She argues that 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul asserts that women need to veil when praying or prophesying, makes use of a misogynistic interpretation of Genesis 1:27. While Paul interprets this passage to see men as made in the image of God and women as merely derivative, some in Corinth assumed that Gen 1:27 described the image of God to include both male and female. Living into their theology as resurrection peoples meant the abolition of gender and status hierarchies, and so, as it seems from 1 Cor. 11, "they tore off their veils, toppling the male hierarchy and dismissing the now illegitimate authority of their husbands."[75] To others, unveiled women may have signaled licentiousness or adultery. Paul indicates the importance of veiling "because of the angels," which may be read with 1 Enoch and Genesis 19 as a reference to a cosmic system wherein unveiled women are in danger from demons, rapists, and immoral men. But, to the women, refusing to veil could be seen as their rejection of a system that controls and blames women for the immoral actions of fallen angels or men. Wearing the veil and having

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[75] April D De Conick, *Holy Misogyny: Why the Sex and Gender Conflicts in the Early Church Still Matter* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 62. For resurrection theology see Antoinette Clark Wire, "Rising Voices: The Resurrection Witness of New Testament Non-Writers," in *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds : Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza et al. (New York: Continuum, 2004); Antoinette Clark Wire, "Women Prophets in the Corinthian Church," in *Conflict and Community in the Corinthian Church*, ed. J. Shannon-Clarkson (New York: United Methodist Church, 2000).

some control over their bodies was a luxury that class afforded to only some women.

Many slave women and freedwomen were expected to be sexually available to their

owners and patrons, regardless of a veil. Indeed, slaves donning the veil may have been

seen as deceptively dressing above their station or attempting to pass for higher social

status.[76] The rejection of the veil could be seen as living into the idea that there is neither

slave nor free in the Corinthian Christ community. Similarly, the refusal to veil in public

could be an anti-imperial political move. Like the modern Women in Black justice

movement, these Corinthian women may have also chosen their clothes to resist the

violence of the imperial social order or the expectations of piety to the emperor or the

gods of the empire.[77] While Paul objects most strongly to leading prayers or prophesies

while not wearing the veil, slaves and wealthy women alike could practice the political

act of refusing to veil.

It is likely that the content of their prayers and prophecies echoed the ethic of

their actions. Rather than offering prayers of thanksgiving for Paul's work, as Paul

directed, they may have prayed that their anti-imperial resistance efforts and their own

radical resurrection living would continue to transform the world. They may have prayed

for their safety as they willingly risked sexual harassment or charges of adultery by

rejecting the veil and the systems it represented. Their prophecies may have envisioned a

future wherein Gal. 3:28 was realized in an *ekklēsia* of wo/men. In praying without veils,

they demonstrate an assumption that their gender and their social status did not inhibit

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[76] The fear of this type of passing is well-documented in the ancient Greek novels, for
     example. See Katharine Haynes, *Fashioning the Feminine in the Greek Novel*
     (London: Routledge, 2003).
[77] "Women In Black," *Women In Black*, accessed April 19, 2015,
     http://womeninblack.org/.

their abilities to commune with God or have God the Paraklete or Sophia respond to or dwell within them. While Paul stresses that his pleas and prayers receive a response from God, some wo/men in Corinth assume the effectiveness of their prayers or the fruition of their prophecies. Indeed, if they did not think that their prayers were effective they would not have taken risks to continue to pray.

While many of these actions could have been taken up by wo/men who were not in leadership positions, Paul himself writes of wo/men as leaders in Christ communities in Achaea. Phoebe, for example, is said to be one of the holy ones (τῶν ἁγίων), a deacon (διάκονον) and leader (προστάτις) of the *ekklēsia* in Cenchreae, which was just a few miles from Corinth (Romans 16:1–2). Certainly, if she is greeted in Paul's letter to the Romans then she not only traveled to Rome but also traveled to Corinth. She likely played a role in the debates evident in the Corinthian correspondence. Perhaps she helped lead the movement to refuse veiling, or to offer support to Paul, or to other traveling ministers like herself. Indeed, she may have been one of the rival apostles. Even though she is far from home in Rome, she is described independently of any others, which further suggests the great extent to which independent women may have led and participated in early Christ communities. The contrast between the description of Phoebe as a leader and deacon, and that of Gaius as someone who is obligated as a host (ὁ ξένος) suggests that the importance of her work is in her leadership rather than her wealth or patronage. This is in contrast to what most English translations imply by translating προστάτις as benefactor. It is easy to envision wo/men in similar positions in Corinth and, for that matter, in all of the communities Paul addresses.[78]

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[78] Other women mentioned in Paul's letters include, but are not limited to, Chloe (1 Cor.

Beyond 2 Corinthians, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* suggest that women may have frequently asserted their own authority in the *ekklēsia* as teachers and preachers, with or without Paul's permission or awareness (*The Acts of Paul and Thecla*). As Francine Cardman describes, "It is likely that Thecla represents not one historical woman, but many women of the first and early second centuries who publicly preached and baptized, claiming the authority of Paul for their ministries."[79] Some versions of these women clearly taught and led in Corinth. By resisting Paul's constructions of the rival apostles as male, and, by thinking with Phoebe and Thecla, that women could also be leaders and apostles, it is not difficult to envision these rivals as women. Paul also constructs the rival apostles as comparable to the snake of Genesis 3:13, but no one assumes they are actually snakes (2 Cor. 11:3). Certainly his constructions of their gender or their foreignness can be met with the same skepticism.

Certainly, in spite of the kyriarchal imitative system Paul inscribes in 2 Cor. 1:1–13, the presence of egalitarian structures in Christ communities is evident outside of Paul's writings, too. Pliny's *Letter to Trajan* attests to the presence of female slaves who were also called deacons (Pliny, *Letters*, 10.96–97). It also asserts that many in the empire are participating in this superstitious behavior, regardless of age, rank, or sex. Additionally, martyrdom accounts preserve stories of women of rank and female slaves as exemplary in their perseverance during suffering. *The Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons* memorializes the female slave Blandina for her "communing with Christ," her

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11), Prisca (Romans 16:3, 1 Cor. 16:19, 2 Tim. 4:19, Acts 18), Mary (Romans 16:6), Junia (Romans 16:7), Tryphaena and Tryphosa (Romans 16:12), Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2), and Apphia (Philemon 1:2).

[79] Francine Cardman, "Women, Ministry, and Church Order in Early Christianity," in *Women & Christian Origins*, ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 302.

perseverance, and her extreme faith in the midst of sufferings: "The heathen themselves admitted that never yet had they known a woman suffer so much or so long" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.1).[80] Many slave women regularly faced difficult circumstances and times of suffering in their involvement in the horrific system of slavery in Greco-Roman antiquity. While some of these participants in the Corinthian Christ community may have found encouragement and hope in Paul's description of God's ever-present consolation, it is not difficult to imagine others rolling their eyes at Paul's descriptions of his sufferings in comparison to their quotidian suffering, prayers, and perseverance. Perpetua and Felicitas are also remembered for their extraordinary visions and faithful perseverance in the account of their martyrdom (*The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*). Indeed, in terms of suffering, women may have found their own experiences of surviving childbirth to be more life-giving or inspirational than identifying with Christ's sufferings or with Paul's imprisonment in Asia.[81]

Paul's attempts to claim authority regarding speech and communication could be related to disagreements about accepting hospitality and collecting money. Some wo/men in Corinth may have preferred offering their thanks and support by feeding and sheltering itinerant ministers and teachers like Paul or Phoebe. For them, participating in the community may have looked more like the cooperative community Luke describes in Acts 2:44–47, where all possessions and goods were evenly distributed according to need. Paul's refusal of their support and attempts to control their prayers and offerings of

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[80] Bart Ehrman, *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 40.

[81] For more on the sacrifices and suffering of mothers in the New Testament and Early Christian literature, see Kathleen Gallagher Elkins, "Mother, Martyr: Reading Self-Sacrifice and Family in Early Christianity" (Ph.D., Drew University, 2013).

thanks showed his distance from the community and contempt for its practices. It is thinkable that Chloe or other wo/men in the community thought that other leaders in the community were good partners because they were amenable to sharing resources or authority, unlike Paul. Paul's rivals could have taught that wo/men should use their spiritual gifts, and could preach, pray, and prophesy in ways that they assumed were sanctioned by God. The rival leaders may have preached a version of Christ's message that affirmed these wo/men in their rejection of social hierarchies, while Paul's attempts to claim authority were not welcome. It is also thinkable that Paul rejected Corinthian hospitality, not because he supported egalitarian itinerant ministry, but rather because he did not want to accept Corinthian hospitality when doing so would limit his control over his teachings. Perhaps he did not want to partner with the wo/men leaders in the *ekklēsia*, and thus, did not accept their hospitality. Others, however, may have fought for the full inclusion of wo/men within the Achaean *ekklēsia*. Some in Corinth may have said thanks to God for the extraordinary work of wo/men.

CHAPTER 4

MAKING ROOM IN 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-6:13

> Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone
> else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a
> quotation.
> <div align="right">—Oscar Wilde</div>

The lines between communal identity and individual identities blur in and out of

focus around sites of debate and negotiation. In 2 Corinthians 5:1–6:13, these sites are

bodies, bodily practices, and homes. As Paul writes about resurrection, his narratorial

choices that focus on bodies and homes reflect fluid boundary lines, processes of give

and take, balancing acts, around these sites. He constructs a version of the world,

populated with people, characters, who are supposed to play particular roles and behave

in certain ways. He and these other characters flit in and out of parts, sometimes cast as

the vulnerable wo/man in the house and other times putting on the clothes of an

ambassador, conquering peoples and lands on behalf of God. How might various peoples

of Corinth interact with the story Paul constructs? What is the relationship between this

story and history? In Danna Fewell's words, "How do the imagined space, time,

characters, and events in the textual world relate to the material space, historical

circumstances, people, and social conditions that contribute to the production of this

story/history?"[1] What other stories might dwell in the realm of historical possibility? If,

as Wilde suggests, Paul is other people and his self-representation mimics others'

opinions, what might we say about these other people? While Paul offers his version of

how Christ communities experience bodies and envision dwelling spaces, in this chapter,

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[1]   Fewell, "Making Space: Biblical Storytelling as Social Negotiation," 11, fn 22.

I will consider how these constructions are not descriptions of reality, but rather reflective of his participation in local, particular debates. After briefly situating this passage within the context of the letter, I will use a feminist decolonizing approach that assumes the active participation of diverse wo/men in these debates to analyze how Paul constructs himself, the Corinthian community, and God in his description of resurrection.[2] I will then consider the implications of these constructions in possible debates concerning bodies and homes. Finally, I will envision alternative historical possibilities and afterlives that might make room for additional voices in these debates.

The Writing on the Hearts: The Passage in Context

This point in the letter is often treated within a broader context of the surrounding chapters 1–7. These initial chapters may form a distinct fragment (or several) from chapters 8–9, which discuss the collection for Jerusalem, and from the Fool's Speech and/or Letter of Tears of chapters 10–13. In the portion of the letter that immediately precedes 5:1–6:13, Paul constructs a series of dichotomies that he will continue to apply in this section. Some of the topics from the introduction to the letter continue into 2:14–7:1, including the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians through Paul's defense of his confidence, pride, and boasting, especially evidenced in the sincerity of his

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[2]   As I have noted in previous chapters, the history of scholarship on 2 Corinthians does not address the significance of gendered or imperial rhetoric here and focuses on the figure of Paul and his claims for authority. For example, Jouette Bassler assumes, along with the majority of commentators, that Paul "is focused exclusively on his relationship to the community as a whole and on his status in their eyes relative to the itinerant ministers, who, it seems, were all men." While Bassler observes that the language of status negotiations is prominent, this chapter will expand on the ways in which this passage is also infused with gendered and imperial status discussions by assuming that the audience is made up of diverse wo/men. Bassler, "2 Corinthians," 566–69.

behavior with them and in the letter.[3] While many interpreters argue that chapters 4–7

predominantly feature Paul's defense of his apostolic ministry, I will expand on this

scholarship to see this defense in Paul's discussion of resurrection through the passage's

imagery of homes and bodies.[4] Throughout 2:14–4:18, Paul rhetorically erects an

elaborate system of dichotomies to claim authority for his ministry and to draw

boundaries around "in Christ" identity.

The beginning of this section introduces a metaphor of a Roman triumphal

procession in 2:14–17.[5] Paul describes how Christ leads the triumphal procession that

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3   In the previous chapter, I argued that Paul constructs a theological and political
     system that is kyriarchal in the ways it presents God, Jesus, Paul/Timothy, and the
     Corinthians. This kyriarchal theological system is now layered with meanings related
     to domestic life, relationships, and space. As in the last chapter, my argument relies
     on the idea that 1 Corinthians can be used as a source for information about the
     community in Corinth and ongoing discussions in 2 Corinthians, and that the wo/men
     interlocutors of 1 Corinthians are still Paul's dialogic partners in 2 Corinthians.

4   Wan, *Power in Weakness*; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*. Wan breaks down the
     section into the following three discussions: Ministry of hardship 4:7–5:10, Ministry
     of reconciliation 5:11–21, Paul's final appeal to the Corinthians 6:1–13; 7:2–4. Jan
     Lambrecht uses the following subsections, under a broader section head of "Paul's
     Apostleship": The Future Destiny 4:16–5:10, The Ministry of Reconciliation 5:11–
     21, As Ministers of God 6:1–10, Apostolic Appeal and Exhortation 6:11–7:4. These
     section headings display the commentators' focus on Paul's defense of his ministry.

5   "But thanks be to God, the one who in Christ leads us in triumphal procession, and
     through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him.
     Because of Christ we are an aroma to God among the ones being saved and among
     the ones perishing; to the one a fragrance from death to death but to the other a
     fragrance of life to life. And with respect to these things, who is competent? For we
     are not as the many, peddling the word of God, but we speak from sincerity, and as
     persons sent from God, standing in God's presence [Τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις τῷ πάντοτε
     θριαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ καὶ τὴν ὀσμὴν τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ φανεροῦντι δι᾽
     ἡμῶν ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ· ὅτι Χριστοῦ εὐωδία ἐσμὲν τῷ θεῷ ἐν τοῖς σῳζομένοις καὶ ἐν
     τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, οἷς μὲν ὀσμὴ ἐκ θανάτου εἰς θάνατον, οἷς δὲ ὀσμὴ ἐκ ζωῆς εἰς
     ζωήν. καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τίς ἱκανός; οὐ γάρ ἐσμεν ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον
     τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἐξ εἰλικρινείας, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ
     λαλοῦμεν]" (2 Cor. 2:14–17).

signals the power of God through aromatic fragrance (ὀσμὴ). Sze-kar Wan describes this

practice as follows:

> In accordance with Roman customs, the victorious generals leads his vanquished
> foes, with their leaders first in tow, in a parade through the entrance to a major
> city and in a major thoroughfare between cheering crowds, as a public display of
> civic celebration. The procession would normally end in the execution of the
> prisoners or their representatives.[6]

Paul presents God as an alternate emperor here, whose fragrant incense promises life to

those who are being saved and threatens death to those who are dying. The aroma signals

a moment in which boundaries seem fixed; its scent can provide consolation to those who

worship this Lord, or can be a foretaste of death for those whose allegiances lie

elsewhere. Thus, there are some initial dualisms: God as heavenly emperor versus earthly

Roman emperor; those who are being saved versus those who are perishing; Paul,

speaking sincerely, sent from God, and standing in God's presence, versus peddlers of

God's word. Yet, the boundaries are also fluid in these moments when theology comes to

resemble the Roman kyriarchy, and commentators cannot decide whether Paul is on stage

with God, a vanquished captive awaiting death, or the very aroma that lingers in the

midst of the crowd.[7] The Roman triumphs, much like the arenas, were sites for displaying

identity markers and for drawing and transgressing boundaries between groups.[8] This is a

perfect metaphor to begin a section where Paul, like those displaying their loyalties at a

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[6]   Wan, *Power in Weakness*, 58.

[7]   Ibid.; Roetzel, *2 Corinthians*, 57–58. 2 Corinthians commentators have been at odds
over whether to place Paul as a captive (with Wan), as on stage with God (Roetzel),
or somewhere in between. Perhaps it is the display itself that is important.

[8]   For more information on identity fluidity and boundary transgression at the arena, see
Carlin Barton, "Savage Miracles: The Redemption of Lost Honor in Roman Society
and the Sacrament of the Gladiator and the Martyr," *Representations*, no. 45 (1994):
41; Carlin Barton, *Roman Honor: The Fire in the Bones* (Berkeley: University of
California Press, 2001); Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative
Representation in Early Christian Era* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

triumph, will defend his sincerity and pure motives in his show of allegiance to God and to the Corinthians. Just as in the Roman triumphal processions, the costs of being caught on the wrong side are high.

Like the displays of both the pious loyalty of the Roman victors and the disgrace of their conquered foes in the processionals, the very flesh of the Corinthians is to be a display of Paul's credentials and God's power. Unlike others who need letters of commendation or who overly recommend themselves, Paul and Timothy have the Corinthians themselves to display as their boast.[9] Such a letter of commendation is written upon fleshly hearts, rather than stone, with the Spirit of God, rather than with ink.[10] This letter can be read and understood by all. On the heels of the metaphor of the Roman triumph, this imagery is reminiscent of the ever-present imperial stonework iconography that displayed the victorious and the vanquished. The Sebastaeion of Aphrodisias, for example, depicts the emperor and his family alongside the gods, in scenes of timeless conquering of various humiliated peoples. Similar scenes of imperial

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[9] "Are we beginning to recommend ourselves again? Or surely we do not need, as some, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, having been written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God, not on tables of stone but on tablets of fleshly hearts [Ἀρχόμεθα πάλιν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστάνειν; ἢ μὴ χρῄζομεν ὥς τινες συστατικῶν ἐπιστολῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἢ ἐξ ὑμῶν; ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ὑμεῖς ἐστε, ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν, γινωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγινωσκομένη ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων· φανερούμενοι ὅτι ἐστὲ ἐπιστολὴ Χριστοῦ διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ᾽ ἡμῶν, ἐγγεγραμμένη οὐ μέλανι ἀλλὰ πνεύματι θεοῦ ζῶντος, οὐκ ἐν πλαξὶν λιθίναις ἀλλ᾽ἐν πλαξὶν καρδίαις σαρκίναις]" (2 Cor. 3:1-3).

[10] The manuscript tradition reflects debate around the possessive pronoun describing whose heart is written on in 2 Cor. 2. While Codex Sinaiticus reads "your hearts" (ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν), many manuscripts read "our hearts" (ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν). As Wan points out, in support of the "our hearts" reading, "A letter of recommendation of course stays with the recommended at all times, as an introduction of the carrier to all other places." Wan, *Power in Weakness*, 160, note 5. Regardless of whose heart is written on, the Corinthian bodies are constructed as Paul's letter.

glory and foreign devastation could be seen throughout the empire. While viewers may have been illiterate or may not have spoken the Greek or Latin of the inscriptions, they would have understood the images. But Paul, arguing against others who would overly recommend themselves, asserts that his boast is not on stone, but on people, and carried in his heart. The next few verses provide further assertions of how Paul's ministry is distinct from that of others who need letters.[11] The proof of Paul's competence is not in fatal letters (τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτέννει), but through the life-giving Spirit (τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζῳοποιεῖ) (2 Cor. 2:6).[12]

The dichotomy between letter and spirit leads to the next several verses where Paul rewrites the past to claim apostolic power in the community. Paul sets up additional binaries between the ministry of death and judgment and the ministry of glory and justice, and between the sons of Israel and the Corinthians.[13] Cavan Concannon argues

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[11] "Such is the confidence we have through Christ to God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to consider anything as from us, but our competence is from God, who also made us competent as ministers of a new agreement, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. [Πεποίθησιν δὲ τοιαύτην ἔχομεν διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. οὐχ ὅτι ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν ἱκανοί ἐσμεν λογίσασθαί τι ὡς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν, ἀλλ' ἡ ἱκανότης ἡμῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἱκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης, οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος· τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτέννει, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζῳοποιεῖ]" (2 Cor. 3:4–6).

[12] It seems ironic that the life-giving letter is written on a human heart while the deadly letters are written on stone, since writing on hearts does not seem like a healthy practice. It is conceivable that slaves in Corinth might have heard this discussion of eternal branding with Spirit differently from freeborn slave owners. Such branding by the spirit also symbolizes freedom, Paul asserts in 2 Cor. 3:17.

[13] "Now if the ministry of death inscribed in letters on stone tablets came with glory so that the sons of Israel are not able to gaze into the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, a glory deactivated, how much more will the ministry of the spirit come in glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of judgement, the ministry of justice will abound in more glory. [Εἰ δὲ ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου ἐν γράμμασιν ἐντετυπωμένη λίθοις ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι ἀτενίσαι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον Μωϋσέως διὰ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ τὴν καταργουμένην, πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος ἔσται ἐν δόξῃ; εἰ γὰρ ἡ διακονία τῆς

that 2 Cor. 3:7–18 shows how Paul uses this story of Moses and the veil to both defend

Paul's own ministry and speech in the wake of attacks against him, and simultaneously

"construct the Corinthians as a people of the Spirit, distinct from the Israelites but heirs to

a divine glory that manifested itself on the face of Moses."[14] In Concannon's

interpretation, Paul constructs three groups of people in this passage: 1) the Corinthians,

2) Gentile "unbelievers" and, 3) the "sons of Israel." Each of these groups is "marked by

a different ability to perceive the glory of God."[15] Yet, Paul leaves the boundaries open

and fluid in moments, at times "hinting that the Corinthians might easily slip back into

their dangerous former identities [as Gentile 'unbelievers'],'" and at other times, writing

the Corinthians into the history of the Israelites as descendants of Moses.[16] By

constructing the Corinthians as people of the Spirit, Paul controls the narrative about that

Spirit, which he both roots in Israelite history and distinguishes from the ministry of the

present sons of Israel.[17] This makes Paul able to argue, in Concannon's words, that, "only

those who recognize his apostolic authority have access to the ministry of the Spirit and

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κατακρίσεως δόξα, πολλῷ μᾶλλον περισσεύει ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης δόξῃ. καὶ γὰρ οὐ δεδόξασται τὸ δεδοξασμένον ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μέρει εἵνεκεν τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης δόξης· εἰ γὰρ τὸ καταργούμενον διὰ δόξης, πολλῷ μᾶλλον τὸ μένον ἐν δόξῃ]" (2 Cor. 3:7-11).

