

IVAR VEGGE

2 Corinthians – a Letter about Reconciliation

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Mohr Siebeck

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2 Corinthians – a Letter about Reconciliation

A Psychagogical, Epistolographical
and Rhetorical Analysis

Mohr Siebeck

IVAR VEGGE, born 1965; 2001 Doctor of Theology at Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo; 2002–2006 Lecturer at Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary (Ethiopia) and at Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology; spring 2007 adjunct lecturer at Ansgar School of Theology and Mission and at Agder University College (both in Kristiansand, Norway; since 2008 associate professor at the University of Agder.

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Dedicated to Mai-Brit

Preface

This book is a revised and expanded version of my dissertation, *2. Korin-terbrev som et forsoningsbrev – belyst ut fra hellenistisk retorikk, episto-lografi og psykagogi*, which was accepted by the Norwegian School of Theology for the degree of *Doctor Theologiae* in 2001.

It is my privilege to thank the many people who helped me on the long way from the initial idea to the completion of this work. I am deeply thankful to my *Doktorvater*, Dr. Karl Olav Sandnes, for his support and encouragement during an initial difficult time of study. This, combined with his many critical questions and suggestions of improvement, has been invaluable. I have further profited greatly from participating in the New Testament research seminar at the Norwegian School of Theology, where Dr. Hans Kvalbein, Dr. Ernst Baasland (Bishop of Stavanger since 1997) and Dr. Reidar Hvalvik should especially be mentioned.

At an early stage in my research, Dr. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Copen-hagen, drew my attention to the importance of the moral-philosophers' psychagogy for 2 Corinthians. Later on, the critical and very constructive debate with my work by Dr. T. Engberg-Pedersen (later as my first "oppo-nent") and by Dr. Samuel Byrskog (second "opponent") helped me simpli-fy my thesis on 2 Cor 7:5–16 and further develop my argumentation concerning the relationship between rhetoric and psychagogy (Engberg-Pedersen), rhetoric and epistolography (Byrskog), and the relative impor-tance of each discipline for analysing 2 Corinthians. The very strong encouragement from my "opponents," as well as from K.O. Sandnes, gave the incentive to revise my work for international publication.

Andy Mason has done a wonderful work in translating the whole manuscript from Norwegian to English. For that I am most grateful. Mrs. Rene Johnson and Dr. Steve Brian have kindly read through longer or shorter sections of the manuscript. Ilse König has formatted the manuscript all the way to a camera-ready copy. Dr. Jostein Ådna kindly presented my manuscript to the editor of the WUNT series, Dr. Jörg Frey.

Dr. Jörg Frey responded in a remarkable short time, accepting my manuscript without any further comments, except the need of a final proofreading, which Dr. Brian McNeil carefully provided. It is an honour to have this book published in the WUNT series which still cherishes typi-cal German *Gründlichkeit* with room for exhaustive surveys of the history of interpretation, and long lists of scholarly opinions. However, in order to

ease the reading of the book, engagement with scholarship that is not vital to my own argumentation is usually presented either in smaller font size or placed in the footnotes.

I am deeply thankful to Fjellhaug Mission Seminary in Oslo for offering me a position as a research scholar for two and a half years (1995–1997). The Norwegian Lutheran Mission has graciously paid the expenses for translating this book into English. The Research Council of Norway covered the costs for the final proofreading and for preparing the manuscript for camera ready copy.

While revising my thesis for publication, I had the privilege of teaching New Testament in Ethiopia at two theological institutions, Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary and Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology. There, 2 Corinthians became all the more relevant in a culture and context more similar to the ancient Mediterranean.

Finally, I want to thank my parents, Marie and Torleiv Vegge, and my parents-in-law, Reidun and Einar Helle, for love and for enthusiasm concerning this book. Most of all, my gratitude goes to my children Veronika, Reidun Marie, Ida Sofie and Torgeir Einar, and my wife Mai-Brit. They have felt the costs of my studies, from a limited economy to a hard workload. My wife has been of constant encouragement. She had confidence in me when I had none. She has overflowed me with love and kindness. Over several years she was the family's breadwinner. I therefore dedicate this book to her in love and respect.

English translations of the Bible are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise stated. Quotations of ancient classical authors follow the volumes of the Loeb Classical Library when available. Conventions of abbreviation generally follow the standard in "Instructions for Contributors" *JBL* 117.3 (1998) 555–579. The Latin titles of patristic, Greek and Latin texts etc. follow the conventions of abbreviation in Hornblower, S. and Spawforth, A., eds. (1996) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 3rd ed. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford. Where abbreviations are not found in OCD, the standard follows (a) Liddel, H. and Scott, R., eds. (1996) *A Greek-English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement*. Clarendon, Oxford, (b) Glare, P.G.W., ed. (1982) *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford, or (c) Lampe, G.W.H., ed. (1978) *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. 5th ed. Clarendon, Oxford (in the above mentioned order).

May this book bring glory to our Lord Jesus Christ! "For we live no longer for ourselves, but for Him who died and was raised for us" (2 Cor 5:15).

Konsmo, Norway, 19 December 2007

Ivar Vegge

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Tension between Reconciliation and Conflict in 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians consists of several clearly delineable textual units. One of these is the passage 2:14–7:4. The passage is framed by Paul’s travelogue in 2:12–13, which is then interrupted, and is first taken up again in 7:5. 2:14–17 almost functions as a new thanksgiving pericope in the letter. Structurally, it has similarities with other Pauline thanksgiving passages,¹ and, like other thanksgiving texts, 2:14–17 introduces some of the main themes in 3:1–6:10.² The transition from the travelogue in 2:12–13 to the thanksgiving in 2:14–17 is abrupt. A number of expressions in 2:14–7:4 show that Paul is explaining the nature of his apostolic ministry in a context characterized by polemic/apologetics (2:17; 3:1; 4:2; 5:11–13; 6:6b–8 and 7:2b). Of these verses, 2:17, 3:1 and 5:12 refer explicitly to opponents of Paul in Corinth. The conflict at hand is also reflected in Paul’s entreating the Corinthians to let themselves be reconciled with God (5:20–6:2) and with himself (5:11; 6:11–13 and 7:2–3). If one disregards the appeals for reconciliation and the polemical/apologetic expressions, large parts of 2:14–6:10 have a didactic character.³ The concluding appeal for reconciliation in 7:2–4 is noteworthy. The appeal for reconciliation in 7:2a is followed by a denial of any hard criticism, “I do not say this to condemn you” (7:3), followed by a statement of solidarity (7:3b), then a statement of confidence in the Corinthians (7:4a), and, finally, a statement that Paul is already “filled with consolation; I am overjoyed in all our affliction” (7:4b). The succession of clauses softens the tone in the appeal

¹ See Schubert, P. (1939) 54–55 for the form elements in a Pauline thanksgiving. Thrall, M.E. (1982) 113–117 and Thrall, M.E. (1994) 188–89 demonstrates the structural similarity between 2 Cor 2:14–17 and other Pauline thanksgiving passages.

² See Thrall, M.E. (1994) 188 for this.

³ Furnish, V.P. (1984) 44 writes: “Paul’s exposition of the meaning of apostleship, and of his in particular (2:14–5:19), is formulated more didactically than polemically, even though it has an apologetic aspect and, on occasion, a polemical edge.”

for reconciliation. One almost gets the impression in 7:4b that the Corinthians and Paul have already been reconciled.⁴

We have so far avoided mentioning the passage 6:14–7:1 in our discussion of 2:14–7:4. In terms of content and terminology, for example through a number of dualistic word-pairs, the passage is clearly distinctive. Paul commands the Corinthians to separate themselves from unbelievers, lawlessness, Beliar and idols because they are God’s temple (6:14–16). God will be their Father and they his children (6:16b–17). By way of conclusion, the Corinthians are challenged to perfect their holiness in the fear of God (7:1). The passage is placed, strikingly, between the appeals for reconciliation in 6:11–13 and 7:2–4.⁵