[14] Concannon, *When You Were Gentiles*, 115.

[15] Ibid., 106.

[16] Ibid., 105–16. Concannon distinguishes between writing the Corinthians into the history of the Israelites via genealogical descent as sons of Israel versus via "as distinct heirs to Moses," (114). This is because Concannon reads the veil story as one in which Moses's lack of frankness led to this obstacle or veil in between the reader and the ancient covenant. In other words, it is not the ancient covenant that is the problem, but rather the veil that represents the inability of the sons of Israel to properly perceive God's glory, (108). Concannon's interpretation counters readings of this passage that support traditional and supersessionist views of Paul as a Christian convert who has turned away from his old Jewish law-obsessed religion in favor of a universal Christianity.

[17] Ibid., 106.

the promise of transformation that it offers 'from glory to glory' (2 Cor. 3:18)."[18] Paul's

focus on the glory and justice that comes through transformation weaves throughout the

next several chapters as he continues to participate in communal debates about his

authority. It is this promise that leads him to have hope, be bold, and not lose heart.

This hope of glory may seem hidden behind a veil or inside an earthenware jar,

but it nonetheless inspires (2 Cor. 4:7). The dichotomy between inner and outer natures is

inscribed on bodies when Paul argues that he carries the death of Jesus in his body (2

Cor. 4:10). This death is shown in the marks of Paul's oppression, so that the life of Jesus

will one day be visible in his mortal flesh.[19] The outer nature is wasting away while the

inner nature will be renewed (2 Cor. 4:16).[20] There are also boundaries around time.

After rooting the Spirit ministry in the past of Israelite history, Paul compares the present

and the future here. The present marks on the flesh of the body are marks of oppression

and death. But, because they also symbolize a promise of future glory, Paul does not lose

heart (2 Cor. 4:16). These dichotomies set up the next section, 5:1–10 in which the outer

nature is equated with what can be seen, including temporary affliction and nakedness,

the earthly and temporal, and with wasting and death. The inner nature is described as

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[18] Ibid.

[19] "Always carrying the dying of Jesus in my body, so that the life of Jesus might be visible in our bodies. For we the ones living are always being given over to death because of Jesus, that also the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. [πάντοτε τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέροντες, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡμῶν φανερωθῇ. ἀεὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες εἰς θάνατον παραδιδόμεθα διὰ Ἰησοῦν, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φανερωθῇ ἐν τῇ θνητῇ σαρκὶ ἡμῶν]" (2 Cor. 4:10–11).

[20] "Therefore, we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is decaying, our inner nature is being renewed day by day [Διὸ οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν, ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ' ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρα καὶ ἡμέρᾳ]" (2 Cor. 4:16)

renewal, connected with eternal time, glory beyond measure, new clothes that cover over nakedness, and with what cannot be seen.

One border that is remarkably blurry in the text is that between Paul and the Corinthians. For example, the manuscript discrepancy regarding the possessive in 3:2 highlights a broader ambiguity in the passage around boundaries and identity. Additionally, the plural prepositions throughout this passage suggest this instability of community identities. Sometimes the plural prepositions seem to indicate Paul or even Paul and Timothy exclusively, while in other instances, it would seem that others, such as the Corinthians, all who are being saved, or all who see the glory of God, are included. This ambiguity begs the question: where are the Corinthians located, either as one group or several, in relation to Paul, Timothy, or other Christ communities? Or, from the other perspective, where is Paul (and/or Timothy) located in relation to them? Where do they belong? Where is home? Where are their bodies, and how are bodies marked in the present versus in the future? The dichotomies are spatial as well as temporal. In which moments might the Corinthians distinguish themselves from Paul or from Paul's constructions of them? Where might they distinguish his constructions of himself or of others with their experiences with him or with others? Paul uses a mélange of metaphors in this passage, oscillating between bodies and houses. In the following sections of this chapter, I will separately treat these metaphors and their role in the narrative world Paul constructs.

Naked and Groaning for the Lord of the House: Bodies and Body Practices

In this section, I will argue that 2 Corinthians 5:1–6:13 reflects an ongoing debate of communal boundaries and authority as manifested in arguments about body regulation

and self-mastery. At the beginning of chapter 5, Paul continues to employ dichotomies

between inner and outer natures and between present and future time in his discussion of

resurrection. This is exemplified and spatialized in bodies and in dwelling spaces, which

are located either on earth or in the heavens. There are two dwellings, the current earthly

one (ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους), and one of God (οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ), which is

not made with hands and is eternal.[21] The earthly dwellings or bodies are temporary, in

danger of imminent destruction. Paul says that he and the *ekklēsia* groan (στενάζομεν),

longing for clothing or covering, as they are exposed or naked (γυμνοὶ).[22] Clothing is

never explicitly mentioned in this passage, but the verbs ἐπενδύσασθαι and ἐκδύσασθαι

convey this sense.[23] In these earthly houses they are burdened (βαρούμενοι) by being

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[21]   "For we know that if ever our earthly dwelling house is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house made without hands, eternal in the heavens [Οἴδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους καταλυθῇ, οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ ἔχομεν οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς]" (2 Cor. 5.1). Translators sometimes translate this metaphor as "body" since Paul makes this meaning explicit later in the passage: "Therefore always being confident and knowing that while we live in the body we are away from the lord [Θαρροῦντες οὖν πάντοτε καὶ εἰδότες ὅτι ἐνδημοῦντες ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐκδημοῦμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου]" (2 Cor. 5.6). For example, *The New New Testament* preserves the sense of "body" throughout its translation of this passage. Hal Taussig, *A New New Testament: A Reinvented Bible for the Twenty-First Century Combining Traditional and Newly Discovered Texts*, 2013.

[22]   The majority of the Greek manuscripts read ἐνδυσάμενοι "when we have put these on" in 2 Cor. 5:3. However, some traditions read ἐκδυσάμενοι "when we have taken these off." The NA-26 and ff. follows this minority. Eberhard Nestle et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece, Greek-English New Testament*, 26th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979). Thrall suggests that the reason some have rejected the majority tradition is that it seems repetitive: "It is self-evident that when one has put on a garment one is not naked," (377). However, Thrall, siding with the majority tradition, asserts that ἐνδυσάμενοι "is intended to give emphasis, and the point is made as a warning to some amongst the readers who might be inclined to regard the disembodied state as the ideal." Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 373–77.

[23]   Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*. In the same word family are the nouns ἐπένδυμα, meaning "upper garment," and ἐπενδύτης, which denotes "a garment or robe worn over another." This latter term is used in 1 Sam 18:4 when Jonathan strips

mortal (θνητὸν), and away from the Lord (5:6).[24] It is against Paul's expressed wishes for any to remain in this dwelling, in this state of body on earth, for he would rather be away from the earthly body and with the Lord.[25] To be at home in one's fleshly or earthly body is at odds with what Paul is preaching. The goal is to please God anywhere, at all times, and all places (5:9). These dichotomies (i.e. earthly home versus heavenly dwelling, nakedness versus clothing, distance from the Lord versus presence with the Lord, outward appearance versus in the heart) allow Paul to rhetorically erect boundaries and construct identity within the community. As Caroline Vander Stichele writes,

> The ideal in Paul's eyes is not to be naked or unclothed (v. 3), but rather to be fully clothed, "so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (v.4). In this way he shows that he would prefer to exchange his present status "in the body" for being "with the Lord" (vv. 6–8).[26]

Paul constructs "in Christ" identity as characterizing someone who desires to NOT be naked, exposed, or away from the Lord. Taken with his metaphor of dwellings, some in Corinth may have heard this as Paul's rejection of earthly homes in favor of dwelling with the Lord. This is connected to the promise of God's eternal glory from 2 Cor. 3:7–4:18.

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off his robe and gives it to David.

[24] "For indeed in this house we groan, desiring to put on again our building, the one from heaven. If at least certainly, when we put these on we will not be found naked. For while we are burdened in the tent we groan because we do not wish to be stripped but we wish to put on garments over it, so that which is mortal should be devoured by eternal life καὶ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ στενάζομεν, τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐπενδύσασθαι ἐπιποθοῦντες, εἴ γε καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι οὐ γυμνοὶ εὑρεθησόμεθα. καὶ γὰρ οἱ ὄντες ἐν τῷ σκήνει στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι, ἐφ' ᾧ οὐ θέλομεν ἐκδύσασθαι ἀλλ' ἐπενδύσασθαι, ἵνα καταποθῇ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆςζωῆς]" (2 Cor. 5:2-4).

[25] "Yes, we are confident and we are more delighted to travel away from the flesh body and to dwell with the Lord [θαρροῦμεν δὲ καὶ εὐδοκοῦμεν μᾶλλον ἐκδημῆσαι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἐνδημῆσαι πρὸς τὸν κύριον]" (2 Cor. 5:8).

[26] Vander Stichele, "2 Corinthians: Sacrificing Difference to Unity," 747.

According to the dichotomies Paul employs, dwelling with the Lord and possessing "in Christ" identity involves being clothed and the avoidance of nakedness. This language draws boundaries around "in Christ" identity where the ideal is a wish to be covered. Read with the rest of the passage, this with-the-Lord identity also involves boasting only in the heart and is in contrast to boasting in outward appearance [τοὺς ἐν προσώπῳ καυχωμένους καὶ μὴ ἐν καρδίᾳ] (2 Cor. 5:12) or according to the flesh [οὐδένα οἴδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα] (2 Cor. 5:16). Conversely, nakedness is threatening and, thus, should be avoided or even feared. The threat of nakedness and bodily exposure functions to further one's fear of God.[27] Furthermore, a person's behavior in the body functions to determine the judgment of the person. Being away from the Lord and not possessing "in Christ" identity is equated with nakedness or being at home in the earthly body. Being away from the Lord is also equated with regarding people according to the flesh, and with boasting in outward appearance.

The majority of scholars take this language of nakedness as a reference to a life without God versus an eternal life with God. There is a fair amount of scholarly disagreement about whether 5:1–10 is part of Paul's defense of bodily resurrection theology aimed at certain Corinthians who support disembodied resurrection or part of Paul's defense of his ministry for how it addresses the present life in the midst of bodily

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[27] "For we all must be exposed publically in front of the court pedestal of Christ, so that each would receive the things according to what was practiced in the body, whether good or base. Therefore, knowing the fear of the lord, we persuade people, and to God we are made visible; indeed, I hope to be made visible also in your consciences [τοὺς γὰρ πάντας ἡμᾶς φανερωθῆναι δεῖ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα κομίσηται ἕκαστος τὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος πρὸς ἃ ἔπραξεν, εἴτε ἀγαθὸν εἴτε φαῦλον. Εἰδότες οὖν τὸν φόβον τοῦ κυρίου ἀνθρώπους πείθομεν, θεῷ δὲ πεφανερώμεθα· ἐλπίζω δὲ καὶ ἐν ταῖς συνειδήσεσιν ὑμῶν πεφανερῶσθαι]" (2 Cor. 5:10–11).

suffering.[28] Commentaries on this and the surrounding passages tend to reproduce a

"Goldilocks" paradigm of Pauline (proto)orthodoxy.[29] For example, Lambrecht suggests

that the discussion of "nakedness" might hint at Paul's arguing "against somewhat

Gnosticizing opponents who preach the ideal of 'nakedness,' i.e., the eternal disembodied

existence of the soul."[30] Similarly, Thall assumes that Paul is arguing from a Jewish

perspective, wherein "there is complete salvation only at the resurrection, when body and

spirit will be re-united."[31] These scholars assume that there are critical theological

differences between Paul and some opponents in Corinth reflected in the language of

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[28] Roetzel, *2 Corinthians*, 74–77; Rudolf Bultmann and Erich Dinkler, *Exegetica: Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967), 298–332; Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 259–275; Lang, *2 Korinther 5, 1–10 in der neueren Forschung*, 194; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 288. Roetzel's explanation of this scholarly debate is succinct and my summary here adopts his review. He credits Bultmann as one of the earliest to suggest that 5:1–10 was a digression aimed at Corinthians who aspired to the nakedness of the soul when it was no longer entrapped by the flesh in death, while Paul sought additional clothing for the soul in a heavenly dwelling. Walter Schmithals argues more conservatively that Paul largely agreed with the Corinthians, except that where they saw a disembodied resurrection, Paul passionately argued for an embodied resurrection. F.G. Lang connected this passage to the previous verses based on seeing a larger argument about present life and apostleship, while Victor Paul Furnish further points out the continuation from the previous verses of the pattern of contrasts. This debate also has implications for how these scholars understand this passage's situation within the preceding section.

[29] King, *What Is Gnosticism?* This paradigm assumes that Paul, who represents proto-orthodox Christianity displays a "just right" mix between "Jewish" and "Hellenistic" influences, against opponents who are either "Judaizers" or "Gnostic Hellenists."

[30] Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 88–89; Bassler, "2 Corinthians," 568. While I disagree with the characterization of Paul's opponents as "Gnosticizing," Lambrecht's theory that Paul's dismissal of nakedness might be evidence of an opposing viewpoint is intriguing, and will be pursued in the following section. On the other hand, Bassler uses 3:7–14 to argue that Paul expands his attack on his opponents (engaged in a ministry of death) "to encompass Moses and the covenant he mediated, probably because Paul's opponents claim the authority of Moses and the Mosaic covenant." She points out that this moves readers toward a supersessionist view, but that this is not Paul's last word on the topic.

[31] Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 377. Thrall uses this reasoning to support the majority manuscript tradition in 2 Cor. 5:3.

nakedness. This assumption is productive for fleshing out some of the historical possibilities of the community in Corinth, which I will return to later in the chapter.

As it fits with the broader context of the letter (or letter fragment), Paul's argument is predominantly about perseverance, not losing heart, when the promise of God's glory seems hidden. The passage may function as a defense of the sincerity of Paul's ministry in the midst of indirect challenges by the presence of rival leaders or even direct challenges, like the one in 2 Cor. 10:10. Indeed, many commentators see the dualistic relationships of the passage as reflective of a direct contrast between Paul and rival apostles in Corinth. For example, the passage may suggest Paul's understanding of the resurrection as one of embodiment rather than a rival view of disembodied resurrection. In this vein, the passage also serves to continue Paul's rhetorical strategy of reversal logics, where signs of weakness are actually evidence of strength, as begun in the introduction and continued throughout the final section in Chapters 10–13. Additionally, Paul explains his authority from God and his own role as an "ambassador for Christ" (2 Cor. 5:20). Yet, by focusing on the apostleship of Paul and on a conflict between Paul and rival leaders in Corinth, most commentators do not address how this passage may negotiate and draw boundaries in local multi-perspectival debates. Decentering Paul turns the focus instead on these multi-perspectival negotiations.

It is possible that some in Corinth heard this part of Paul's letter as a condemnation of nakedness, and even, as encouragement of modest dress. In other words, some may have understood Paul as arguing that a person's modesty would display a person's piety. This ideology would function to encourage modest dress while shaming those who wear fewer or more revealing clothes. Indeed, as Vander Stichele points out,

the binary system that negatively assesses corporeality and temporality present in this passage shaped Christian views for many years to come: "In the Christian tradition this value system was expanded: body and spirit, temporality and eternity, natural and supernatural, woman and man, humanity and God entered into a hierarchical relationship to one another. Ascetic movements hostile to the body found fertile soil here."[32] In ancient Corinth, such a valuing of modest clothing practices would disproportionately affect wo/men from lower status levels who might not be able to afford additional cloth for making modest clothes, or, in the case of slaves, might not have control over their bodies and their clothing choices. Such an ideology would also shape perceptions of bodily covering during ritual practices, which, as attested in 1 Corinthians, was certainly a matter of debate in Corinth.

This passage from 2 Corinthians 5 is not the first place Paul has discussed body covering and clothing practices with the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, Paul argues for gendered practices around veiling and hairstyles. Women must veil their heads and wear their hair long, while men must wear their hair short and not veil while praying or prophesying.[33] Paul uses arguments from nature (11:13–14), social convention (11:4),

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[32] Vander Stichele, "2 Corinthians: Sacrificing Difference to Unity," 749.

[33] "Every many who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered shames her head, for it is the same as its having been shaved. For if a woman is not covered let her also be shorn, but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be cut or shaved, let her be covered. For a man ought not to be covered on the head, being in the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of a man. [πᾶς ἀνὴρ προσευχόμενος ἢ προφητεύων κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ· πᾶσα δὲ γυνὴ προσευχομένη ἢ προφητεύουσα ἀκατακαλύπτῳ τῇ κεφαλῇ καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῆς· ἓν γάρ ἐστιν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τῇ ἐξυρημένῃ. εἰ γὰρ οὐ κατακαλύπτεται γυνή, καὶ κειράσθω· εἰ δὲ αἰσχρὸν γυναικὶ τὸ κείρασθαι ἢ ξυρᾶσθαι, κατακαλυπτέσθω. ἀνὴρ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ὀφείλει κατακαλύπτεσθαι τὴν κεφαλήν, εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων· ἡ γυνὴ δὲ δόξα ἀνδρός ἐστιν]" (1 Cor. 11:4–7).

and theology (11:7–8) to support his point. Wire's commentary on 1 Corinthians 11

displays how Paul's rhetoric is gendered and directly related to the roles Paul would like

to see women play, or not play, in worship and prophesying. She argues that the wearing

of the veil would function to urge the submission of the women to free men in the

community. Furthermore, Wire suggests that the length of Paul's argument, and the

several attempts he makes to support it, signal that Paul anticipates resistance. She also

sees these factors as demonstrative of the Corinthian women prophets' distinct set of

theological and social reasons for their practices of not wearing veils to pray and

prophesy.[34] In addition to suggesting that women should be subordinate to male prophets

and apostles, Paul makes an argument about female (and male) practices related to bodily

appearance. Women are to wear veils and wear their hair long, which also serves to

distinguish them from their male counterparts. Is this distinction important only during

worship or ritual practices, or are these distinctions to be maintained at all times? (It

would obviously be difficult to wear one's hair long for prayer or prophesying, but wear

it cut short for other occasions.) The related passage of 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 may have

been interpreted by some in Corinth as a restatement of Paul's arguments about veiling

practices in Corinth. If so, those arguments would especially challenge wo/men prophets

and leaders in the community.

The passage transitions from body coverings to bodily behavior when the

judgment of Christ is connected to bodily practices.[35] The Lord has made the down

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[34] Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 130–31.
[35] "For we all must be exposed publically in front of the court pedestal of Christ, so that
each would receive the things according to what was practiced in the body, whether
good or base [τοὺς γὰρ πάντας ἡμᾶς φανερωθῆναι δεῖ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ
Χριστοῦ, ἵνα κομίσηται ἕκαστος τὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος πρὸς ἃ ἔπραξεν, εἴτε ἀγαθὸν

payment (τὸν ἀρραβῶνα) and can now judge people based on their practices in the body

(2 Cor. 5:5–10). The implication is that "in Christ" identity involves succeeding in a test

of bodies on the court pedestal (τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ)—passing judgment by

practicing good bodily behavior. While Paul does not state directly what constitutes good

(ἀγαθὸν) or bad (φαῦλον) behavior in this passage, the language of purity and sincerity

figures prominently, as does the continued binary between inner and outer natures. In the

broader context of the passage, Paul's frankness and purity is a major point of his claims

for authority. In 2 Cor. 1:12, Paul asserts that his boast is that he (and Timothy) have

behaved in the world with open-heartedness about purity of God (ἐν ἁπλότητι καὶ

εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ).[36] In 2 Cor. 2:17 it is speaking as a person of sincerity or purity (ἐξ

εἰλικρινείας) that distinguishes Paul from the *hoi polloi* who trade in God's word.[37]

Concannon speaks similarly about Paul's self-characterization in 2 Cor. 3:12–18, "Paul

presents himself as one who speaks with frankness and freedom that come from his

authorization by the Spirit."[38] In Concannon's interpretation, this frankness (παρρησίᾳ) is

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εἴτε φαῦλον]" (2 Cor. 5:10).

[36] "For this is our reason for boasting, the witness of our knowledge, that in open-heartedness and purity of God, indeed not in fleshly wisdom but in God's grace, we have behaved in the world, but exceedingly so to you [Ἡ γὰρ καύχησις ἡμῶν αὕτη ἐστίν, τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως ἡμῶν, ὅτι ἐν ἁπλότητι καὶ εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ σαρκικῇ ἀλλ᾽ ἐν χάριτι θεοῦ, ἀνεστράφημεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, περισσοτέρως δὲ πρὸς ὑμᾶς]" (2 Cor. 1:12).