As mentioned above, 7:5 continues the travelogue from 2:12–13. Thematically, 7:5–16 and 2:1–11 are concerned with one and the same conflict: the conflict caused by “one who has caused pain” (2:5) and “one who did the wrong” (ὁ ἀδικήσας, 7:12); from now on referred to as “the offender”. Scholars usually refer to this conflict as the ἀδικήσας-conflict (7:12). In addition, both 2:1–11 and 7:5–16 refer to an earlier letter from Paul (2:3–4, 9; 7:8–12). This letter is referred to as the “tearful letter” (2:4) among scholars. 7:5–16 celebrate a reconciliation between the Corinthians and Paul in the ἀδικήσας-conflict as if this had been a final and completed reconciliation. God himself effected the Corinthians’ “repentance that leads to salvation” (7:10). Both 7:7 and 7:11 describe the Corinthians’ reconciliatory disposition (and action) towards Paul. 7:11 concludes: “At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in the matter” (7:11b). The tearful letter’s purpose, “in order that your zeal for us might be made known to you before God,” is fulfilled (7:12). The reconciliation has given Paul consolation, new courage (παράκλησις, 7:6 and 13) and great joy (7:7, 9, 13 and 16). Without reservation, Paul celebrates “the obedience of *all of you*,” and “how you welcomed him [Titus] with fear and trembling” (7:15). The whole section finishes with a similarly unreserved declaration of confidence in the Corinthians, “I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you” (7:16). Apart from the concluding 7:4, there thus exists a clear tension between the description of reconciliation in 7:5–16 and the passage 2:14–7:4 (especially the appeals for reconciliation in 6:11–13 and 7:2–3).

Given the background of 7:5–16, it is surprising to read in 2:6 that it was only the majority of Corinthians (οἱ πλείωνες) who sided with Paul in this conflict and punished the offender. When Paul now asks the Corinthians to forgive, console and show love to the person concerned (2:6–8, 10–11) in order to prepare the way for a reconciliation between the

⁴ For a detailed analysis of 7:4, see paragraph 4.3.5.

⁵ We will discuss more fully how 6:14–7:1 can be understood in paragraph 4.3.5.2.

minority and the majority in Corinth in this conflict, and between the still-critical minority and Paul himself,⁶ the tension between 2:5–11 and 7:5–16 becomes very real.

The letter starts, like all the other Pauline letters, with a greeting (1:1–2), and then moves into thanksgiving (1:3–11). Paul normally uses the introductory thanksgiving to express thanksgiving to God for the church to whom he is writing (see Rom 1:8–15; 1 Cor 1:4–9; Phil 1:3–11; 1 Thess 1:2ff; Phlm 1:4–7; also Eph 1:15ff; Col 1:3ff; 2 Thess 1:3ff). Rhetorically, such an introductory thanksgiving functions as a *captatio benevolentiae* where the aim is to win favour for the writer. In 2 Cor 1:3–11, however, the thanks is directed to God for what He has done for Paul. Thus, as early as the letter's introduction, Paul indicates the fact that God has placed his mark of approval on Paul's ministry. This is understandably connected with the fact that the Corinthians have raised doubts about his apostolic ministry (especially in 2:14–7:4 and chs. 10–13). It is in such a context that Paul expresses hope in God that the Corinthians will be partners (κοινωνοί) with him in sufferings and consolation (1:7). He also appeals in 1:11 for solidarity between the Corinthians and himself through their helpful prayers for him.

The contrast between the description of reconciliation in 7:5–16 and Paul's defence in the face of criticism in 1:12–24 is also great. First, Paul denies that he has behaved in the world, not least among the Corinthians, by earthly wisdom (ἐν σοφίᾳ σαρκικῇ). His life is, on the contrary, characterized by frankness (ἀπλότης), godly sincerity (ἐιλικρινεῖα) and by the grace of God (1:12). Second, he denies that his letter is unclear (1:13). Third, Paul denies that the cancelling of his planned third visit reflects irresponsible vacillation or rashness (ἐλαφρία), and that, accordingly, he is, as a person, duplicitous (saying “yes, yes” and “no, no” at the same time 1:17). Paul's defence of the cancelled visit is formidable (1:18–2:4). The criticism must have been extremely destructive of Paul's apostolic authority among the Corinthians. Right in the middle of this apologetic passage we find two optimistic expressions of confidence addressed to the Corinthians (1:13b–14 and 2:3b). In 1:13b–14 Paul acknowledges the Corinthians' partial recognition of the fact that they and Paul are one another's boast. Paul now expresses a hope that this recognition might become complete. In 2:3 Paul emphasizes his confidence in the Corinthians for reciprocal joy. By way of summary, we can say, concerning 1:1–2:13, that the tone of the passage is, on the whole, gentle and friendly (cf. the thanksgiving in 1:3–11 and the expressions of confidence in 1:7; 1:13b–14; 2:3b). But, underlying the gentle and friendly tone, there exists a conflict between the Corinthians and Paul (cf. the

⁶ For such an understanding of 2:5–11, see paragraph 3.1.

apology in 1:12–13a and 1:15–2:4, the appeals for full reconciliation connected to the expressions of confidence in 1:13b–14 and 2:3, together with the attempt to foster reconciliation in 2:5–11).