[37] "For we are not like the many who peddle the word of God, but in Christ we speak with purity, as from God, in the face of God [οὐ γάρ ἐσμεν ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἐξ εἰλικρινείας, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν]" (2 Cor. 2:17). Roetzel, *2 Corinthians*, 59.

[38] Concannon, *When You Were Gentiles*, 112. "Since we have such a hope we act with frankness, not like Moses who put a veil upon his face, so that the sons of Israel would not gaze on the final glory that was passing away [Ἔχοντες οὖν τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα, καὶ οὐ καθάπερ Μωϋσῆς ἐτίθει κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου]" (2 Cor. 3:12–13).

what distinguishes him from Moses. In 2 Cor. 5:12, Paul constructs his sincerity in opposition to others "who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart." In 2 Cor. 6:6–7, he describes his ministry as commendable for its purity (ἐν ἁγνότητι) and true word (ἐν λόγῳ ἀληθείας). Additionally, Paul constructs his bodily practices in direct contrast with those of the Corinthians in 5:11–6:13. The Corinthians are to imitate Paul by opening their hearts to him, just as he has opened his heart and affections to them.[39] In the following section 6:14–7:4, Paul discusses partnerships between believers and unbelievers, and calls the Corinthians to be clean of defilement of body and spirit (7.1).[40]

Some in Corinth may have heard this language of purity as strongly reminiscent of Paul's passionate assertions in 1 Corinthians 6:13b–6:20 regarding marriage and sexual practices. These verses use similar vocabulary regarding bodily identification with Christ, and vocabulary of inside and outside the body. There are resonances with the image of the body as a pure temple (1 Cor. 6:19). Even the language of being bought with a price appears in both 1 Cor. 6:20 and in 2 Cor. 5:5. Some may have heard Paul's language in 2 Corinthians 5:1–7:4 as limiting marriage or sexual unions. Rather than engaging in earthly *porneia* or recognizing others' fleshly bodies, some may have heard Paul to argue that the model "in Christ" partnerships should be ascetic, or only between a

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[39] Our mouth is open (we speak frankly) to you, Corinthians, our heart is open wide; there is no restriction in our affections, but yours are limited. In return, I speak as to children, indeed, open your (hearts) [Τὸ στόμα ἡμῶν ἀνέῳγεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, Κορίνθιοι, ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν πεπλάτυνται· οὐ στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν ἡμῖν, στενοχωρεῖσθε δὲ ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ὑμῶν· τὴν δὲ αὐτὴν ἀντιμισθίαν, ὡς τέκνοις λέγω, πλατύνθητε καὶ ὑμεῖς]" (2 Cor. 6:11–13). See also 2 Cor. 7:2–4.

[40] The verses in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 are disputed as to their place in the letter(s) or even as authentically Pauline. Their vocabulary, seemingly arbitrary placement, and theological framework seem to be out of step with other writings of Paul. It is even argued that it is a fragment of the same letter from 1 Cor. 6. However, my analysis suggests that its current placement in the letter is fitting for the continuation of the language of body practices from 2 Cor 5–6.

person and the Lord of the house. Such a household model would serve to authorize earthly hetero-monogamous relationships rather than alternatives of wo/men living together, for example. Similarly, this language of purity reappears throughout 2 Corinthians. As I will discuss in chapter 5, some of the same language from 2 Cor. 5–7 is used in 2 Cor. 10–13, but with overt sexual overtones. In 2 Cor. 10–13 Paul speaks of desiring the chastity of the Corinthians and suggests that his opponents are deceiving the Corinthians into inappropriate relations with alternative gospels. Other false apostles take advantage of them (2 Cor 11:20), while Paul specifically says that he has not taken advantage of anyone 2 Cor 7:2.

Paul's arguments concerning modest clothing practices and pure bodily behavior fit into a larger ancient philosophical conceptualization of self-mastery. In 5:14 Paul asserts that if we (presumably referring to Paul/Timothy in this instance) are beside ourselves, if we are away from our earthly bodies, it is for God. If we are in our right mind or in conscientious self-mastery, it is for you (εἴτε γὰρ ἐξέστημεν, θεῷ· εἴτε σωφρονοῦμεν, ὑμῖν) (2 Cor. 5:13). The idea that Paul might be acting with special self-constraint, moderation, or self-mastery for the benefit of the Corinthians is intriguing. What might be gained by Paul's display of self-mastery? How might self-mastery function in communal debates in Corinth? In his rereading of Romans, Stanley Stowers has convincingly argued that the rhetoric and logic of self-mastery plays a major role in Paul's argumentation in Romans.[41] I would suggest that Paul employs a similar type of self-mastery in his claims for authority in the Corinthian correspondence. Stowers argues that the key to controlling others is learning to be one's own master in the Greco-Roman

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[41] Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

world.[42] Paul constructs himself as someone who should have authority in the community because he has self-control. He constructs his ministry as being a service of self-mastery in the imitation of Christ. The ultimate show of self-mastery and bodily control is Christ's death for all, which the believer is to imitate. Stowers argues that Romans chapters 5–8 asserts that identification with Christ, rather than the practice of the law, helps the Roman audience to attain mastery over their passions and desires.[43] As Paul is imitating Christ and encouraging the Corinthians to imitate himself, Paul asserts that he uses self-mastery for them, just as Christ died to the world for others (5:14–15).

Paul also constructs himself as master of his self when he says that he will no longer regard anyone from an earthly point of view. He will not know anyone according to the flesh (5:16). It is possible that some in Corinth heard this as Paul's claiming a practice of celibacy or of asceticism. If so, it would be important for Paul to present this as self-mastery because such a practice could sometimes call one's control of the passions into question:

> Ancient sources often describe the weak as having what we moderns might describe as superstitious or irrational scruples. Cicero defines weakness as "an unwholesome aversion and loathing for certain things" and adds that "the product of aversion moreover is defined as an intense belief, persistent and deeply rooted, which regards a thing that need not be shunned as though it ought to be shunned" (*Tusc.* 4.23, 26). For concrete examples, writers include fear or hatred of certain foods, wine, strangers, and women.[44]

The Corinthians are to imitate him in this self-mastery as proof of their "in Christ" identity. For Paul, being "in Christ" means having self-control: not knowing anyone according to the flesh and assuming that outer, naked, earthly bodies have passed away

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[42] Ibid., 49.

[43] Ibid., 44.

[44] Ibid., 46.

while new creations come from inner, spiritual, eternal natures.[45] After presenting the

ways in which he is master of himself, and how all of the "in Christ" people should act

with self-control, he then asserts his claims to authority.[46] He constructs himself as a

deacon of change and reconciliation (καὶ δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς),

summoned by God through Christ to entreat them to change, as God has reconciled the

cosmos by Christ (2 Cor. 5:19).

     This entreaty to moderation and self-control is "undergirded by the notion that

one's body is not one's own, but is part of the one body of the community."[47] On the

ideological level of the text, everyone is encouraged to employ the same modest clothing

practices, moderation, and abstinence in bodily practices. The motivation for these

practices is that people can be changed or reconciled to God and thus, be identified as

belonging to the communal "in Christ" identity group. Laura Nasrallah addresses the

significance of communal body rhetoric in her work on prophecy in 1 Corinthians 11–14.

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[45]   "For this reason, from now on we no longer know anyone according to the flesh; even though we knew Christ according to the flesh, but now we no longer know him (according to the flesh). Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation; the old things go by the way side, behold the new taking place; [Ὥστε ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν οὐδένα οἴδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα· εἰ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκομεν. ὥστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινά·]" (2 Cor. 5:16–17).

[46]   "But all these things are from God the one who changes himself to us through Christ and who gives the deaconship of change to us. Just as God being in Christ reconciled the cosmos to himself, not reckoning their trespasses against them, and putting in us the logic of reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of Christ we are acting as ambassadors, as one being summoned by God through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God [τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ καὶ δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς, ὡς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ, μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, καὶ θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς. ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦντος δι' ἡμῶν· δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ.]" (2 Cor. 5:18–20).

[47]   Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*, 79.

Nasrallah asserts that Paul's arguments about the body, both the individual body and the communal body, serve to further his claims about spiritual gifts, such as prophesying and teaching, and their roles in creating boundaries of sanctioned "in Christ" identity and practices.[48] In that 1 Corinthians 12, Paul follows his discussion of the importance of one's role in the communal body with a ranking of the spiritual gifts, with apostleship ranked superior to other gifts. This ranking lays the foundation for Paul's claims to authority in the community over both church practices and bodily practices.

Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 5, the discussions of having confidence in the Lord and becoming a new creation may have been heard as drawing boundaries around bodily coverings and purity practices. Paul claims to be a deacon/ambassador for this change into new creation. Might some have heard in this a danger of the loss of particular fleshly characteristics as they are swallowed up by the eternal communal body? Certainly, discussions of self-mastery and bodily purity would have been heard differently by various members of the Corinthian *ekklēsia*. By a slave who had little power over his/her own body, the emphasis and positive valuing of purity may have discouraged his/her participation in the *ekklēsia*.[49] Judgment of the body on a public pedestal may have not been metaphorical for some; something similar may have taken place the previous week for some in the *ekklēsia.* Or, for those in the community who may have felt "mixed" in some way—perhaps in terms of gender, ethnicity, class (in the case of freedpersons, for example), or imperial identification—how might this discussion of "unmixedness" (an alternative translation for εἰλικρίνεια) be received? How does this discussion of purity

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[48]   Ibid., 69.
[49]   See Jennifer A. Glancy, "Obstacles to Slaves' Participation in the Corinthian Church," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117, no. 3 (1998): 481–501.

differ from a pre-Pauline baptismal formula of Gal. 3:28? As we will see in the next section, this ideology and construction of relationships also furthers Paul's claims to authority via the treatment of bodies, including his own, through hospitality practices and church practices.

<u>Home and Away, Imperial Subjects and Strategic Displacement: Home Rhetoric</u>

In addition to this discussion of earthly bodies and emphasis on pure bodies, 2 Cor. 5:1–6:13 also uses rhetoric about homes and households. In this section, I will examine how Paul uses home rhetoric in his constructions of himself, his audience, and his theology. The ideology undergirding these constructions valorizes kyriarchal models of home, hospitality, and authority while devaluing alternate egalitarian models. The majority of scholarship sees little significance in the use of the house metaphor in what is typically assumed to be Paul's discussion of bodily resurrection. However, it is a historical possibility that home structures and domestic practices are a site of contestation in Corinth. I will argue first, that this metaphor is complexly entangled with gender and status identity markers and boundaries. Then I will assert that Paul's usage of this metaphor constructs kyriarchal models of authority and theology for Christ communities, before envisioning alternate models by assuming that a diverse group of wo/men are present and active in the Corinthian Christ communities.

Paul uses language about home and household throughout the first several verses of chapter 5. He constructs two distinct types of dwelling spaces, one on earth and one in the heavens. In verse 1, he describes the earthly dwelling house or tent (ἡ ἐπίγειος οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους) and contrasts it to a building from God, (οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ), a house made

without hands, eternal in the heavens (οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς).[50]

While verse 1 uses οἰκία and οἰκοδομὴν, Paul favors another term in verse 2, τὸ

οἰκητήριον (house, building, and dwelling), which connotes a more permanent and

substantial home building. In verses 2 and 3, Paul continues this juxtaposition with the

use of pronouns: "in this (earthly) one we groan," (ἐν τούτῳ στενάζομεν) "because we

long to put on our building in the heavens" (τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ).[51] He

reiterates this same contrast in verse 4, but switches from "house" (οἰκία) to tent or

dwelling (σκῆνος). Here he describes how in the (earthly) tent, (ἐν τῷ σκήνει), those with

"in Christ" identity are burdened (βαρούμενοι) and groaning (στενάζομεν) because they

do not want to be stripped or plundered (ἐκδύσασθαι). In verse 5, God is described as

treating his followers like property, as he has subdued or cultivated them

(κατεργασάμενος ἡμᾶς) and made a downpayment for them with spirit (ὁ δοὺς ἡμῖν τὸν

ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος). Paul imagines God as the Lord of the house, materially,

financially, and socially. He has built the house, paid for it, provides for the inhabitants,

and expects some service from them in return. While earthly houses are considered weak

and fail to provide adequate protection for their inhabitants and families, the ideal home

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[50]   Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 357. Thrall extensively reviews the various interpretations of the precise nature of the contrast based on the connections that have been drawn between this usage of skynos and others in Greek and Jewish literature.

[51]   "For indeed in this house we groan, desiring to put on again our building, the one from heaven. If at least certainly, when we put these on we will not be found naked. For while we are burdened in the tent we groan because we do not wish to be stripped but we wish to put on garments over it, so that which is mortal should be devoured by eternal life [καὶ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ στενάζομεν, τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐπενδύσασθαι ἐπιποθοῦντες, εἴ γε καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι οὐ γυμνοὶ εὑρεθησόμεθα. καὶ γὰρ οἱ ὄντες ἐν τῷ σκήνει στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι, ἐφ' ᾧ οὐ θέλομεν ἐκδύσασθαι ἀλλ' ἐπενδύσασθαι, ἵνα καταποθῇ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς]" (2 Cor. 5:2–4).

features an all-powerful Lord of the home with whom, and to whom, the inhabitants belong.

Feminist and decolonizing scholars consider home rhetoric in some of their work. Stephanie May uses a critical feminist rhetorical analysis of home to argue that "the notion of 'home' is deeply implicated in constellations of power that function to shape social practice as well as the very material landscape within which we dwell."[52]In her work with various 19th and 20th century Christian feminist documents, May asserts: "as a rhetorical construction, home is used to launch grand appeals to reify or challenge socio-economic institutions such as marriage, the family, and the nation."[53] Similar questions to May's can be asked regarding the function of home in 2 Corinthians 5.[54] What are the various social groups and relationships that form constellations of power? What boundaries does Paul construct concerning Christian identity and behavior using home rhetoric? What claims does Paul make regarding socio-economic institutions such as marriage, the family, and the nation in his use of home rhetoric? What is an ideal home for Paul, and what must someone do to be welcome in it? Finally, how might there be other ideals of home already functioning in the Corinthian community?

This exploration of the work of home rhetoric resonates with the work of Ben Dunning on the alien topos in early Christianity in a Roman imperial context. Dunning argues that "the alien topos functioned as a peculiarly malleable discursive resource—one that could be strategically drawn upon and variously put to use in order to negotiate

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[52] Stephanie Louise May, "Contesting the Theo-Ethical Rhetoric of Home: Feminist and Postcolonial Politics of Space" (Th.D., Harvard Divinity School, 2012), 10–11.

[53] Ibid.

[54] In New Testament studies, Jennifer Kaalund has recently examined home, foreigner, travel, and identity language in Hebrews. See also Luckritz Marquis, *Transient Apostle*.

identity and demarcate difference in a variety of ways."[55] He describes various uses along

this spectrum. At one end, the alien topos is used in the construction of…

> a 'usable social identity'…among the vast range of cultic identities and practices
> that proliferated in the ancient Mediterranean. This use of the topos could
> represent Christian identity on a rhetorical level as socially marginalized, while all
> the while seeking to position it as a force to be reckoned with very much *within*
> the Roman world, and in a nonresistant—or even assimilationist—stance toward
> many basic Roman cultural values (a dynamic often overlooked or downplayed
> by historical scholarship on this period).[56]

Considering home rhetoric as a similarly "malleable discursive resource," urges the

question of how this rhetoric functions to construct identities and boundaries within 2

Corinthians. It also encourages thinking beyond Paul's constructions of the home's

constellations of power, resurrection, and Christ communities, to consider homes as a site

for debate. Being mindful to "turn away from the question of Paul's identity," this section

will trace the constructions of home Paul sets forth using these questions: How does

Paul's home rhetoric construct Paul, his audience, and his theology?[57] How might these

constructions serve to authorize, valorize, or erase particular agendas and voices?[58] After

identifying and analyzing the world he constructs, the final section will envision alternate

constructions potentially at work in the community and in the afterlives of the text.

Paul establishes a kyriarchal model of home and theology, and thus, rejects

potentially egalitarian structures. He constructs an ideal heavenly community and

resurrection experience in opposition to and above the current earthly experience. The

image he fashions for the Christ community recalls a naked or even pregnant person who

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[55] Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners*, 7.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul: Toward a Feminist and
       Decolonizing Approach to the Letters of Paul," 173.
[58] Ibid., 174.

is groaning for the covering only the powerful Lord of the house can give, while inside an inadequate tent shelter.[59] God has subdued this woman/person/community with spirit, making it possible to take her to the new heavenly house wherein she will strive, above all else, to please him before she, along with many others, will be displayed in the public speaking area for judgment of her bodily practices by Christ. This is Paul's construction of the model Christ follower and her home. In opposition to this model, he implicitly constructs others who are always away from the Lord. Being at home in Corinth is equated with being at home in the body, and away from God. Being at home in Corinth means living in vulnerable, temporary dwellings, tents. He employs the alien topos when he asserts that the home of Christ followers is located elsewhere, in heaven.[60] This is a construction that accentuates boundaries between Christ followers and others. Furthermore, it illustrates Paul's identity reasoning as he joins himself in relation to those who wish to be like him, and distinguishes this identity from those who seem to be teaching otherwise (i.e. those who desire positive investment in the local, the earthly, the community, in the homes, in the glorification of the body, etc.).

Home rhetoric subtly continues into chapters 6 and 7 with a shift to hospitality rhetoric. The language in 6:3–13 emphasizes the behaviors and characteristics that make

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[59] Paul uses similar language in Romans 8:22-23, where the connection between groaning and labor pains is explicit: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning and in laboring pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first offering of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies [οἴδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν· οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν υἱοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν]" (Romans 8:22–23).

[60] Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 85. Lambrecht points out that 2 Corinthians 5:6–9 is the only place in the New Testament where the verbs ἐνδημέω (to be at home) and ἐκδημέω (to be away from home) are paired.

Paul a good houseguest, and which the Corinthians are to imitate. He identifies his service, which comes highly commended (6:4). He has willingly suffered hardships, including sleepless nights and hunger, to prove his commendation. On the one hand, he identifies problems with the treatment he and Timothy have received: they have been treated as deceivers (πλάνοι), as unknown (ἀγνοούμενοι), as dying (ἀποθνῄσκοντες), as chastised or punished like children (παιδευόμενοι), as grieving or harassed (λυπούμενοι), as poor (πτωχοὶ), and having nothing (μηδὲν ἔχοντες) (2 Cor. 6:8–9). On the other hand, he emphasizes that they have been true (ἐν λόγῳ ἀληθείας), familiar (ἐπιγινωσκόμενοι), surprisingly alive (ἰδοὺ ζῶμεν), not killed as a result of punishment (μὴ θανατούμενοι), always rejoicing (ἀεὶ δὲ χαίροντες), making many rich (πολλοὺς δὲ πλουτίζοντες), and possessing everything (πάντα κατέχοντες). He emphasizes behaviors of opening hearts to one another and making room for each other (6:11–13, 7:2–3).

Describing these behaviors functions as part of Paul's argument for a new model of home and domestic behaviors of hospitality that are characterized by service to the Lord of the house and his son. Everyone is well covered and dwells together in eternal safety and permanence. In the best light, this is a safe arrangement where everyone dwells and serves together and is protected by a mighty, generous, and loving Lord from whatever or whoever threatens outside of its bounds. On the ground, this construction of the model Christ follower, who shows hospitality through service, acting familiar, and making room for others, may have been interpreted in a less friendly light. Some may have heard this message alongside Paul's previous assertions of his rights as an apostle and his freedom to choose how he might "reap [their] material benefits" (ὑμῶν τὰ σαρκικὰ θερίσομεν) (1 Cor. 9:11).

Furthermore, this image Paul constructs of the Christ community's home and its constellations of power is not gender neutral. Homes are spaces that often showcase gendered identity. Feminist postcolonial literary critic Rosemary George argues, "The word 'home' immediately connotes the private sphere of patriarchal hierarchy, gendered self-identity, shelter, comfort, nurture and protection."[61] While many ancient households may not have been private, it is likely that they would have been kyriarchal. Paul uses a string of feminine gendered metaphorical subjects in this section. The metaphor of the earthen vessel (ὀστρακίνοις σκεύεσιν) from 2 Cor. 4:7 is gendered feminine. The term σκεύος frequently refers to wombs, a distinctively female anatomical part. Homes, like vessels, are traditionally associated with women, and are the traditional spaces of wo/men.[62] Wo/men are often involved in domestic care through childbearing and rearing, caring for the elderly, and for the dead. Homes are also often the places of sexual practices, in which gendered identity is often at stake and in play.

Using housing metaphors, Paul constructs the Christ community, himself and Timothy included, as a vulnerable, poorly clothed, and pregnant woman in 5:1–4: In this earthly house, he says that they groan (ἐν τούτῳ στενάζομεν), because they long to put on their building in the heavens (τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ), where they won't be found naked (οὐ γυμνοὶ εὑρεθησόμεθα). In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul's ideal Christ

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[61] Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1–2. George argues: "As imagined in fiction, 'home' is a desire that is fulfilled or denied in varying measure to the subjects (both the fictional characters and the readers) constructed by the narrative." While George's argument is based on conceptualizations of home in the literature of modern industrialized societies, some of the same connotations may be applicable to antiquity.

[62] The parallel between the earthen vessels of 4:7 and the earthly homes of 5:1 would be heightened in the Greek pronunciation "ὀστρακίνοις σκεύεσιν" compared to "οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους."

community groans with the burden of earthly life and its inadequate clothing, and instead desires to travel to be with God, the Lord of the heavenly house. Anxiety about being stripped, plundered, or found naked underlies this construction (2 Cor. 5:2–4). Being stripped or sexually assaulted, while happening occasionally to high status men and women, would be a constant danger for slaves, children, and low status wo/men in the ancient Mediterranean.[63]

In Paul's construction of the Christ community, this fear of being uncovered or assaulted is only assuaged through the covering provided by the Lord patriarch. In verse 5, God is described as treating his followers like property, as he has subdued or cultivated them (κατεργασάμενος ἡμᾶς) and made a downpayment for them with spirit (ὁ δοὺς ἡμῖν τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος). Indeed, the home is a fertile metaphor in Paul's construction of a Christ community as both effeminate and childlike. God, on the other hand, is cast as the Lord of the house, the divine patriarch, who provides a heavenly home, abundant clothing, shelter, and eternal stability.[64] Paul's use of these particular images may have been interpreted as his drawing boundaries around gendered practices concerning the home, or travel away from it.[65] The ideal home is characterized by the

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[63] The term "unmen" describes people on the bottom of the Roman sex/gender system. Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 135–36.

[64] George, *The Politics of Home*, 1–2. "'Home' moves along several axes, and yet it is usually represented as fixed, rooted, stable—the very antithesis of travel."

[65] Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 169–96. As a malleable discursive resource, it can be imagined that wo/men in the community heard Paul's home rhetoric in this passage differently from men in the community. Mieke Bal puts it succinctly: "It is a common view that houses are one side of an opposition between public and private, between danger and safety, between freedom and bondage, between communal and individual….The oppositions are produced in order to make an unacceptable division appear acceptable" (171). In her work on Judges, Bal argues that rather than considering the chronology of a fairly asynchronous text that is a

community's passivity and the privileging of the patriarch's pleasures and wishes, especially in terms of body, clothing, and travel practices.

The rhetoric of home and the related spatial mapping of the text not only carries gendered meanings, it also makes claims regarding nationhood and peoples. Homes are the spaces of families, peoples, cultures, and even nationalities. Mieke Bal examines the significance of patrilineal relationships in her reading of the house in Judges. As she states, "The house is the site, or the signifier, of descent, of partiliny. And it is in turn this patriliny that produces the people by the mediation of the tribes: the sons of Israel/Jacob."[66] In what ways do the earthly dwelling spaces of 2 Cor. 5:1 also signify peoplehood, ethnicities, lines of descent, or generations of families? Metaphorical language is often read in material and evaluative ways to consider local cultural significance. Witherington, for example, in discussing the earthenware vessels of 2 Cor. 4:7 suggests: "This may be a reference to the cheap pottery lamps made in Corinth and used for walking about at night. Precisely because of their thinness, these vessels let out more light."[67] Some in Corinth may have heard Paul's usage of housing rhetoric in terms of its local and particular significance. These houses shelter the people of Corinth, of

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compilation and retelling of a number of stories throughout Israel's history, it is more fruitful to consider the architecture of space. This alternate model for exploring a text that is not predominantly focused on reproducing a chronology is helpful for opening up new ways of approaching 2 Corinthians as well. Bal focuses her inquiry on the symbol and image of the house, which appears in important ways and functions differently for women and men throughout Judges.

[66] Ibid., 172. The end of Bal's chapter on the house considers Freud's essay on the uncanny or *unheimlich*. She works with the ideas of unhomeliness and Freud's idea of how the uncanny is characterized by doubleness and strangeness. To be uncanny/unhomely is to be double, and to be strange. Is Paul constructing himself as an unhomely one, who is treated as strange or double in 2 Corinthians? In what ways might some in Corinth hear Paul's construction of a Christ home and feel unhomely?

[67] Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 386–87.

Achaea, known for their legacy of strength, defiance, and ultimate failure against Roman

rule. Their houses may signify their community rebuilding efforts, their resilience, their

stability.[68] They could be the locations of their freedom of spirit, their sexual freedom, or

their hospitality. It is possible that a family's house would have distinctive style or even

that the houses in Corinth would have a distinctive style.[69] The Corinthian order of

columns, for example, while dating to several hundred years before Paul, is suggestive of

the types of architectural variations in which locals might take particular pride.[70]

Yet, Paul discusses the threat of losing these homes, these family legacies (2 Cor.

5:1–6:13). The values and meanings of home are also wrapped up in this looming

destruction. Along with Doreen Massey, May argues that "If the place of home is to be

understood as a particular constellation of social relations at a particular time, then the

disruption of the place of home is also a disruption of those (spatialized) social

relations."[71] At the moment of potential destruction and disruption, then, Paul introduces

an alternate ideal home structure and accompanying kyriarchal social relationships. This

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[68] Johnstone, *Stories, Community, and Place*, 125. In her interview studies, Barbara Johnstone found that stories of overcoming the 1982 flood in Fort Wayne, Indiana functioned to bind the community together and then became emblematic of the city itself. She argues that "place can serve as a symbolic resource in stories, so that truth can be established through rootedness in place." How might Corinthian houses served as resources in the stories of the people of Corinth?

[69] The ancient architectural writer Vitruvius explains how the architectural styles of private buildings might be shaped by things such as regions, climates, latitudes, the bodies, limbs, and vocal, and intellectual qualities of the local human population, the course of the sun, and "the inclination of the heavens" (Vitruvius, *The Ten Books On Architecture* 6.1).

[70] Vitruvius describes the Corinthian column as it "imitates the slenderness of a young girl, because young girls, on account of the tenderness of their age, can be seen to have even more slender limbs and obtain even more charming effects when they adorn themselves" (4.1.9–11).

[71] May, "Contesting the Theo-Ethical Rhetoric of Home," 18; Doreen B. Massey, "Spaces of Politics," in *Human Geography Today*, ed. John Allen, Philip Sarre, and Doreen B. Massey (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 279–94.

may have struck some in the community as Paul's supplanting of earthly familial lines of

descent, nationhood, and local culture by constructing an ideal home made up of a new

family and a new people. No longer are they to consider each other in terms of their

fleshly families and connections on earth, but as new creations in the Christ family (5:16–

17).[72] He describes their new cultural practices of walking by faith and not by sight (5:7),

maintaining confidence (5:6), living for Christ and not for themselves (5:15), making

room for one another (6:13, 7:2), etc. These ideas culminate in 6:14–7:1 with the

following image and references from Leviticus 26:11–12 and Ezekiel 37:27, in which

God describes himself as welcoming his sons and daughters as his people, and he, their

father.[73]

Paul's envisioning of Corinthian homes could have been interpreted as an act

similar to colonization. As George argues,

> Imagining a home is as political an act as is imagining a nation. Establishing
> either is a display of hegemonic power. Similarly, having all these markers laid
> out for one to step into as part of a naturalized socialization process is an
> indication of the power wielded by class, community and race.[74]

Some in Corinth could have seen this passage as the displacement and relocation of their

homes and homeland, where Paul, in an act of hegemonic power, assumes that he can

claim control over Corinthian spaces and peoples. This passage begins much like the

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[72] Buell, *Why This New Race*; Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*. This has been seen
as Paul's ethnic reasoning, as the universalizing language builds off of language of
ethnicity and peoplehood.

[73] Scholarship is divided as to whether 6:14-7:1 is an interpolation. While I can certainly
understand the reasons in favor of it as an interpolation (anomalous vocabulary,
distinct theology, etc.), I think its emphasis on purity and peoplehood fits well with
the discussion of purity throughout this text.

[74] George, *The Politics of Home*, 6.

whole letter, with a memory of imperial destruction.[75] I argued in the previous chapter that Paul's situating Corinth within the whole of Achaia in his greeting could have brought to mind the historic Corinthian alliance with the whole of Achaia in their battles against and crushing defeat at the hands of the Roman Empire. Paul's extensive discussion of the near fatal wounds he suffered in Asia, presumably at the hands of the empire, could have encouraged some in Corinth to seek out a powerful God to rescue them and an authoritative servant general to work with them for survival and subversion of the empire. Indeed, God leads the triumphal procession in 2:14–17. The image in 5:1–2 of the destruction of their homes and of their own people as found stripped, naked, and groaning, may have functioned similarly. This metaphor continues with the threat of appearing for public trial and judgment in 5:10 and the question of whether they are pleasing the Lord in 5:9. These threatening constructions place Paul and the God he represents in the perfect positions to rescue the Corinthians and defend them against the empire, thereby erecting an alternative empire. Some in Corinth could have seen this as liberating, where they are rescued from powerlessness and oppression under the earthly empire for an eternal life of safety. Others, however, may have heard these arguments as a reinscription of the kyriarchal system they could never escape.

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[75] Musa Dube describes how texts can sanction violence and imperialism in various ways, including "the glorification of military might and conquest; the promotion of travel that characterizes the travelers as authoritatively above foreign lands and their inhabitants; and the construction of foreign peoples and spaces in specific legitimizing forms." Musa Dube, "Reading for Decolonization (John 4:1–42)," in *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power*, ed. Jeffrey L. Staley (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 57.

This system assumes that the Corinthians will be included in all of God's people, but that God, Christ, and Paul himself, as an apostle are above these peoples.[76] These depictions "depend on sharply contrasting the colonizer's lands and people with those of the colonized. The colonized spaces and inhabitants are basically subjected to the standard of the colonizer, and difference is equated with deficiency."[77] Paul's construction of a new home is dependent on imperial metaphors in which "foreign lands are immoral women which await taming by foreign saviours."[78] For some, the image that Paul's home rhetoric presents is one of violence toward a passive and subjugated party in the home. By bringing together critiques of violence in the home with postcolonial critiques, May argues that, "violence in the place called home is fundamentally intertwined with the violence of imperial projects of the national homeland."[79]

While Paul's imagery may imitate imperial imagery and its horrors, on the other hand, perhaps Paul narrates the world this way not because he is an imperial traveling hero or villain, but because, like others in the empire, he wants to create space, make room, for his small, marginalized family. In envisioning a new home, he is also constructing a home in which he and the Corinthian *ekklēsia* can dwell together. It is important to remember that he includes himself and Timothy in the construction of the

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[76] Ibid., 69–71. Imperializing discourses are characterized by a politics of othering that masks difference and different levels of oppression: "Imperialist expansion suggests a massive inclusion of races, lands, genders and religions, but not equality. The inclusion is intended to legitimate control, and control depends on unequal relationships."

[77] Ibid., 58.

[78] Ibid., 71. This construction could be a description of first-century imperial imagery, as evidenced, for example, on the Aphrodisian Sebasteion. The image of a personified Bretagne, held up by her hair with her breast exposed at the hands of the emperor, comes to mind.

[79] May, "Contesting the Theo-Ethical Rhetoric of Home," 77.

image of the woman waiting for God's saving power. They, too, could be seen as vulnerable in this construction, in the same way the Corinthians may have been vulnerable. Perhaps he is arguing against claims that he does not belong in Corinth or that he is not welcome. He may be the foreign, the distant one, who is vulnerable, hungry, and homeless when those in Corinth or other areas will not host him.[80] As a Jew, he may have faced difficulties on account of his ethnicity in this Greco-Roman town.[81] As a Christ-following Jew, he might have faced persecution by other Jews.[82] As a working-class, itinerant minister, if he does not have access to someone's home as a guest, he may have trouble performing his ministry in their house church, or even having a safe space to spend the night. If he is known for resisting the Roman Empire, he may have faced persecutions among patriots of this empire. Yet, in a feminist decolonizing approach it is important to turn away from this question of Paul's identity.[83] Situating Paul's letter within its Roman imperial context also situates him and his audience within spheres of sociality where they, like others in the empire, must eke out space and identity.

More than Making Rooms: Occupying Spaces

By assuming that Paul's constructions of the Corinthians, God, and his own ministry should be considered in direct relation to the diverse Corinthian wo/men, I can

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[80] The Roman emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome in 49 C.E. (*Claudius* 25.4). See the discussion of the effects of this edict on the Roman Christ community in Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 96–100.

[81] See Tat-Siong Benny Liew, "Redressing Bodies at Corinth: Racial/Ethnic Politics and Religious Difference in the Context of Empire," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).

[82] For example, Paul discusses a dining disagreement with Cephas (Peter) in Antioch (Galatians 2).

[83] Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul: Toward a Feminist and Decolonizing Approach to the Letters of Paul."

look at the symbol system Paul uses to draw boundaries of community identity with new

lenses. The body and housing metaphors may have had special significance within Paul's

dialogic relationship with various groups in Corinth, who need not be characterized as

theologically, socially, or intellectually inferior to Paul, or to the modern interpreter.

Paul's visions for an ideal home likely met with competing visions among Corinthian

householders, managers, or occupants. While he may be using this language of home to

control a vision of an ideal home and the bodies within it, a critical feminist decolonizing

hermeneutic asks about alternative narratives and visions of an ideal home at work in the

community. Bal's work with the house image in Judges suggests that the common

assumptions about where "house" falls along spectra of public/private, danger/safety,

freedom/bondage, and communal/individual are perhaps never perfectly applicable to

reality.[84] While the normative assumptions about "house" or "home" are that it is a

private, safe, free, and individual space, houses may be public, dangerous, bonded, or

communal spaces for various individuals at particular moments. Bal uses this logic to

read from the perspective of the woman on the threshold in Judges 19.[85] A similar

strategy can be used in 2 Corinthians to envision possibilities and counter-narratives

around houses for wo/men in Corinth. If the house is often under the purview of women

in the family or community, then not only are women associated with the house, but, as

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[84] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 171.

[85] Ibid., 195. Bal reads from the perspective of the woman at the threshold in Judges 19:
       If we can see her lying at the threshold, we can grasp more. We see her then, not
       as an object that is uncannily between death and life—'behold this woman'—but
       as the destroyed subject who 'sees' from *below* the closed, then opened door. We
       see the man who estranged himself from her by rejecting her. We see the traveling
       legs of the man that, viewed from below, are detached from his estranged voice—
       "up!" Then we can grasp what uncanniness feels like for its victim."
   Such a reading is instructive in multiple ways for a feminist decolonizing approach to
   2 Corinthians.

Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald assert: "women were traditionally…viewed as natural household managers (for example, 1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:5) and thereby already in a position to have considerable influence in a house church."[86] The activities in house churches might include organizing and participating in worship, hospitality, patronage, education, communication, social services, evangelization, and mission.[87]

Furthermore, "women have traditionally been chiefly responsible for hospitality," which "would include reception of passing Christian visitors, especially itinerant missionaries like the wandering apostles and prophets of the Didache or the founder of a church."[88] General practice would be for these guests to be in the house church, but eventually, widows and other women would have been responsible for this service if they had the means to host guests.[89] Additionally, Osiek and MacDonald note that there would have been communication through these sites, from hostess to hostess, along women's social networks.[90] Women were not just house managers in the stead of partners who traveled, but they often traveled themselves. Traveling women ministers appear throughout Paul's letters. Phoebe, the deacon and leader of Cenchreae, traveled to Rome in her ministry (Romans 16:1–2). Additionally, Osiek and MacDonald suggest that missionary couples, often male/female couples, represented the norm. Prisca and Acquila were probably a wife and husband team who traveled throughout the Mediterranean, including to Corinth. In his analysis of Romans 16, Peter Lampe argues that while Paul

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[86] Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 33.

[87] Ibid., 12.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid. See 1 Tim. 5:10 for how widows were expected to show hospitality.

[90] Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*; Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul: Toward a Feminist and Decolonizing Approach to the Letters of Paul."

mentions 8 women and 18 men in his greetings, the numbers change when they are analyzed in terms of their activity in the communities; 7 women to 5 men are active.[91] Envisioning the majority of itinerant missionaries as male/female pairs challenges assumptions of the maleness of Paul's rival apostles. Female/female pairs, such as Tryphaena and Tryphosa (Romans 16:12) and Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2) also appear in Paul's letters. It is also possible that slaves would have been additional travelers with these pairs, even though they were not named explicitly. As such, they may have formed their own networks of relationships.

Paul's work with and dependence on women's social networks in Corinth can be observed with his mention of Chloe's people in 1 Cor. 1:11. It is via Chloe and Chloe's people that Paul receives news about the community, which informs his views of them in 1 Corinthians. Just as the people who possessed sacred books become important in early Jewish Christ following communities, those who are purveyors of letters and messages may have also had some power in their communities. They may have had the powers of translating or interpreting these messages about practices in other Christ communities or about various traveling ministers. It is likely that they would be more inclined to grant their hospitality to traveling ministers who did not threaten their freedoms around body and clothing practices or housing and house church practices.

Additionally, some of these diverse wo/men might have had different practice-based theologies from Paul's. As Wire argues concerning 1 Corinthians, Paul enters the conversation from a different theological perspective. He emphasizes an experiential connection to Christ's death, which means that all have to die to this life and these

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[91] Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the first two centuries* (London: T&T Clark International, 2006), 165–67.

bodies. This is based on an assumption that a person has something, some status, to give up or lose, that there is room to go down to the cross.[92] But others who are at the bottom levels of society might see the triumphal potential of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection for them may mean that people can be empowered in this life or in these bodies. Perhaps it is this body, which enables the experience of life, enables connection, and an experience of God, perhaps through Wisdom or Spirit.[93] They construct themselves as equal to others with accompanying freedoms, in the face of social constructs that denied choice about how to live.[94]

Some people in Corinth might have considered bodies as vessels for experiencing God. For some of them, sexual pleasure could have been pure or holy and their earthly bodies good.[95] Or, some wo/men thought that a religious practice of abstinence from sex was a way to protect themselves from dangerous and unwanted pregnancies or from sexual violence. Indeed, if husbands were thought to be the head of their wives, then wo/men may have refused marriage to avoid the limiting of their freedoms. Reading with Gen. 1:27, some might have felt that living a resurrected life meant demonstrating that the image of God is reflected in androgynous bodies where gender was not

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[92] See the Christ hymn in Philippians 2:5–11 where going down to the cross is tied to slavery and class status.

[93] Strong parallels exist between 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 and Wisdom of Solomon 9:14–15. "For the reasoning of mortals is worthless, and our designs are likely to fail; for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind" [λογισμοὶ γὰρ θνητῶν δειλοί, καὶ ἐπισφαλεῖς αἱ ἐπίνοιαι ἡμῶν·φθαρτὸν γὰρ σῶμα βαρύνει ψυχήν, καὶ βρίθει τὸ γεῶδες σκῆνος νοῦν πολυφρόντιδα]" (Wisdom of Sol. 9:14–15). It is possible that such a text, which prioritizes a female figure of Wisdom and her role in providing leadership, perseverance during hard times, and sound advice and companionship, might have encouraged some in Corinth to live as wise wo/men.

[94] Thecla baptizes herself and preaches in *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, for example.

[95] Texts such as the canonical Song of Solomon or Longus' novel *Daphnis and Chloe* present desire and sex in positive light, for example.

distinguishable or that sex could be divided into "natural" and "unnatural" ways.[96] Or, like the Epicureans, comforts of good food and wine, comfortable or beautiful clothes, even sleeping arrangements, could be the way they showed their communal identity as "in Christ" peoples. By sharing resources, as we see in Acts 2:44–47, some may have been experiencing a new material wealth in joining the community. They might envision themselves as living in Christ's resurrection rather than his death.

Paul's model household is kyriarchal and grounded in a kyriarchal theology. Yet, "the diasporic movement of peoples through the (post)colonial currents of political and economic dynamics has unsettled the notion of 'home' for many persons."[97] It is possible to have multiple homes. A person need not have their old home destroyed or disparaged in order to appreciate a place of belonging and dwelling. For some diverse wo/men in Corinth, perhaps the ideal home and theology was one where they were not threatened with the destruction of their homes and the judgment of their bodies. Some may have envisioned a home where they were not in the service of pleasing the lord, his son, or his ambassador. Instead, they could have used Galatians 3:28 to envision home and the *ekklēsia* as a place where people unite in their differences. "In Christ" identity then would be characterized by behaviors of respect and pride for differences, where diverse peoples might dwell and debate together.

In conclusion, a feminist decolonizing reading of this passage allows debate and difference to come to the fore of the conversation. Rather than the authorization of a singular view and the construction of monolithic group identity, envisioning this passage

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[96]   See *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, *Gospel of Mary,* and *Gospel of Thomas* for non-dualistic presentations of gender.

[97]   May, "Contesting the Theo-Ethical Rhetoric of Home," 95.

with diverse Corinthian wo/men suggests a richer potential within alternate Christian

theologies for body and housing practices. In spite of the lack of explicit references to

wo/men or gendered practices in 2 Corinthians, several themes regarding wo/men's

leadership, clothing and body practices, and housing and hospitality practices continue to

be shaped by Paul's letters. The debates and the differences are empowered with new life

as the text is reread and reinterpreted.

CHAPTER 5

THE RHETORICAL GRAND FINALE IN 2 COR. 10–13

I am witless, and I am wise
Why did you hate me with your schemes?
I shall shut my mouth among those whose mouths are shut
And then I will show up and speak.
                    —The Thunder: Perfect Mind 2:19–3:2

In this chapter, I will analyze chapters 10–13 where imperial and martial

metaphors come to the fore in the construction of kyriarchy as emperor God sends Paul

as an imperial general to crush the opponents and rescue the obedient Corinthians. Yet,

simultaneously, metaphors of foolishness and slavery are also highlighted as Paul uses

identity reasoning to momentarily assert fluid aspects of identity for himself and the

community, and then reassert fixity of his kyriarchal scheme. Unlike in chapters 5 and 6

where Paul describes resurrection, chapters 10–13 feature a rhetorical tour de force.[1] Paul

makes claims for authority in a debate about wisdom and the power to speak in the

community.[2] It is in service to this task that he constructs himself and others.[3] While he

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[1] This section of the letter is often treated by scholars as its own letter. It is frequently
     characterized either as Paul's Fool's Speech and sometimes also his Letter of Tears,
     referenced earlier in 2 Corinthians (2:4, 7:8). Scholars vary on whether they see this
     letter as historically preceding or succeeding the earlier sections of 2 Corinthians. The
     reasons for the theoretical division are numerous, but are predominantly focused on
     the shift in tone scholars note between chapter 9 and 10:1. Paul moves from speaking
     optimistically and with encouragement about the collection for Jerusalem to harsh,
     angry tones in 10–13. Furthermore, chapters 10–13 seem to be a unit, based on the
     sustained focus and train of thought, that in juxtaposing this section with other
     chapters highlights a potential break between 10–13 and others. The debate about
     whether the section may precede or succeed other parts of 2 Corinthians is partially
     dependent on whether scholars reconstruct history with Paul (and Christian tradition)
     ending on good or bad terms with the Corinthian community.

[2] This is assuming that the Corinthians are actually invested in this debate, and that the
     whole debate itself is not experienced only by Paul. Comedian Eddie Izzard sums this
     point up nicely in his skit on the Corinthians when he imagines the Corinthians as

openly defends himself on a few counts – speaking ability, ministry style, weakness, and

visions – he also defends himself on indirect challenges to his masculinity, his strength,

and his class status.[4] Paul uses kyriarchal imagery and metaphors to construct various

participants in this debate, using the assumed power systems functioning in those roles to

authorize his position and power over others. Paul's ultimate defense, however, relies on

his theological program of grace.[5] Even this grace, while from God, serves Paul's

authority claims. After analyzing Paul's use of identity reasoning in this passage, I will

then investigate how his authority claims culminate in his moderation of visions before

somewhat bewildered with his claims for authority as they write back to Paul, "Why do you keep sending us these letters?" Eddie Izzard, *Eddie Izzard—St. Paul's Letters*, 2006.

[3] Scholars writing on chapters 10–13 often focus on defining the terms. They often seek to pin down the historical events with when and why questions (i.e. was Paul really lowered down in a basket in Damascas?). This often results in attempts to define and/or demystify his visionary and apocalyptic experiences when the ancient worldviews push the scholar's view of reason beyond limit: (i.e. When/what was his ecstatic experience? Where was he? What was he talking about exactly? What physical, rational, explicable phenomenon would have made Paul think he was having an ecstatic experience or that he had a thorn in his side? To what extent was he an ecstatic person?) Or, attention turns to the opponents: (Who were they? Where did they come from? Why is Paul so angry with them? Have they come from outside the Corinthian community? Are they Gnostics? Hellenists? Judaizing zealots? Have they been sent from the Jerusalem Council?) Here again, scholars are often anxious to fit these opponents, or the Corinthian community as a whole, into modern taxonomies and timelines.

[4] It is unclear the extent to which the kyriarchal frame, upon which Paul bases his constructions, would have functioned within the community behind Paul's letters. Much scholarship is devoted to this question, and many scholars argue that Paul is the hero of liberalism by rejecting these standards in opting for weakness. Rather than attempting to identify Paul or the Corinthians in terms of their placement on a spectrum of kyriarchal beliefs or practices, this project looks at the rhetorical level, considering Paul's constructions and the historical possibilities.

[5] Focusing on the central role of grace in Paul's argument for authority in this passage challenges the claim that this passage is comparatively lacking in theological arguments. Wan, for example, asserts: "Gone are the subtle theological arguments [in 2 Cor. 10–13]; instead, Paul turns to the blunt weapon of intimidation." Wan, *Power in Weakness*, 126; Sandra Hack Polaski, *Paul and the Discourse of Power* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

turning to my own envisioning of the lives and afterlives of the text as a communal document.

Paul employs kyriarchal rhetoric and imagery to construct himself and others in chapters 10–13. Paul uses identity reasoning to shift these rhetorical constructions in relation to one another.[6] Identity reasoning, or the strategic shifting of identity performance in any situation for claiming power, allows Paul to construct both an identity at the top of the kyriarchal pyramid and one at the bottom of the kyriarchal pyramid for himself. As he shifts his own identity performance, he correspondingly shifts his constructions of others to suit his argument. Paul claims power on multiple levels of societal interaction as he performs a reversal in logic to claim weakness as strength and power. He constructs himself as a warrior from God, a paterfamilias, and as a slave, while constructing God as another emperor, the Corinthians as passive and effeminate, and the other apostles as monolithic opponents and devils. As patriarch, Paul claims kyriarchal power on a familial level. As imperial general, he asserts power on a societal level. While Paul's position within these roles is later strategically reversed using fluid identity reasoning, the kyriarchal frame and assumptions remain fixed. These shifts and negotiations ultimately serve Paul's claims to authority based on speaking abilities, wisdom, and ecstatic experiences. Examining these constructions using a hermeneutics of suspicion shows the potential gap between Paul's rhetoric and historically possible realities in Corinth.

God the Emperor, the Colonizing Apostle, and the Corinthian Battlefield

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[6] Denise Buell, *Why This New Race : Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 2.

In this first section, I argue that Paul presents himself in the image of an imperial general in the service of God who resembles an emperor in order to claim power in communal debates about authority. These power claims should be viewed through Paul's defense of his rhetorical abilities and masculinity. At the beginning of chapter 10, Paul is directly addressing the topic of rhetorical abilities as a standard for authority. Vocabulary about speaking and rhetoric is prevalent throughout this section. Indeed, he has been claiming the right to boast throughout the whole letter (1:12; 3:1; 5:12). Paul's constructions in this section may be in direct response to the critique recorded in 10:10 that Paul's physical presence is weak and pales in comparison to his strong letters. This critique is likely aimed at Paul's rhetorical performance and accuses him of being a flatterer.[7] Rather than attacking the content of one's speech, a common strategy called a rival's right to speak into question by using physiognomics, or the practice of determining one's character, status, or destiny through examination of that individual's body. In examining rhetorical performance, physiognomy would consider vocal tone and clarity, posture, gestures, clothing, and personal appearance.[8] In order to defend himself on these counts and secure a position of authority in the community, Paul initially presents himself as physically and rhetorically strong. Furthermore, as critiques of rhetorical performance were critiques of gender performance, the critique in 10:10 additionally functions as an attack on Paul's masculinity or authoritative power.[9] Thus, his self-constructions serve as a defense of his masculinity and his strength.

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[7]   Jennifer Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123, no. 1 (April 1, 2004): 91.

[8]   Ibid., 87–90.

[9]   Ibid., 91. Larson draws from an examination of Seneca and the work of Maud Gleason for this claim. See Seneca, *Controversiae* 2, pref. 1; see also Sen. *Ep.*114,

From the beginning of chapter 10, Paul describes himself as God's imperial warrior who is capable of asserting power over others. Paul as warrior directs from afar, arguing that he and his army may live as humans, but they wage war divinely, using divine weapons that conquer and capture thoughts and arguments.[10] This evokes an image of a Roman general who enslaves conquered prisoners of war.[11] Warrior Paul demands obedience and punishes disobedience in his God-given mission to build up the Corinthians.[12] Paul uses vocabulary of measured regions and spheres to present himself as authoritative in Achaia.[13] As a conquering traveler, Paul declares his hopes to enlarge

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"On style as a mirror of character."

[10] "For although walking in flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our war are not fleshly but powerful by God for the destruction of strongholds—we are destroying arguments, and are raising up everything exalted against the knowledge of God, and taking prisoner of all thoughts for the obedience of Christ [ἐν σαρκὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦντες οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατευόμεθα—τὰ γὰρ ὅπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν οὐ σαρκικὰ ἀλλὰ δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων—λογισμοὺς καθαιροῦντες καὶ πᾶν ὕψωμα ἐπαιρόμενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντες πᾶν νόημα εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ]" (2 Cor. 10:3–5).

[11] James Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 53.

[12] "And we are fully prepared to punish disobedience, whenever your submission is completed. See the things in front of you. If anyone is convinced that such a one is of Christ, let her consider this again to herself, that just as she belongs to Christ, thusly also are we. For even if I boast a little too extravagantly about our authority, which the Lord gave to build and not to destroy you, I am not ashamed; [καὶ ἐν ἑτοίμῳ ἔχοντες ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν παρακοήν, ὅταν πληρωθῇ ὑμῶν ἡ ὑπακοή. Τὰ κατὰ πρόσωπον βλέπετε. εἴ τις πέποιθεν ἑαυτῷ Χριστοῦ εἶναι, τοῦτο λογιζέσθω πάλιν ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ ὅτι καθὼς αὐτὸς Χριστοῦ οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς. ἐάν [τε] γὰρ περισσότερόν τι καυχήσωμαι περὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας ἡμῶν, ἧς ἔδωκεν ὁ κύριος εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν ὑμῶν, οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσομαι]" (2 Cor. 10:6–8). This rhetoric of obedience has been thoroughly investigated by Cynthia Kittredge. Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, *Community and Authority : The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradition* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998).

[13] "But we are not boasting in the measureless, but according to the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us by measure, to reach even until you [ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος οὗ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρου, ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν]" (2 Cor. 10:13).

his territory as the locals submit.[14] He presents himself as careful to avoid lands/peoples that are under someone else's authority.[15] Instead, he keeps to the areas/peoples where he arrived first.[16] Once he has brought this land and these peoples into obedience, he can make proclamations in farther lands.[17] By using vocabulary of strength, power, and aggression, Paul is highlighting masculine characteristics. David Clines argues that Paul presents himself as the "ultimate Can Do male," who looks forward to strength tests with his opponents.[18] Furthermore, in utilizing language of imperial and militaristic action, some in Corinth may have thought of Paul's mission as resembling a Roman conquest of territories and peoples. In the words of Marchal: "Paul mimes the emperor's authoritative gender while exhorting the community to perform[ance] and imitation similar to that

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[14] "We are not boasting beyond measure in others' labors, but we have hope that because of increasing your faith, our sphere will grow in abundance among you, [οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχώμενοι ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις κόποις, ἐλπίδα δὲ ἔχοντες αὐξανομένης τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν ἐν ὑμῖν μεγαλυνθῆναι κατὰ τὸν κανόνα ἡμῶν εἰς περισσείαν]" (2 Cor. 10:15).

[15] "So that we may preach the gospel in the spheres beyond you, not to boast in the spheres of others/foreigners/strangers for the things already done [εἰς τὰ ὑπερέκεινα ὑμῶν εὐαγγελίσασθαι, οὐκ ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι εἰς τὰ ἕτοιμα καυχήσασθαι]" (2 Cor. 10:16).

[16] "For we were not stretching ourselves beyond measure in reaching you, for until even you we extended/came first in the good news/gospel of Christ" [οὐ γὰρ ὡς μὴ ἐφικνούμενοι εἰς ὑμᾶς ὑπερεκτείνομεν ἑαυτούς, ἄχρι γὰρ καὶ ὑμῶν ἐφθάσαμεν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ·]" (2 Cor. 10:14).

[17] Paul "will not boast beyond measure" (ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα), but will follow his orders to stay in his assigned area of duty (2 Cor. 10:13-15).

[18] David Clines, "Paul the Invisible Man," in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 184. In his discussion of 2 Cor. 10-13, David Clines argues that "Paul is more interested in power, which he likes, than in weakness, which he does not like – and he has thought of a way in which weakness can be seen as power." He adds that Paul clearly values persuasive and effective speech, whether or not he embodies Clines further supports his claim of Paul as the "ultimate Can Do male," he also emphasizes Paul's valuing powerful rhetorical performance, force when necessary, and freedom from marriage with women.

demanded of Rome's subjects."[19] Paul presents himself as a colonizing male who dominates and effeminizes communities.

The identification between Paul and a Roman general, and between God and the Roman emperor, would not have gone unnoticed by the Corinthians. By situating Corinth within Achaia at multiple points in the letter and by employing imperial imagery and rhetoric, some in Corinth may have interpreted Paul as aligning himself with the emperor rather than with the Achaians. Signs and images of Roman colonization surrounded Paul's first audience.[20] For example, at the time of Paul's writing to Corinth, the large majority of the inscriptions in Corinth would have been in Latin, the imperial language, even though the surrounding areas and peoples in Achaia would have undoubtedly spoken Greek.[21] Paul wants the boast of his authority to ring out in the regions of Achaia.[22] Indeed, as I have suggested in previous chapters, Paul's kyriarchal constructions could have reminded some in the audience of the time when the Corinthians joined the Achaian League and attempted to rebel against Roman rule.

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[19] Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*. This description comes from Marchal's analysis of Paul in Philippians. However, it also seems applicable to Paul in 2 Corinthians 10, (87).

[20] Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2. ed. (New York; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 309. Depending on how one dates 2 Corinthians, the emperor would have been either Gaius Caligula, who reigned from 37–41 C.E., Claudius, from 41–54 C.E., or Nero, from 54–68 C.E.

[21] Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 5; John Harvey Kent and American School of Classical Studies at Athens, *The Inscriptions, 1926–1950* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1966), 19. Murphy-O'Connor uses Kent's analysis to argue: "If inscriptions are any indication, Greek would have reestablished itself as the official language of the city by the time of Pausanias, but at the time of Paul it was still Latin; 'of the 104 texts which are prior to the reign of Hadrian [A.D. 117–138] 101 are in Latin and only three in Greek, a virtual monopoly for the Latin language.'"

[22] "The truth of Christ is in me so this boast of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia [ἔστιν ἀλήθεια Χριστοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ ὅτι ἡ καύχησις αὕτη οὐ φραγήσεται εἰς ἐμὲ ἐν τοῖς κλίμασιν τῆς Ἀχαΐας]" (2 Cor. 11:10).

Corinth was razed by Roman consul Mummius and "re-founded" over one hundred years later by Julius Caesar. This has led some scholars, such as Jerome Murphy-O'Connor to argue, "There were in fact two Corinths, one Greek and the other Roman, each with its distinctive institutions and ethos."[23] The Roman founding myth featured Caesar rather than Poseidon and Helios. However, God is the emperor for Paul. It is God, not the Roman emperor, who gave Paul his authority through grace. Paul highlights how this difference changes the situation when he specifies that God gave him power for building up rather than tearing down the Corinthians.[24] Paul also stresses that he does not wish to make them terribly afraid by his letters.[25] While Paul presents himself as a conquering warrior sent by an emperor, his contrastive arguments serve to distinguish his mission from that of the Roman Empire. Thus, he claims power, but he also claims moderation.

Paul's self-constructions and fixed identity claims to an authoritative point on a kyriarchal pyramid are further concretized by his corresponding constructions of the Corinthian Christ community. While Paul constructs himself as an imperial general in chapter 10, he constructs the Corinthians as passive peoples, living territory over which he battles with the super-apostles. He repeatedly uses spatial terms referring to measures, spheres, limits, and boundaries. Furthermore, it is God who has apportioned this territory, these peoples, to Paul.[26] These lands do not talk. In describing himself as a bold

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23 Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 1.

24 "Have you been thinking all along that we are defending ourselves to you? We are speaking in Christ before God. Everything we do, beloved, is for the sake of building you up [Πάλαι δοκεῖτε ὅτι ὑμῖν ἀπολογούμεθα; κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν· τὰ δὲ πάντα, ἀγαπητοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑμῶν οἰκοδομῆς]" (2 Cor. 12:19).

25 "(I say this) so that it does not seem as though I am trying to make you intensely afraid through my letters [ἵνα μὴ δόξω ὡς ἂν ἐκφοβεῖν ὑμᾶς διὰ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν·]" (2 Cor. 10:9).

26 "But we are not boasting in the measureless, but according to the measure of the

rhetorician, he is dependent on the image of a silently attentive audience. As he makes proclamations throughout the region of his right to boast and to deliver powerful speeches, his loquaciousness is juxtaposed to the constructed silence of the Corinthians.[27]

Pater Paul, Jesus the Groom, the Wayward Corinthian Bride, and the Other Men

Paul also fashions himself as a divinely jealous patriarch who worries about his daughter's virginal status (e.g., Judges 8; Hosea 1–2).[28] By constructing himself as a father to the Corinthians, the kyriarchal relationships between God, Christ, Paul, and the Corinthians are naturalized.[29] Paul describes himself as fatherly in his refusal to accept the Corinthians' offers of material support. Even though he was in great need, he reports that he did not burden anyone in Corinth and instead relied on other communities.[30] Some

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sphere which God apportioned to us by measure, to reach even until you [ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος οὗ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρου, ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν]" (2 Cor. 10:13).

[27] This silence echoes in the lack of feminist scholarship on this text compared to 1 Corinthians.

[28] "For I am jealous for you by a godly/divine jealousy, for I have engaged you to one man as a chaste/pure virgin to present to Christ [ζηλῶ γὰρ ὑμᾶς θεοῦ ζήλῳ, ἡρμοσάμην γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἑνὶ ἀνδρὶ παρθένον ἁγνὴν παραστῆσαι τῷ Χριστῷ·]" (2 Cor. 11:2).

[29] This recalls stories from the Hebrew Bible of a jealous God whose people commit adultery in their lack of faithfulness and idolatry. See the story of Hosea and the prostitute in Hosea 1-2, or Gideon and the ephod in Judges 8 for just a few examples. Within the Corinthian correspondence, see 1 Cor. 10:22 where, in the context of discussing food sacrificed to idols, Paul asks, "Are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" Paul constructs himself as God's representative, which continues the argument he began in the previous chapter (10:3–4).

[30] "Did I commit a sin when I made myself low so that you might be raised up, because I preached the good news of God to you as a gift? I have robbed other churches, taking payment from them for the sake of your ministry, Even while I was with you and was lacking I was not being slothful towards/pressing upon anyone; for the brothers coming from Macedonia replenished my lack; and in everything I strove and I strive to keep myself from being a burden to you. The truth of Christ is in me so this boast of mine will not be barred/stopped/silenced in the latitudes/regions/slopes of Achaia. And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do. But what I do I will even continue to do, so that I will hinder the opportunity of the ones who want an

in Corinth may have interpreted Paul's rejection of Corinthian support in favor of his own

independence as his rejection of limits to his masculine autonomy.[31] He appeals to

fatherly love and to convention about parents providing for their children to support this

refusal.[32] As a stern father figure, he writes to correct and protect them. By chapter 13,

Paul makes it clear that he is coming and will not allow any disobedience. The

Corinthians are to listen to him on every point, or else Paul will correct them.[33]

Where he is described as masculine, powerful, and fatherly, the Corinthians are

effeminate, voiceless, passive, and a singular sexually objectified daughter/maid.

Corresponding to Paul's self-construction as father, Paul describes the Corinthian

community as his female child who he has promised in marriage to Christ.[34] As Shelly

Matthews argues, this construction serves to denigrate them and place them in a socially

inferior and passive role. Paul characterizes the entire Corinthian community as tainted

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opportunity to be recognized for being as good as us in that which they boast about,
[Ἢ ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησα ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε, ὅτι δωρεὰν τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ
εὐαγγέλιον εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν; ἄλλας ἐκκλησίας ἐσύλησα λαβὼν ὀψώνιον πρὸς τὴν
ὑμῶν διακονίαν, καὶ παρὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ὑστερηθεὶς οὐ κατενάρκησα οὐθενός· τὸ
γὰρ ὑστέρημά μου προσανεπλήρωσαν οἱ ἀδελφοὶ ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας· καὶ ἐν
παντὶ ἀβαρῆ ἐμαυτὸν ὑμῖν ἐτήρησα καὶ τηρήσω. ἔστιν ἀλήθεια Χριστοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ ὅτι ἡ
καύχησις αὕτη οὐ φραγήσεται εἰς ἐμὲ ἐν τοῖς κλίμασιν τῆς Ἀχαΐας. διὰ τί; ὅτι οὐκ
ἀγαπῶ ὑμᾶς; ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν. Ὃ δὲ ποιῶ καὶ ποιήσω, ἵνα ἐκκόψω τὴν ἀφορμὴν τῶν
θελόντων ἀφορμήν, ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καυχῶνται εὑρεθῶσιν καθὼς καὶ ἡμεῖς]" (2 Cor. 11:7–
12).

31   Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," 93–94.
32   "Behold I am ready to come to you this third time, and I will not be a burden; because
      I do not seek your things but you, for children should not store up for their parents,
      but the parents for their children [Ἰδοὺ τρίτον τοῦτο ἑτοίμως ἔχω ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς,
      καὶ οὐ καταναρκήσω· οὐ γὰρ ζητῶ τὰ ὑμῶν ἀλλὰ ὑμᾶς, οὐ γὰρ ὀφείλει τὰ τέκνα τοῖς
      γονεῦσιν θησαυρίζειν, ἀλλὰ οἱ γονεῖς τοῖς τέκνοις]" (2 Cor. 12:14).
33   "Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Be restored. Listen to my appeal. Be of the
      same mind. Be at peace, and the God of love and peace be with you [Λοιπόν,
      ἀδελφοί, χαίρετε, καταρτίζεσθε, παρακαλεῖσθε, τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖτε, εἰρηνεύετε, καὶ ὁ
      θεὸς τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν]" (2 Cor. 13:11).
34   Kittredge, "Rethinking Authorship in the Letters of Paul," 212.

by female sexual promiscuity in that they have not been faithful or chaste.[35] He compares

the Corinthians to Eve and the rival apostles to the serpent.[36] As Matthews argues, this is

evidence of his identifying the serpent of Genesis 3 with Satan. Furthermore, this shows

that he assumes, along with a popular interpretation at the time, that Eve's actions of

eating from the tree were also sexual in nature.[37] By not listening to Paul, the Corinthians

are at risk of being deceived and led astray in thought and body, which would make them

unfit for union with Christ, the spouse Father Paul has chosen for them. They are flirting

with unfaithfulness and sexual promiscuity in their ready submission to the super-

apostles' snakelike whisperings in their ears of other Jesuses, other spirits, and other

gospels.[38] By characterizing the Corinthians in the negative image of Eve, Paul

effeminizes and sexually objectifies the community. Their obedience is configured as

maintaining chastity and sexual purity, for the purpose of pleasing their Lord Christ.

Associating the community with sexual transgressions would have been "a direct affront

to women who had chosen an ascetic life-style as part of their devotion to God."[39] It

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[35] Matthews, "2 Corinthians," 212.

[36] "But I am afraid lest somehow, as the serpent thoroughly seduced Eve in its own
     cunning, your thoughts may be corrupted away from sincerity and purity of devotion
     for Christ [φοβοῦμαι δὲ μή πως, ὡς ὁ ὄφις ἐξηπάτησεν Εὕαν ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτοῦ,
     φθαρῇ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἁπλότητος [καὶ τῆς ἁγνότητος] τῆς εἰς τὸν
     Χριστόν]" (2 Cor. 11:3)

[37] Matthews, "2 Corinthians," 212.

[38] "For, you receive it well if on the one hand, someone comes preaching another Jesus
     than the one which we preached, or possessing another spirit than the one you
     possessed, or other gospel than the one which we accept [εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος
     ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν, ἢ πνεῦμα ἕτερον λαμβάνετε ὃ οὐκ
     ἐλάβετε, ἢ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον ὃ οὐκ ἐδέξασθε, καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε]" (2 Cor. 11:4).

[39] Matthews, "2 Corinthians," 212.

would also have been an affront to wo/men who engaged in consensual sexual behavior in their Christ community, or did not shun the family of 1 Corinthians 5:1, for example.[40]

Furthermore, accepting this image of the community also requires acceptance of the kyriarchal frame that Paul uses in constructing this comparison. Caroline Vander Stichele compares Paul's usage of the metaphor of Eve and the sexually seductive serpent to his descriptions of Adam in other letters. Adam exemplifies the universal and old humanity, whereas Christ models a new humanity. In contrast to Adam and Christ, Eve marks the particular, sexual, and physical. Vander Stichele asserts, "If we look at the way Eve is portrayed in 2 Corinthians, we discover that her sexual identity as a woman stands in the foreground, and moreover, that she is seen to be in a passive role. She herself does not take the initiative; she is simply led astray."[41] In using this image of Eve as a metaphor for the Corinthian community, Paul marks them as passive, sexual, physical, effeminate. Vander Stichele points out, "His argument is built on the contrast between the images of two different types of women, the positive image of the virgin (v. 2, *parthenos*), on the one hand, and the negative image of Eve as one capable of being led astray, on the other."[42] It depends on the notion that women are defined and valued in terms of their sexual purity, and that men and others who may be positioned higher on a kyriarchal pyramid, such as Paul, free male leaders, and God, are expected to judge women according to these standards. Slaves and wo/men from low classes may have had additional challenges for maintaining a virginal status, and thus, would be more

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[40]   It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality that is not even among the gentiles, for a man to live with the wife of his father. [Ὅλως ἀκούεται ἐν ὑμῖν πορνεία, καὶ τοιαύτη πορνεία ἥτις οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ὥστε γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν]" (1 Cor. 5:1).

[41]   Vander Stichele, "2 Corinthians: Sacrificing Difference to Unity," 751.

[42]   Ibid., 752.

vulnerable in valuing and judgments based on sexual purity. Paul's constructions, in effect, remove these wo/men from the debate about authority, speaking abilities, and wisdom.

Paul not only constructs an image of himself as imperial general and jealous patriarch, and of the Corinthians as passive territories, and sexually compromising wo/men, he also presents the rival apostles as deceptive false imperial generals and sexually deviant boasters from Satan. This debate about boasting should be seen as a competition of rhetoric and masculinity (2 Cor. 10:12, 17).[43] While Paul "destroys arguments" (λογισμοὺς καθαιροῦντες), "enslaves opposing thoughts" (αἰχμαλωτίζοντες πᾶν νόημα), and "punishes disobedience" (ἔχοντες ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν παρακοήν), they are responsible for generating these opposing thoughts and arguments (2 Cor. 10:4–6). They become a foil for him as he contrasts his own behavior to their extensive bragging and comparisons. Furthermore, in Paul's construction, God supports Paul's boasting, but not the boasting behavior of the other apostles.[44] They merely boast for themselves, says Paul. According to the majority of commentaries, rival leaders critique Paul's rhetorical abilities, which provokes Paul's agitated response.[45] Paul adds kyriarchal metaphors and rhetoric to this debate. Paul uses imperial metaphors that claim and map various occupied territories to construct the super-apostles as representatives of a false emperor and pseudo

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[43] Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," 91. This is the case when seen in the Greco-Roman context that equated authority, masculinity and rhetorical performance.

[44] "But let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord; For it is not the one who commends himself, who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends [Ὁ δὲ καυχώμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω· οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἑαυτὸν συνιστάνων, ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν δόκιμος, ἀλλὰ ὃν ὁ κύριος συνίστησιν]" (2 Cor. 10:17–18).

[45] "Because, they say, 'On the one hand, his letters are fierce and strong, but his fleshly appearance is weak and his word contemptible' [ὅτι, Αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ μέν, φησίν, βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραί, ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενὴς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος]" (2 Cor. 10:10).

regime as they boast beyond their limits by vying for preaching power over the Corinthians. They are clearly in Paul's territory.[46] While Paul boasts in the Lord, they are presented as ministers of Satan in serpent disguise, "false apostles" (ψευδαπόστολοι), and "deceitful workers" (ἐργάται δόλιοι).[47] While Paul's actions are divinely sanctioned, Paul characterizes the super-apostles' actions as foolish.[48] They attempt to conquer and devour the Corinthians by enslaving them, taking advantage of them, and abusing them.[49] In identifying them with the serpent, their actions are also sexualized. This enables Paul to construct them not only in opposition to him, but also rivaling Christ as suitors for the effeminized Corinthian bride.[50] As a powerful *paterfamilias* to the Corinthians and warrior for the Lord, Paul claims power over the rival leaders as he portrays them claiming power over the Corinthians.

Strategic Slavery and Forced Foolishness

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[46] In contrasting his own mission to others' he suggests that they do not respect boundaries while he does: "We are not boasting beyond measure in others' labors [οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχώμενοι ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις κόποις]" (2 Cor. 10:15).

[47] "For such ones are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguised as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan disguises himself as an angel of light; Therefore, it is not surprising if even his ministers disguise themselves into ministers of righteousness [οἱ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι ψευδαπόστολοι, ἐργάται δόλιοι, μετασχηματιζόμενοι εἰς ἀποστόλους Χριστοῦ. καὶ οὐ θαῦμα, αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ Σατανᾶς μετασχηματίζεται εἰς ἄγγελον φωτός· οὐ μέγα οὖν εἰ καὶ οἱ διάκονοι αὐτοῦ μετασχηματίζονται ὡς διάκονοι δικαιοσύνης, ὧν τὸ τέλος ἔσται κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν]" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

[48] "For, being wise, you put up with fools with pleasure [ἡδέως γὰρ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων φρόνιμοι ὄντες·]" (2 Cor. 11:19).

[49] "For you put up with it if anyone enslaves you, if anyone devours you, if anyone seizes you, if anyone exalts him or herself, if anyone strikes you in the face [ἀνέχεσθε γὰρ εἴ τις ὑμᾶς καταδουλοῖ, εἴ τις κατεσθίει, εἴ τις λαμβάνει, εἴ τις ἐπαίρεται, εἴ τις εἰς πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς δέρει]" (2 Cor. 11:20).

[50] This characterization of the apostles also participates in the kyriarchal frame that assumes that men have the power to determine how women, and women's bodies, should be treated.

Paul also presents himself as weak and slave-like in this passage. As he shifts his own self-characterization, he correspondingly shifts his presentation of the community and the super-apostles.[51] He humbles himself to a slave-like status when he has preached to them for free.[52] He accepted support from other churches, robbing them, to be a slave for the Corinthians.[53] Comparing himself to the superapostles, Paul says that he has worked harder and has faced prison and beatings to a greater extent than they have, and that he has even come close to death.[54] He lists all the various implements that have been used to physically harm him, including lashes, rods, and stones.[55] In many settings he has been in danger at the will of many people and forces. With his own people, Paul has received lashes, which he contrasts to the rival apostles who might gain authority for being a Hebrew, Israelite, and descendant of Abraham. Further evidence of Paul's constructed weakness or slave status can be found in the description of his floggings,

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[51] Unlike other places in his writings, such as in 1 Cor. 9:19 when Paul states, "I have made myself a slave to all," Paul's self-construction as slave is not explicit in 2 Cor. 11. Instead, he uses descriptions of his body to describe himself as weak and slave-like.

[52] "Did I commit a sin when I made myself low so that you might be raised up, because I preached the good news of God to you as a gift? [Ἢ ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησα ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε, ὅτι δωρεὰν τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγέλιον εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν;]" (2 Cor. 11:7).

[53] "I have robbed other churches, taking payment from them for the sake of your ministry/service, [ἄλλας ἐκκλησίας ἐσύλησα λαβὼν ὀψώνιον πρὸς τὴν ὑμῶν διακονίαν]" (2 Cor. 11:8).

[54] "Are they ministers of Christ? I am speaking as if I'm out of my mind, I am a better one: with much greater labors, much more imprisonments, far more beatings, frequent deaths; [διάκονοι Χριστοῦ εἰσιν; παραφρονῶν λαλῶ, ὑπὲρ ἐγώ· ἐν κόποις περισσοτέρως, ἐν φυλακαῖς περισσοτέρως, ἐν πληγαῖς ὑπερβαλλόντως, ἐν θανάτοις πολλάκις·]" (2 Cor. 11:23).

[55] "Five times I received 40 lashes minus 1 from Jews, three times I was beaten with rods, one time I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and day I spent in the deep sea. [ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων πεντάκις τεσσαράκοντα παρὰ μίαν ἔλαβον τρὶς ἐραβδίσθην, ἅπαξ ἐλιθάσθην, τρὶς ἐραβδίσθην, ἅπαξ ἐλιθάσθην, τρὶς ἐναυάγησα, νυχθήμερον ἐν τῷ βυθῷ πεποίηκα]" (2 Cor. 11:24–25).

which would highlight his dishonor by the Roman custom that reserved flogging for non-citizens.[56] Jennifer Glancy argues that wounds on the back and bodily scars from beatings and whippings were distinguished from martial wounds of honor on the front of the body.[57] Indeed, whippable bodies were considered dishonorable, of suspect character, effeminized, and were often enslaved. Paul does not describe his beatings as heroic or manly, but rather as weakness.[58] Living in subhuman conditions without sleep, food, drink, or clothes, he has had to toil and work.[59] Not only has he suffered abuses from all people, but even from nature, leaving him often near death, cold, naked, and without food.[60] He describes himself as the weakest of the weak.[61] These descriptions contribute to a construction of Paul as sharing the status of slaves.

Additionally, by constructing himself as a slave, Paul uses identity reasoning to strategically negotiate his authority to speak. J. Albert Harrill argues that because his opponents use physiognomy to critique his masculinity and power to dominate others,

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[56] Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," 94.

[57] Jennifer Glancy, "Boasting of Beatings (2 Corinthians 11:23-25)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123, no. 1 (2004): 99; Barton, "Savage Miracles," 41. Glancy deals directly with Carlin Barton's idea from "Savage Miracles" that the reception of beaten bodies could be ambiguous in an arena setting, depending on audience and passage of time. Glancy argues that even if the condemned person's performance might elicit admiration, the condemnation to the arena was shameful.

[58] Glancy, "Boasting of Beatings," 99.

[59] "On frequent journeys, I have endured danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from the gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters, [ὁδοιπορίαις πολλάκις, κινδύνοις ποταμῶν, κινδύνοις λῃστῶν, κινδύνοις ἐκ γένους, κινδύνοις ἐξ ἐθνῶν, κινδύνοις ἐν πόλει, κινδύνοις ἐν ἐρημίᾳ, κινδύνοις ἐν θαλάσσῃ, κινδύνοις ἐν ψευδαδέλφοις]" (2 Cor. 11:26).

[60] "In labor and toil, through many sleepless nights, hungry and thirsty, frequently without food, cold and naked [κόπῳ καὶ μόχθῳ, ἐν ἀγρυπνίαις πολλάκις, ἐν λιμῷ καὶ δίψει, ἐν νηστείαις πολλάκις, ἐν ψύχει καὶ γυμνότητι]" (2 Cor. 11:27).

[61] "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble and I am not burning with indignation? [τίς ἀσθενεῖ, καὶ οὐκ ἀσθενῶ; τίς σκανδαλίζεται, καὶ οὐκ ἐγὼ πυροῦμαι]" (2 Cor. 11:29).

Paul must respond using the same logic. The opponents' charges of Paul's weak bodily presence and contemptible speech in 10:10 portray Paul's rhetorical performance as slave-like. In his *Institutes of Oratory*, Roman rhetorician Quintilian remarks that slaves generally could not be accomplished orators, and warns against adopting a slavelike posture when speaking.[62] According to physiognomic reasoning, observers could identify the slave body by poor or submissive posture, hunched shoulders, physical deformity, and small stature and height, which signified weakness, dishonor, and questionable morals.[63] Paul responds by his foolish discourse of 2 Cor. 11:21–12:10, which resembles rhetorical performances of slaves in Greco-Roman comedies. Playing into assumptions of his poor rhetorical performance allows Paul to turn the focus from style to the wisdom of its content.[64]

Many scholars who observe the radical differences in Paul's self-fashioning ask whether and to what extent Paul participates in the kyriarchal and oppressive practices of the Greco-Roman world. Does he participate as a willing participant, making him a villain to modern liberationist causes, or as a strategic move to reject or critique kyriarchy, which would make him a hero of liberation? On the side of a heroic Paul, Harrill argues that Paul's construction of himself as slave-like is intended to exaggerate physiognomy to make its usage by Paul's opponents seem foolish for its focus on

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[62] Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 1.3.83; 2.11.7; 2.17.6.

[63] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 37–38; Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 142–143. Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 1.3.83; 2.11.7; 2.17.6.

[64] "But even if I am an amateur in word, but not in wisdom, in every way we have presented all things to you [εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ τῇ γνώσει, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν παντὶ φανερώσαντες ἐν πᾶσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς]" (2 Cor. 11:6).

superficial details.[65] Glancy also sees Paul as rejecting norms by identifying with suffering individuals when he boasts of his body as weak and beaten.[66] Similarly, Larson asserts that Paul rejects Greco-Roman gender physiognomics when he presents himself as weak and effeminate, rather than as strong and masculine. Davina Lopez makes a similar argument in her work on Galatians: after his call experience Paul rejects Greco-Roman norms of imperial masculinity by giving up the power to dominate others and identifies instead with the conquered feminized nations living under the power of the Empire.[67] Lopez emphasizes Paul's own change in gender status with this rejection: "Paul's masculinity changes from dominant to non-dominant and undergoes further shift toward femininity in Galatians."[68] In other words, Paul's Christ-like strength in his weakness allows him to identify with others who are weak or low in status. For Lopez, this signals his countercultural rejection of status systems more broadly.

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[65] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 54; Hans Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus Und Die Sokratische Tradition: Eine Exegetische Untersuchung Zu Seiner Apologie 2 Korinther 10–13.* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972); Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989). Harrill uses the works of Hans Betz and Abraham Malherbe that attempt to locate Paul's writings in the context of competing philosophical and rhetorical schools to support his argument about Paul's response.

[66] Glancy, "Boasting of Beatings," 134. By adding his suffering under the whip and rod to his boast of hardships, Paul is breaking the mould of self-praise discussed by Plutarch and practiced by many. Glancy argues that by not recognizing this break, scholars fail to see the way the body is a site for contestation in 2 Corinthians. She distinguishes between the bodily scars of beatings and whippings on the back and martial wounds of honor on the front of the body. While Glancy concludes that Paul stresses this identification for "theological reasons," she also states that Paul's second purpose in boasting of beatings is "strategic" in his argument against opponents in Corinth. Rather than seeing Paul in a place of power in this strategizing, however, Glancy portrays him as whippable and struggling for power to speak in Corinth.

[67] Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 141.

[68] Ibid.

Others interpret Paul's participation in gender and status discourses as symbolizing his assertions of power and authority over the community. Colleen Conway argues that Paul draws on a variety of gender discourses to convince the Corinthians that they can achieve masculinity by following Christ.[69] Conway's assertion that Paul claims weakness to achieve power is supported by her observation that strength or power language regularly follows descriptions of Paul's weakness in 2 Cor. 10–13. But even this claim for power through gender malleability is also a strategy for survival under empire, Conway argues, in which non-dominant men and women had to find alternative ways of achieving and displaying gender status.[70] Marchal views Paul's rhetoric of personal self-lowering and weakness as a performance of identification with suffering that ultimately helps him claim authority.[71] Reading 2 Cor. 10–13 according to this logic suggests that Paul may pass as effeminate or enslaved, but only in order to affirm his power and status over the community.

Identity Reasoning In Context

Expanding the questions and analysis to include attention to Paul's characterizations of the Corinthians and the other apostles makes possible interpretations in which Paul and also these others as all negotiating for authority to speak and for claims to wisdom. Both he and they may have strategically used or rejected the kyriarchal and imperial imagery and metaphors available to them when it was advantageous. Rather than

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[69] Colleen M. Conway, "The Unmanned Christ and the Manly Christian in the Pauline Tradition," in *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 69. Pointing out that Paul frequently uses athletic and martial imagery, Conway argues that "Paul's rhetoric is shaped by the cultural metaphors of masculinity, a masculinity that he applies to himself and to believing Christians."

[70] Ibid., 69–77; Clines, "Paul the Invisible Man."

[71] Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*, 87. Borrowing a quote from Anne McClintock, Marchal claims that Paul is "'the colonial who passes as Other the better to govern.'"

classifying Paul (or anyone else) as universally "good" or universally "bad" according to

modern standards of liberation and justice, it is more ethically responsible and

historically accurate to see these interactions and images as particular and local.

When Paul shifts to a self-construction of his weakness, he presents the

Corinthians as those whom he loves and serves, even in his weakness (11:7–11, 12:15–

19). In Paul's construction, the childlike, passive, feminized, and sexualized Corinthian

body is the object over which Paul stages his divinely sanctioned war with the super-

apostles (10:3–8). The winner takes the prize of full control over the Corinthian body. As

the audience, they stay silent, passive, and relatively powerless. While he presents their

identity as static, he shifts his own to strategically suit his argument. He presents their

role as either accepting or rejecting, and makes the case that they should accept him. Paul

asserts that they have passively accepted others who have treated them poorly, and

promises that he will treat them well.[72] Their position remains on the bottom of the status

pyramid as they are described as beloved children, an errant daughter. Paul's own

identity construction shifts to feature his weakness and service to them. He tells the

Corinthians that he will gladly be spent for them.[73] His every action is in service to

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[72] "Since many may boast according to the flesh/world, I, too, will boast. For, being wise, you put up with fools with pleasure; For you put up with it if anyone enslaves you, if anyone devours you, if anyone seizes you, if anyone exalts him or herself, if anyone strikes you in the face. To my shame, I must say, in this we have been weak; but in whatever anyone may dare (to boast), in foolishness I say, I also am daring [ἐπεὶ πολλοὶ καυχῶνται κατὰ σάρκα, κἀγὼ καυχήσομαι. ἡδέως γὰρ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων φρόνιμοι ὄντες· ἀνέχεσθε γὰρ εἴ τις ὑμᾶς καταδουλοῖ, εἴ τις κατεσθίει, εἴ τις λαμβάνει, εἴ τις ἐπαίρεται, εἴ τις εἰς πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς δέρει. κατὰ ἀτιμίαν λέγω, ὡς ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠσθενήκαμεν· ἐν ᾧ δ' ἄν τις τολμᾷ, ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ λέγω, τολμῶ κἀγώ]" (2 Cor. 11:18–21).

[73] "But I most gladly will spend and will be utterly spent for your souls. If I more abundantly love you, am I to be loved less? [ἐγὼ δὲ ἥδιστα δαπανήσω καὶ

them.[74] Here Paul's self-construction is dependent on his construction of the Corinthians as low in social status. By identifying with Christ in his suffering, Paul's reversal is complete. Paul is both weak/slave-like/effeminate and strong/free/masculine while the Corinthians are both Paul's errant and passive daughter as well as served by Paul in their lowly state. It is the relational nature of these constructions that heightens Paul's point.

Similarly, when Paul changes his own construction to one of an effeminate slave, he emphasizes the traits that would give the rival apostles authority in the community: their being Hebrews, Israelites, and of Abraham's seed.[75] While several major commentators argue that these three terms should be taken together to refer to the Jewishness of the rival apostles and to Paul, others have argued that each has distinct connotations that relate different aspects of the Jewishness of these figures.[76] The first

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ἐκδαπανηθήσομαι ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν. εἰ περισσοτέρως ὑμᾶς ἀγαπῶ, ἧσσον ἀγαπῶμαι]" (2 Cor. 12:15).

[74] "Have you been thinking all along that we are defending ourselves to you? We are speaking in Christ before God. Everything we do, beloved, is for the sake of building you up. [Πάλαι δοκεῖτε ὅτι ὑμῖν ἀπολογούμεθα; κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν· τὰ δὲ πάντα, ἀγαπητοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑμῶν οἰκοδομῆς]" (2 Cor. 12:19).

[75] "Are they Hebrew-speakers? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they of the seed of Abraham? I am, too [Ἑβραῖοί εἰσιν; κἀγώ. Ἰσραηλῖταί εἰσιν; κἀγώ. σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ εἰσιν; κἀγώ]" (2 Cor. 11:22).

[76] Wan, *Power in Weakness*, 138–140. There are several factors that suggest similarities between Paul's "opponents" in Corinth and those in Rome and Galatia. I will give a brief summary of Wan's extensive review. First, they bring recommendation letters from authority figures in the early church (3:1; 5:12; 10:12). This suggests that they may be figures from outside the church since otherwise they would be known and would not need these letters. Second, based on Paul's discussion of going beyond one's assigned territory, Wan also claims that there must have been an agreement about the areas of ministry/mission fields for each minister, which would most likely have been decided at the Jerusalem Council mentioned in Galatians. Third, language of alternate gospels appears both in 2 Cor. 11:2–4 and Gal. 1:6–8. Finally, Paul's discussion of their titles in 11:22 shares resemblances with the group described in Galatians. For these reasons, Wan concludes, "His opponents in 2 Corinthians must be the same group of Jewish Christians who advocated a law-centered Christianity in Corinth just as they have tried to do in Galatia."

term Ἑβραῖοί has linguistic connotations, as seen in Acts 6:1, where Hebrew or Aramaic-speaking Jews are contrasted to Greek-speaking Jews.[77] Paul may use this term here in this linguistic sense given the rhetorical context of the passage. If Paul is responding to a critique of his speaking abilities, then it is possible that he is highlighting the speaking abilities of his rivals, in addition to their Jewishness. "Are they Hebrew-speakers? So am I," says Paul. Yet, when Paul speaks as a fool, in the character of an effeminized slave, these speaking abilities are no longer strengths, but weaknesses. It is possible that Paul highlights the qualities that distinguished his rivals—their lineage, their experience as ministers of Christ, and their linguistic abilities—so that when he inverts the system, these qualities function as evidence of their weakness and inferiority to Paul. Their weakness is further affirmed when Paul claims that his experiences exceed theirs in weakness.[78] Who is weak if not Paul? The rival apostles are neither as authoritative in their rhetorical performance, nor in their lineage, nor in their commissioning as Paul, but nor are they as weak or as Christlike as Paul.

Competing Visions

In this section, I argue that Paul's story of his ecstatic experience is the climax of his rhetorical show in local debates about the authority to speak and to possess true wisdom. Indeed, I interpret this story as contributing to Paul's identity reasoning, using

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[77] "Now during these days when the disciples were being increased, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food [Ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις πληθυνόντων τῶν μαθητῶν ἐγένετο γογγυσμὸς τῶν Ἑλληνιστῶν πρὸς τοὺς Ἑβραίους, ὅτι παρεθεωροῦντο ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ τῇ καθημερινῇ αἱ χῆραι αὐτῶν]" (Acts 6:1).

[78] "Are they ministers of Christ? I am speaking as if I'm out of my mind, I am a better one: with much greater labors, much more imprisonments, far more beatings, frequent deaths [διάκονοι Χριστοῦ εἰσιν; παραφρονῶν λαλῶ, ὑπὲρ ἐγώ· ἐν κόποις περισσοτέρως, ἐν φυλακαῖς περισσοτέρως, ἐν πληγαῖς ὑπερβαλλόντως, ἐν θανάτοις πολλάκις]" (2 Cor. 11:23).

an inversion that envisions strength through the display of weakness.[79] Paul begins his

description of his vision with a reference to the boasting that has been a theme throughout

the letter.[80] His description is on behalf of someone who was taken up to the third heaven

in a vision of the Lord (Christ).[81] This person was caught up into heaven fourteen years

ago and heard words that cannot be uttered on earth.[82] Paul states repeatedly that he does

not know whether this happened in the body (ἐν σώματι) or apart from the body (χωρὶς

τοῦ σώματος). After briefly defending his boasting, Paul explains that he especially

would not want to boast about the excess of his revelations.[83] To keep him from being too

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[79] Cf. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 773. Thrall claims that 2 Cor. 12:5 demonstrates that Paul distinguishes between his visionary experience and his weakness.

[80] "It is necessary for me to boast; though nothing profitable will come from it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord [Καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ· οὐ συμφέρον μέν, ἐλεύσομαι δὲ εἰς ὀπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου]" (2 Cor. 12:1).

[81] There has been some debate about whether Paul describes the experiences of someone else or of himself in the third person. The majority opinion, possibly after John Chrysostom, is that these are Paul's visionary experiences. See Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 778; Chrysostom, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 12:399, PG 61 col. 576.

[82] "I know a person in Christ who, fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—was taken up (this person of whom I speak) to the third heaven. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—that he was caught up into paradise and heard unutterable words which no person may tell [οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῷ πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων—εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν—ἁρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ. καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον—εἴτε ἐν σώματι εἴτε χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν—ὅτι ἡρπάγη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι]" (2 Cor. 2–4).

[83] "On behalf of such a one I will boast; on behalf of myself I will not boast except in my weaknesses. For if I want to boast, I will not be out of control (foolish), for I will be speaking truth; but I refrain from it, lest anyone should credit me with more than she sees in me or hears from me, especially from the excess of my revelations. Therefore, so that I should not be too elated, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger from Satan so that I would be tormented, that I would not be too elated [ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοιούτου καυχήσομαι, ὑπὲρ δὲ ἐμαυτοῦ οὐ καυχήσομαι εἰ μὴ ἐν ταῖς

elated (ὑπεραίρωμαι), Paul describes receiving a thorn in his flesh (σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί),

sent from Satan. He does not define this thorn or describe it in any detail, although

scholars have speculated about it for years. The text seems to assume that the original

audience would already know about this thorn. Paul emphasizes the thorn's functions as

to hit or torment him (με κολαφίζῃ) and to keep him from being too elated or too lifted up

(ὑπεραίρωμαι) presumably in his visions.[84] Rather than removing this thorn, the Lord

tells Paul—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know—that grace is sufficient

instead, because power is made perfect in weakness (ἡ γὰρ δύναμις ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ

τελεῖται).[85] Paul asserts that it is for this reason that he boasts of the things that show his

weakness.[86] Coming out of his out of control speaking (Γέγονα ἄφρων), Paul reasserts his

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ἀσθενείαις μου. ἐὰν γὰρ θελήσω καυχήσασθαι, οὐκ ἔσομαι ἄφρων, ἀλήθειαν γὰρ ἐρῶ· φείδομαι δέ, μή τις εἰς ἐμὲ λογίσηται ὑπὲρ ὃ βλέπει με ἢ ἀκούει τι ἐξ ἐμοῦ καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων. διό, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ, ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι]" (2 Cor. 12:5–7).

[84] The term κολαφίζῃ is only used a handful of times in the New Testament. Paul uses the term in 1 Cor. 4:11 in his description of his sufferings in his work as an apostle. Mark and Matthew use it to describe the sufferings of Jesus at the hands of the Roman guards in Mark 14:65 and Matthew 26:67. It also appears in 1 Peter to describe the consequences for sin.

[85] "As to this three times I appealed to the Lord that it might leave me. But he said to me, 'My grace is strong enough (sufficient) for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me [ὑπὲρ τούτου τρὶς τὸν κύριον παρεκάλεσα ἵνα ἀποστῇ ἀπ' ἐμοῦ·καὶ εἴρηκέν μοι, Ἀρκεῖ σοι ἡ χάρις μου· ἡ γὰρ δύναμις ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελεῖται. ἥδιστα οὖν μᾶλλον καυχήσομαι ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου, ἵνα ἐπισκηνώσῃ ἐπ' ἐμὲ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ]" (2 Cor. 12:8–9).

[86] "Therefore, I delight in my weakness, in mistreatment, in hardships, in persecutions and distresses on behalf of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong [διὸ εὐδοκῶ ἐν ἀσθενείαις, ἐν ὕβρεσιν, ἐν ἀνάγκαις, ἐν διωγμοῖς καὶ στενοχωρίαις, ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ· ὅταν γὰρ ἀσθενῶ, τότε δυνατός εἰμι]" (2 Cor. 12:10).

superior claims to authority in Corinth as he casually mentions the signs and wonders the

Corinthians observed from him that could be grounds for their recommendation.[87]

Scholars often point to 2 Cor. 12:1–13 to support their diverse theories of Paul's

views on visions and revelations. Colleen Shantz, for example, uses studies from

neurobiology to assert Paul's full support of ecstatic visions:

> Ecstatic religious experience was a frequent and significant aspect of Paul's
> personality and social setting, not just a circumstantial contingency. In other
> words, Paul was not someone who was merely surprised by an unsolicited
> encounter with the divine in the course of his everyday business; Paul was, among
> other things, an ecstatic.[88]

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Michael Goulder argues that Paul and the Pauline

tradition does not support ecstatic experiences most of the time.[89] In regards to 2

Corinthians 12:1–10, he asserts, against the majority of scholarship, that Paul is speaking

about someone else, such as Timothy or Titus.

Rather than trying to determine the answer to the question of Paul's opinion on

ecstatic experiences, my feminist decolonizing and decentering approach places this

passage in the context of local debates about authority to speak and to claim true wisdom.

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[87]   "I have been speaking as a fool (or out of control); you all forced me to it; indeed, I ought to be commended by you; for I am not in the least less than the super apostles, even if I am nothing; Indeed the signs of a true apostle were performed among you in all patience, both by signs and wonders and works of power [Γέγονα ἄφρων· ὑμεῖς με ἠναγκάσατε· ἐγὼ γὰρ ὤφειλον ὑφ' ὑμῶν συνίστασθαι. οὐδὲν γὰρ ὑστέρησα τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων, εἰ καὶ οὐδέν εἰμι· τὰ μὲν σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου κατειργάσθη ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν πάσῃ ὑπομονῇ, σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν]" (2 Cor. 12:11–12).

[88]   Colleen Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy: The Neurobiology of the Apostle's Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2.

[89]   Michael D. Goulder, "Visions and Revelations of the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:1–10)," in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict: Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall*, ed. Trevor J. Burke and J. K. Elliott (Boston: Brill, 2003). Goulder mentions the view that one could not aspire to visions of the throne without ascetic practices, especially sexual abstinence. He cites Col 2:18, Exod. 19:15 in support of this view, and suggests that Paul opposes the spiritual practice of abstinence to bolster visions.

It is possible to interpret Paul's recounting of his visionary experience as an additional display of weakness and foolishness. The powerful rhetorical move in this inversion hinges on a politics of identification in which Paul claims power and wisdom through identifying with God's grace in his weakness and irrationality. Additionally, a reexamination of the term ἄφρονα within the context of Corinthian debates suggests that it is possible to read this passage as Paul's attempt to moderate visionary practices and wise speech in the Corinthian *ekklēsia*.

In his discussion of visions and revelations, Paul uses identity reasoning in the form of inversion to describe his ecstatic experience in terms of his weakness, which ultimately displays the strength of his leadership.[90] Looking to the previous verses, Wan interprets Paul as in a point-by-point contest with the super apostles in 2 Cor. 11:21–12:13, where Paul matches them on ethnicity and speaking abilities. But then, Wan sees Paul's reversal logic at work when he emphasizes his weakness and low status in describing himself as a servant of Christ (διάκονοι Χριστοῦ).[91] It continues with Paul's recounting of his hardships in ministry, including the curious episode in the basket in Damascus.[92] His last point for claiming authority is to discuss visions and revelations, and the thorn in his flesh. Wan describes the logic of this climactic argument:

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[90] This inversion strategy appears throughout Paul's letters. As discussed in chapter 3 of this dissertation, the inversion of weakness and strength features in Paul's rhetoric of suffering in 2 Cor. 1:1–13. See Castelli, "Interpretations of Power in 1 Corinthians"; Castelli, *Imitating Paul*.

[91] "Are they ministers of Christ? I am speaking as if I'm out of my mind, I am a better one: with much greater labors, many more imprisonments, far more beatings, frequent deaths [διάκονοι Χριστοῦ εἰσιν; παραφρονῶν λαλῶ, ὑπὲρ ἐγώ· ἐν κόποις περισσοτέρως, ἐν φυλακαῖς περισσοτέρως, ἐν πληγαῖς ὑπερβαλλόντως, ἐν θανάτοις πολλάκις]" (2 Cor. 11:23)

[92] Wan, *Power in Weakness*, 145.

"He begins by suggesting that, like his opponents, he too has seen visions, but just as one enters the internal logic of such a comparison, he turns it upside down by showing that his ecstatic vision demonstrates precisely the opposite: namely, he is but a weakling, someone who is helplessly dependent on God's grace."[93]

Others may have ecstatic experiences where they seem to display strength through wise speech and rhetorical skills as they recount their out-of-body experiences, but Paul argues that he is better, when compared, because his performances in these arenas demonstrate his own weakness that makes him completely reliant on God's grace and power. His vision, his ecstatic experience, is discussed last. It is the height of his illustration of being out of his own control and under God's control.

Paul also inverts wisdom and foolishness in presenting his visions as folly. This enables Paul to assert that his "foolishness" around revelations is superior to those who claim authority for their wisdom in revelations. In Wan's words, Paul's strategy in the passage assumes that "To defeat the argumentation of the wise, the sophistry of the crafty, he must speak like a fool."[94] Paul presents others as having ecstatic visions and speaking (or boasting) about them to gain authority. By presenting as powerful his "weakness" of not speaking about his visions, or not becoming excessively raised up (ὑπεραίρωμαι) in them on account of the thorn in his flesh, he critiques those who would speak about or get too intoxicated in their revelations. Furthermore, after describing this visionary experience and his reliance on God's grace, he says that he has been speaking as if out of his mind.[95] By presenting his boasting about visions as foolishness, he critiques those who claim that talking about their visions makes them wise.

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[93] Ibid., 146.

[94] Ibid., 142.

[95] "I have been speaking as a fool (or out of control); you all forced me to it; indeed, I ought to be commended by you; for I am not in the least less than the super apostles,

Paul uses his description of his ecstatic experience to claim authority by presenting his weakness in terms of God's grace. Grace serves as shorthand for Paul's theology and is often representative of God's power.[96] Throughout the letter, Paul constructs God in the image of an emperor, who wins over expansive lands and peoples, using force when necessary. In this passage, it is the power rather than the love or forgiveness of God that takes precedence. Paul frequently conflates his role and mission with God's, which is made explicit in 2 Corinthians 12:9.[97] Polaski explains this relationship in the following way:

> The effect of Paul's reference to grace is to connect even more closely (if paradoxically) Paul's work with the work of God. Because God's grace is operative in Paul's life, he implies, because it is *God's* power that functions in him, power acknowledged to Paul is power acknowledged to God. This practical equation of Paul's power with the divine power is made possible by Paul's use of the terminology of grace.[98]

Thus, Paul's weakness in visions and revelations, as manifest in the thorn in his flesh that keeps him from being too elated, is rhetorically inverted to present Paul as having power through grace. This has important consequences for how Paul presents himself and his speaking abilities: "Even when Paul uses expressions that stress the mutuality of grace,

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even if I am nothing [Γέγονα ἄφρων· ὑμεῖς με ἠναγκάσατε· ἐγὼ γὰρ ὤφειλον ὑφ' ὑμῶν συνίστασθαι. οὐδὲν γὰρ ὑστέρησα τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων, εἰ καὶ οὐδέν εἰμι]" (2 Cor. 12:11).

[96] Polaski, *Paul and the Discourse of Power*, 105–107.

[97] "But he said to me, 'My grace is strong enough (sufficient) for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me [καὶ εἴρηκέν μοι, Ἀρκεῖ σοι ἡ χάρις μου· ἡ γὰρ δύναμις ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελεῖται. ἥδιστα οὖν μᾶλλον καυχήσομαι ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου, ἵνα ἐπισκηνώσῃ ἐπ' ἐμὲ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ]" (2 Cor. 12:9).

[98] Polaski, *Paul and the Discourse of Power*, 113. In her analysis of 2 Corinthians 12:9, Polaski points out that grace language appears alongside direct power language, and affects the transformation of weakness to power: "Paul's weakness makes him more demonstrably the subject of God's power: this, according to the revealed message, is the work of 'grace.'"

he does so in the context of a discourse of power that also presumes a spiritual hierarchy, with himself at the top as privileged speaker."[99] Polaski's analysis can be expanded to consider its effects on the particular Corinthian debates about wisdom and speaking abilities. By conflating his weakness of revelatory rhetorical abilities with God's power, and his mission with God's mission, Paul constructs himself not as weak, but as quite powerful. Indeed, he is not just powerful, but powerful particularly in terms of the quality of his speaking about revelations (not boastful) and of quality of revelations (not too intoxicated). Using a politics of identity, Paul constructs himself as a conduit of God's power in order to distinguish himself from others in the community.[100]

Another way Paul claims authority through his revelation account is by presenting himself as moderated by God's grace in his approach to visions. Paul uses the term ἄφρονα, frequently translated as "foolish," in several places throughout this passage.[101] Indeed, the entire passage is often termed the Fool's Speech. While this translation is certainly accurate, considering the Greek word family sheds light on important connotations that might open up space for additional interpretations. The term ἄφρονα can be translated as being senseless and incoherent.[102] It is the opposite of σωφρονέω from 5:13, which, as I discussed in my last chapter, could indicate a

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[99] Ibid., 119. According to Polaksi, Paul uses a similar strategy in 2 Corinthians 8–9, 1 Corinthians 15:1–7, and Romans 5 and 12.

[100] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 182–185.

[101] ἀφρόνων appears in 2 Cor 11:19, Romans 2:20, and 1 Peter 2:15. ἄφρων appears in 1 Cor. 15:36, 2 Cor. 12:6 and 12:11, and in Luke 12:20. ἄφρονες appears in Luke 11:40 and Ephesians 5:17. ἄφρονα appears twice in 2 Cor. 11:16.

[102] "I say again, let no one suppose that I am out of control; but if otherwise, even if as out of control put up with me, so that I also may boast a little. What I am saying in this boastful confidence is not according to the Lord, but as in foolishness (or out of control) [Πάλιν λέγω, μή τίς με δόξῃ ἄφρονα εἶναι· εἰ δὲ μήγε, κἂν ὡς ἄφρονα δέξασθέ με, ἵνα κἀγὼ μικρόν τι καυχήσωμαι. ὃ λαλῶ οὐ κατὰ κύριον λαλῶ, ἀλλ᾽ὡς ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ, ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ὑποστάσει τῆς καυχήσεως]" (2 Cor. 11:16–17).

preoccupation with moderation and self-mastery.[103] With this antonym in mind, it seems

that Paul speaks as someone who is out of control, not master of himself. This binary of

self-moderation/lack of control complements the wisdom/folly binary at work in this

passage and ties it together with the weakness/strength inversion that rhetorically

provides Paul with God's power. At the height of Paul's demonstration of his weakness

as strength, he presents himself as a model of moderation in that he must rely on God's

grace because of his lack of control. Through the system of imitation that Paul has set up

throughout the Corinthian correspondence, the implication of this story is that others, too,

should find strength in weakness and rely on God's grace rather than excessive visions.

He does not boast, especially of the extraordinary character of his revelations, and nor

should the Corinthians.[104] In a context of debate in Corinth over speaking authority, it is

possible to see this is as an attempt to moderate ecstatic speech in the community.

It is also possible that this passage functioned as a critique of those who

emphasized the Jewish law as a way to develop self-mastery, similar to other

contemporaneous philosophical schools.[105] In his work on Romans, Stanley Stowers

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[103] The term ἄφρονα is distinct from the term Paul uses in 1 Cor. 1:18, μωρία, that connotes dim-wittedness. See Wan, *Power in Weakness*, 144. Paul also uses παραφρονῶν in 2 Cor. 11:23. This term refers to someone who speaks apart from or opposed to reason or sensibility, and is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament.

[104] "For if I want to boast, I will not be out of control (foolish), for I will be speaking truth; but I refrain from it, lest anyone should credit me with more than she sees in me or hears from me, especially from the excess of my revelations. Therefore, so that I should not be too elated, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger from Satan so that I would be tormented, that I would not be too elated [ἐὰν γὰρ θελήσω καυχήσασθαι, οὐκ ἔσομαι ἄφρων, ἀλήθειαν γὰρ ἐρῶ·φείδομαι δέ, μή τις εἰς ἐμὲ λογίσηται ὑπὲρ ὃ βλέπει με ἢ ἀκούει τι ἐξ ἐμοῦ καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων. διό, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ, ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι]" (2 Cor. 12:6–7).

[105] Philo's *Life of Moses, VI, 26*, for example, presents Moses in the form of a Greek philosopher, who espouses something akin to Middle Platonism in his emphasis on

asserts that if Paul can argue that the law does not guarantee self-mastery then he has bested his Roman opponents: "If Paul can persuasively claim that the law does not guarantee self-mastery even to native Jews learned in the law, then he has effectively eliminated the central appeal for Judaizing propounded by his opponents."[106] In response to them, Paul presents himself as the best model of self-mastery in Romans: "Instead of attaining his own righteousness through the law, Paul has a righteousness by means of Jesus' faithfulness. He obtains this righteousness by reenacting the manner of Jesus' death in faithfulness to God and thus experiencing the same kind of 'passions' that Jesus suffered."[107] His imitative method for modeling self-mastery in Romans is strikingly similar to his reliance on God's grace in 2 Corinthians 12:9. In 2 Corinthians, Paul critiques others for boasting beyond measure (2 Cor. 10:15), of being fools (2 Cor. 11:19), of boasting foolishly (2 Cor. 11:16–21). In Paul's construction, they are out of control and not models of self-mastery at all. This would be a stinging critique to those who teach the law as a guarantor of self-mastery. Instead of boasting in excessive visions,

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wisdom, learning, and self-control. In speaking of Moses as a child, Philo writes, "And he tamed, and appeased, and brought under due command every one of the other passions which are naturally and as far as they are themselves concerned frantic, and violent, and unmanageable. And if any one of them at all excited itself and endeavored to get free from restraint he administered severe punishment to it, reproving it with severity of language; and, in short, he repressed all the principle impulses and most violent affections of the soul, and kept guard over them as over a restive horse, fearing lest they might break all bounds and get beyond the power of reason which ought to be their guide to restrain them, and so throw everything everywhere into confusion."

[106] Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 66. Stowers identifies this matter of self-mastery as one of the most important distinctions between Paul and his opponents in Romans: "Why is the most devastating explicit criticism that Paul can conjure against his opponents to claim that they cannot control their passions and desires instead of, say, to criticize their theology or their teaching methods or their interpretation of the law? Most likely because the focus of their teaching was on mastery of the passions through the law," (68).

[107] Ibid., 67.

Paul relies on God's grace that preserves the thorn in his side that keeps him from being too elated. God's grace provides the best response to or solution for ἄφρονα.

By the end of the passage, Paul has regained his power as he discusses his divine authority. Paul now uses language of speaking in Christ in 12:19 and 13:3 alongside the language of speaking as a fool. It is his foolishness, his comparative weakness, which gives him comparative authority. While Paul presents himself as speaking from the lowest possible social status, he has raised up the beloved Corinthian community and the so-called super-apostles above himself. He does this so that when he redefines the terms of the system—weakness as strength and power, and strength and power as weakness – the rivals and the Corinthians appear exceedingly inferior to him. Paul moves from presenting himself as a divine warrior and *paterfamilias* in chapter 10, to speaking from a position of low status in chapters 11 and 12, to finally returning to the *paterfamilias* of the Corinthian community. His shifts in the presentation of his own malleable identity are dependent on how the community and rival apostles are positioned within his argument, and they shift along with him.

Paul's argument and the constructions that help fortify it are based on the assumption that the kyriarchal system Paul uses will be understood and accepted by those in the Corinthian audience. In vying for power to speak in Corinth, Paul makes use of familiar images and constructions of his day, including those of the empire and of status more broadly. He may be hoping to unite the community in common Christ cause, but he does so at the expense of diversity. According to Vander Stichele, there is no room for particular difference, posed by women and Jews, in Paul's picture of Christianity: "The depiction of unity apparently occurs at the expense of the difference and thus degenerates

into uniformity."[108] In other words, it is not just that Paul uses an image of Eve to represent the Corinthians, but that his argument depends on the assumption that women are objects of judgment for how well they fit the two options of Mary's virgin chastity or Eve's scandalous seduction. While it seems that Paul questions standards for authority in terms of rhetorical abilities and displays of wisdom, he also assumes that demonstrable masculinity and imperial shows of force will persuade his audience of his authority. By examining the extent to which he constructs debates about authority using a kyriarchal frame, we see the extent of his metaphors/imagery, suggestive of the gap between the rhetoric and the reality.

The Chorus of the Laughing People[109]

A feminist decolonizing approach can open up space in this text by thinking through the effects of these constructions, tracing them through their lives and afterlives. As in the two previous chapters, I use a feminist decolonizing hermeneutics of suspicion to read against the grain of the text and to ask whether these are fair representations of either the Corinthians, of the rival apostles, or of Paul himself. Alternative historic possibilities exist for the wo/men in Corinth and for wo/men in early Christian tradition. Indeed, Antoinette Wire has argued extensively regarding 1 Corinthians that there were a number of Corinthian women prophets who may have been leaders in the community. The vigor Paul uses in 2 Cor. 10–13 to construct the community as a passive, errant, and promiscuous daughter who is seduced and abused by rival leaders might be an indicator

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[108] Vander Stichele, "2 Corinthians: Sacrificing Difference to Unity," 751.

[109] M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge: M.I.T., 1963), 474. As mentioned at the beginning of chapter 2, the "laughing chorus" refers to the folk humor that "always existed and was never merged with the official culture of the ruling classes." Here, I imagine the laughing chorus as those in Corinth who play parts in Paul's constructions and resist their roles.

of the vibrancy and vitality within the community. Especially in regards to gendered practices such as celibacy or marriage, for example, the Corinthians may have been setting a positive example for women and men in other Christ-following communities. Perhaps it is not because they have been seduced or abused but rather that the community has chosen to reject the often absent and unimpressive Paul in favor of leaders who are physically present or otherwise better suited to lead. As I have cautioned throughout this dissertation, we should not assume that Wire's Corinthian wo/men prophets are no longer participating in negotiations for authority just because Paul, using a kyriarchal frame, presents the Corinthians as passive. Indeed, a hermeneutics of suspicion would encourage envisioning the opposite.

Rather than assume Paul's perspective on rival leaders in the community, we can consider that they may have seemed threatening to Paul because they were good leaders in the *ekklēsia*. Or, it is possible that Paul, perhaps with the help of later interpreters, posits a rift between the community and rival apostles, using a politics of othering. Perhaps these groups are not as distinct as many would like to believe. This is especially destructive when scholars classify all rival apostles as foreign and "Judaizing," while classifying all Corinthians as Greek, prophetic, passive, and homely. By attempting to precisely identify and define both Paul's position and that of his opponents, modern scholars are essentially rehashing old orthodoxy and heresy debates. His perspective has been assumed and repeated by early church writers and even modern interpreters. In modern interpretation, this has often led to a rehearsal of ancient orthodoxy/heresy debates, with Paul representing the one and only orthodox Christian tradition and all others subsequently burned at the stake.

Positing a divide between the Corinthians and the rival apostles encourages their division along other lines as well, including male/female, foreign/local, client/patron, Jewish/Greek, etc. In blurring these lines, the historic possibilities are numerous. Paul's gendered constructions that describe his rival apostles as male and the Corinthian community as female and passive would have been aggravating to active Corinthian wo/men prophets. By characterizing leaders as aggressive men, the Corinthian women may have taken Paul's constructions as his dismissal of their great efforts within the community, including any offers of support or hospitality they may have extended to him. If, as I suggested in chapter 3, some of their work involved a rejection of the veil as a symbol of male authority over women's bodies, or even as a symbol of the pervasiveness of sexual aggression against women, Paul's constructions of them as sexually abusive men would have been infuriating.

Furthermore, for male and female slaves and freedpersons who were participating in a variety of ways with a theology of resurrection, the idea that community was divided along lines of leaders and passive others may have been received as dismissive of their contributions. Similarly, if parts of the community came together around egalitarian ethics, or the ethic of Galatians 3:28, with a cooperative focus, such as in Acts 2:47–48, then they would have felt misunderstood when Paul constructs divisions between leaders and passive others. Rather than judging and selecting leaders as Paul suggests, they may have doubled their efforts at living with egalitarian resurrection politics.

Additionally, it is possible to envision that Paul and his Corinthian interlocutors are both participating in *and* resisting imperial norms of masculinity and status. The multiple constructions along malleable lines of gender and status evident in 2 Cor 10–13

suggest that the struggle for how to construct, how to negotiate, and how to interpret is ongoing and evolving. Strategies might contrast or even compete, but this should not mean that one side is good, masculine, or strong while the other is bad, feminine, or weak. Rather, all must negotiate to survive. Debates about the wisdom of visions take place in the midst of these gendered and imperial negotiations. Susan Ashbrook Harvey has suggested that there was a shift of ecstatic practices around the time of toleration and acceptance of Christianity by the Roman Empire. While Christians in Late Antiquity had the luxury to think into the natural world and bodies on earth, Christianity before that "material turn" often had to find hope and pleasure beyond this world.[110] As Harvey asserts, "the model Christ had offered was to use the body as the instrument through which to seek eternal life; its purpose was not to focus on this temporary, ephemeral world."[111] The empire controlled much of the natural world and this control was highly visible. Peoples and animals were enslaved or killed if they would not submit to the governing force of the empire. Building iconography, public rituals, even time itself, all aspects of social life, demonstrated devotion to the emperor.

As Johnson-DeBaufre argues, visions and ecstatic experiences would have been useful ways for early Christians to envision and dream about the kin-dom of G*d in the context of imperial violence and oppression in the ephemeral world.[112] In the first century, wo/men in Christ communities might have taken a stance against imperial

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[110] Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 3–4.

[111] Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 44; Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 3–4, fn. 18.

[112] Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, "The Basileia of God and the Space/s of Utopian Politics" (Twelfth Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquium, Drew University, February 9, 2013).

control through their ecstatic experiences. By venturing into the eternal and the paranormal, living in the ecstatic realm through speaking in tongues, having visions, and other prophetic experiences, early Christ followers were able to step out of the Roman Empire. In Johnson-DeBaufre's terminology, they might have been able to envision new worlds together through "social dreaming." It is historically possible that the Corinthians and other Christ communities potentially used spirit and prophecy to get out from under oppressive attempts to control their (slave or free, male and/or female, Jewish or gentile) bodies, control "nature," and generally control the temporal world. If we envision 2 Corinthians 10–13 as participating in this complex context, we need not confine our focus to Paul's opinions regarding ecstatic experience in Christ communities, extrapolating out to questioning Paul's accommodation to or resistance of empire. Paul's writings are not simple statements of praise or condemnation of ecstatic experiences in Christ communities.[113] However, this text and the debates it participates in could have been used to bolster both sides of this debate.

One way in which the debates about wo/men's ecstatic experience continues is evident in the numerous texts and stories about this topic that still exist. Within the New Testament canon, Acts records a vision of the Lord telling Paul to refuse to be silenced as responsible for Paul's lengthy stay in Corinth (Acts 18:9–10). The gospels each write that women were the first to have a vision of the risen Jesus. Beyond the canon, it would be more difficult to mention all of the early "Christian" texts that feature wo/men having some sort of ecstatic experience than not. A text such as the *Gospel of Mary* serves as an important example of this particular debate. Mary has a vision and is given special

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[113] Nor, for that matter, are they easily categorized as accommodating of or resistant to the Roman Empire.

wisdom by Jesus. Andrew and Peter do not believe her, and denounce her teachings. Levi is on her side, however, and they lead the disciples in going forth in the spirit of Mary's teachings. This text suggests that the quality of wo/men's visions were questioned by some and believed by others, and that such debates are thinkable among the earliest disciples. Wo/men prophets in Corinth would not have been strange or silent in early Christ communities throughout the ancient Mediterranean.

Another example of this debate considers heresiologies from the 3rd century. Laura Nasrallah's work on prophecy and authority traces this conversation from the Corinthian correspondence through several 3rd century texts. In her discussion of Epiphanius' *Panarion* and the Anti-Phrygian source he uses, she notes that this source avoids mentioning Pauline materials, in spite of shared vocabulary and themes between these materials and the oracle discussed by the Anti-Phrygian. She attributes this to the Anti-Phrygian wanting to avoid authorizing Maximilla's oracle with Paul's discussion of folly in ecstasy in 2 Corinthians 12, or with Paul's ambiguous stance on tongues, prophecy, and interpretation espoused in 1 Corinthians.[114] Thus, here is an account of a powerful female prophet whose position could have resembled that of Corinthian wo/men prophets. Indeed, she and others like her may have led a large and highly successful prophetic movement referred to in polemical literature as the New Prophecy, the Montanists, and/or the Phrygians. It is impossible to know precisely. The Anti-Phrygian source used by Epiphanius strategically avoids Paul's writings because they might further authorize Maximilla's ecstatic visions rather than limit them.

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[114] Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*, 186.

In conclusion, the power and wisdom of wo/men to envision alternative pasts, presents, and futures continues to flourish. Recent stories of women in pink tennis shoes refusing to be silenced on the Senate floor in Texas, or of young women fighting Islamist fundamentalism by learning in secret, or of diverse peoples marching through New York City to envision a world that is not devastated by racism or climate change, or of inmates earning college degrees in anticipation of cultivating new life out of prison, serve as proof of the ways wo/men are always there, speaking back from the gaps and envisioning new possibilities.

CONCLUSION
CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

> Incidentally, the usual designation of the magnitude scale
> to my name does less than justice to the great part that Dr.
> Gutenberg played in extending the scale to apply to
> earthquakes in all parts of the world.
> —Charles Richter

> A riot is the language of the unheard.
> —Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Considerable ambiguity." "Instability." These are the words that Judith Lieu

uses to describe the construction of boundaries in Pauline literature in her study of early

Christian identity.[1] This instability of rules, practices, and boundaries leads Paul to

"develop to a high degree the language of mutuality that embraces not only Jew and

Gentile, but also any complexity of relationships (1 Cor 12:13; Gal. 3:28)," Lieu asserts.

Yet, while this fluidity and flexibility in Pauline identity constructions allows for the

crossing of boundaries and the negotiation of shifting relationships, there are also

moments of fixity, stability. In their inscription in texts, this identity reasoning is

strategic; Paul constructs himself, the Corinthians in various ways depending on the

rhetorical moment. In the process of negotiating the border lines with the Corinthians and

with other communities, and inscribing them into texts, Paul employs a number of images

and metaphors, narratorial choices, that reflect the gendered and imperial discourses that

the community may have used to think with. From the beginning of the letter, we readers

drop into an imperial context of suffering and struggle, relationship and speech. Images

of domestic life, family, and bodies are used to conjure a community, encompass the

ekklēsia. Bodies and communities are wrapped together with language and writing as

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[1]   Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 131.

Paul claims that the Corinthians are his letter of recommendation, written on his heart with spirit from Christ. Christ, Paul, the Corinthians, and even a diverse group of readers join in the act of writing, reading, and responding. While sometimes fixed, the boundaries can also be quite fluid and ambiguous.

Yet, there is another reason that I start this conclusion with "considerable ambiguity" and "instability." These are also fitting words to describe the feelings around historical imaginative work. Johnson-DeBaufre describes one way of doing this work:

> Rather than attempting to pinpoint the letter on a map of ancient urban life and reconstructing the community from there, I suggest placing certain aspects of the letter alongside an understanding of mobile and diverse community members who were not consigned to one space and did not carry a singular identity, but rather moved through the spaces of the ancient city and regularly negotiated multiple identities such as status, wealth, gender, and tribe.[2]

But it can feel uncertain, even risky, to venture into an interpretive context of moving parts and multiple parties. It is tough to make claims about an *ekklēsia* of wo/men about whom little is recorded. When Paul's voice is not just a literary or historical voice but a (the?) theological voice, it can also feel religiously or spiritually risky. When someone finds herself on moving ground, she is likely to feel unsteady.

Allow me to tell a personal story. I have a fear of earthquakes. Growing up in Tennessee, earthquakes were one of the only natural disasters that seemed to pose a real threat. The 1811 and 1812 earthquakes formed the largest lake in Tennessee and caused the Mississippi River, which forms one of Tennessee's borders, to flow backwards for days. One farmer described the once solid land as looking like an ocean, roiling and churning with waves. (I did not need to look up this information because fear has

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2   Johnson-DeBaufre, "'Gazing Upon the Invisible': Archaeology, Historiography, and the Elusive Women of 1 Thessalonians," 29.

imprinted it on my brain.) I expect another earthquake in the region daily, and frequently

check the U.S. Geological Services website for confirmation of either my safety or

doomsday predictions. In short, I do not generally like the idea of shifting ground.

Perhaps scholarly and historical uncertainty is the reason many scholars have

adopted tired tropes in their historical reconstructions and interpretations. Scholarship has

often assumed Paul's perspective on Corinth and on his relationships with those in

Corinth. Some scholars have even absorbed his metaphors, with their kyriarchal legacies,

in their interpretations. Thus, with surprising frequency the picture is one of a strange

love triangle between the sensitive and caring Paul, the feminized and difficult

Corinthians, and the ruddy, showy, foreign male apostles.[3] In some versions, the

Corinthians even fight amongst themselves over who gets to show off more for this

competition, with their hairstyles and their wise talking.[4] In this vision, one can almost

hear Paul saying, "Ladies, ladies, please, there's no need to fight. There's plenty of my

good news to go around."

Earthquakes are also evident in literature and material remains from the ancient

Mediterranean. In my travels in Turkey, I was shocked (or shaken?) to realize that the

cause for the abandonment of many of the ancient cities was either earthquakes or the

fires that succeeded them. Yet, these same fault lines may have also fed the oracular

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[3] For example, Kate Cooper describes Paul as listening to his female hosts as a sympathetic visitor. She asserts, "One can see in the letter what it was about Paul that made so many people love him. Here was a man who was not afraid of emotional honesty." Kate Cooper, *Band of Angels: The Forgotten World of Early Christian Women* (New York: Overlook Press, 2013), 23.

[4] Ibid., 26. Regarding Paul's assertions about women covering their heads (1 Cor. 11:3–5), Cooper states: "It seems likely that Paul has been drawn into a debate between two factions of women" where he argues that "women should not make a fuss about challenging the ancient custom of veiling their heads."

activity of many ancient sites. The Apollo temple at Delphi, site of the famous oracle, appears to sit directly above two fault lines. Speculations have been made that various gases, such as ethylene, may have risen from these faults and further given rise to much of the extraordinary prophetic activity there. I am not making a case for scholars to get high in order to enhance their visions of the past. I am rather using earthquakes and fault lines to think with when I say that the moving ground of historical imagination can give rise to exciting visions and new worlds. If what we see depends on where we stand, then taking a stand on unsteady ground may move us to see new things. Just as it should no longer be necessary to make the case that wo/men were there, haven't we also had enough of only envisioning one-dimensional female characters in biblical history?[5] It is time to envision the Corinthian *ekklēsia* of wo/men as complex characters who have full lives and functioning communities regardless of Paul. While Paul may present himself as a main character and, while the existence of these letters may give access to his writings and not to the writings of the Corinthians, our historical imaginations must be broader because envisioning the diversity of the past shapes how we see diversity in the present. By broadening our scope and opening ourselves up to the experiences of others in the past, we not only observe the extraordinary dialogues of the past, but experience the rich dialogues of today in new ways.

In reading 2 Corinthians for the use of identity reasoning and with an eye for the narratorial choices that indicate debate and dialogue, I have argued that it is historically possible to envision an *ekklēsia* of wo/men in Corinth. When Paul describes a kyriarchal system that presents them as passive and prayerful for him and his suffering in 2

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[5] Johnson-DeBaufre, "'Gazing Upon the Invisible': Archaeology, Historiography, and the Elusive Women of 1 Thessalonians."

Corinthians 1–11, it is possible to think otherwise of other political and theological systems, and of them as speaking wisely, preaching, resisting or negotiating hardships and relationships under empire, and invoking G*d in their own ways. As Paul discusses resurrection in 2 Corinthians 5–7 by setting up contrasts between the earthly home practices and heavenly ones, he indicates that home and bodies as sites for debate and boundary. While he argues for pleasing the Lord *paterfamilias* by rejecting earthly homes and bodies and moving home and body to the space of the Lord, I have suggested that some wo/men in Corinth were hosting or serving in home churches, preaching and teaching, discerning and critically thinking about the sermons and services of others. They may have had a more egalitarian political-theological vision that gives wo/men at different levels of society independence or power in homes, in sexual practices, in marriage practices, and in church practices. Rather than waiting at home, they may have been like Thecla or Prisca, traveling and passing letters along wo/men's social networks, or like Lydia operating guilds like the purple dyers or tentmakers (Acts 16:13–15). They may have used whatever power they could muster as wealthy patrons but also slaves, like those in Pliny's *Letter to Trajan*, in service to creating a kindom of G*d.

Finally, when in 2 Corinthians 10–13 Paul employs militaristic and sexually objectifying language to describe the Corinthians as property, silent lands and a single errant daughter, it is possible to envision that some wo/men in the Corinthian *ekklēsiai* are speaking out, leaving their bodies through prophetic activity, and having new visions of G*d as Wisdom, like Mary Magdalene or Maximilla. Where scholars have often assumed a troublesome, disobedient, licentious, and divisive community, this approach

encourages a vision of a vibrant, spiritually rich, and thriving community of connection—an *ekklēsia* of wo/men.

Scholars must use a broader historical imagination not just for complexifying the Corinthians, but also for Paul himself. Paul is not a hero or a villain, but rather, one person in complicated relationships with many other interesting folks. As he moves along imperial, gender, class, and ethnic lines to claim power for his own speech and visions, he also must negotiate. He, too, must figure out the boundary lines and the rules for crossing them or drawing new ones. In the constant community creation process, he, too is trying to determine his role, using identity reasoning.

This type of feminist decolonizing approach can also be helpful for interpreting other Pauline texts. It can be useful when it does not seem as if the text talks about women. Johnson-DeBaufre's work with 1 Thessalonians, for example, is a clear example of how assuming that the significant presence of wo/men, even when women are not mentioned or alluded to, can shape historical reconstructions and interpretations.[6] In this text and others, assuming the presence of wo/men can help envision wo/men in dialectic relationship with Paul, as glimpsed in the narratorial choices of the text. Attention to the multiplicative nature of oppression and the functioning of identity reasoning within the letters suggests the myriad ways in which texts can be interpreted. Assuming the dynamism of relationships makes it possible to consider new pathways of connection and boundary crossings. In first century Corinth, wo/men in Christ communities might have taken a stance against kyriarchy in its many forms. Their struggles and inspired speech can continue to fuel visions for generations to come.

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[6] Ibid.

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