The tone in chs. 10–13 is completely different from the rest of the letter. First, several explicit accusations against Paul are expressed. 10:1b and 10:9–10 restate an accusation that Paul is servile and weak when he is present in Corinth, but bold, authoritative and frightening when he is absent (also 13:3–4). Paul is accused of preaching the gospel without remuneration (11:7–12) while at the same time blamed for exploiting the collection to his own advantage (12:16–18). 10:7 and 13:3a refer to the fact that Paul's apostleship is doubted. Second, Paul comes, in these chapters, with a direct criticism of the Corinthians (11:4, 19–20; 12:11, 20–21 and 13:5). Third, and in close connection with the criticism of the Corinthians, Paul threatens them with punishment (10:3–6, 11; 12:20–21 and 13:1–4, 10). Fourth, Paul's so-called "fool's speech" (German: "Narrenrede") covers a large part of these chapters (11:1–12:10). The fool's speech is bitterly ironic, almost sarcastic, and the criticism of the opponents is very caustic (11:3–4, 5, 13–15, 18–20; see also 10:12–18 and 12:11b). In the middle of all this Paul expresses his love (11:11 and 12:14–15) and passionate concern for the Corinthians (11:2–3 and 11:28–29). He expresses his optimistic hope in the Corinthians in two places; this is an expression of confidence directed to the letter's addressees. The expression of hope in 10:15b is connected to an appeal for an enlarged sphere of action for Paul among the Corinthians. In 13:5–6 the expression of hope is concerned with the Corinthians' understanding the relationship between their own faith and Paul's apostolic ministry. It is clear that Paul tones down the polemic and threats towards the end of ch. 13. He has written the letter so that he might not need to be severe with the Corinthians when he comes; he would rather "build up" than "tear down" (13:10). This does not, however, change the main impression of chs. 10–13 as threatening, bitterly ironic, strongly polemical and apologetic. The contrast in tone with the introductory 10:1a is very clear, "I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the *πραΰτης καὶ ἐπιείκεια* of Christ ...".

Chs. 8 and 9 are thematically distinct in their concern with the collection for the poor in Jerusalem. As they stand, each of the two chapters is meaningful as an independent textual unit. Given this fact, the question of doublets has been raised.⁷ The last part of ch. 8 is a recommendation of Titus and two brothers as reliable envoys and collectors among the Corinthians. The background for both chs. 8 and 9 is the Corinthians' suspension of the collection, which they had earlier begun (1 Cor 16:1–4).

⁷ See the history of interpretation of 2 Cor 8 and 9 in Betz, H.D. (1985) 3–36 and in Bieringer, R. (1994a) 98–105. We discuss this question in Excursus I.

It is reasonable to assume that the Corinthians have suspended the collection as a result of the conflict between them and Paul. Paul asks them now to complete the collection (8:6, 11; 9:1–5). Both chapters are characterized by praise of the Corinthians (8:7, 24; 9:2, 3) and expressions of confidence that they will complete the collection (8:22; 9:1–5, 15). However, it should not be forgotten that Paul makes the Corinthians aware of the fact that his praise for them will be turned to shame if they do not do as Paul says and complete the collection (8:24 and 9:1–5). Accordingly, Paul uses praise almost as a means of pressuring his audience.

The passages' special characteristics can be represented schematically in the following way using key words:

	1:1–2:13	2:14–7:4	7:5–16	chs. 8–9	chs. 10–13
REASONS FOR CONFLICT					
1) <i>Opponents</i>		2:17; 3:1 (4:2?) 5:12			(10:2b–11), 12–17 11:3–5, 12–15, 11:18–23; 12:11
2) <i>Offender</i>	2:5–11		7:5–16		
3) <i>Immoral Corinthians</i>					12:21–13:2
SIGNS OF CONFLICT					
1) <i>Accusations against Paul:</i>					
– cancelling of visit	1:15–17				
– duplicity	1:12f, 17	(2:17)			10:1b, 10
– servile in Corinth but authoritative via letter	(1:15–17) (1:23?)				10:1–11; 11:21a 13:2–4, 9
– economically devious		2:17; 7:2		(8:20–21)	12:16–18
– apostolic authenticity	(1:3–11)	(2:14–6:10)			10:7; 13:3 (chs. 10–13)
2) <i>Paul's criticism of opponents</i>		2:17; 3:1 (4:2?) 5:12			10:12–18; 11:3–6 11:7–15, 18–23
3) <i>Paul's criticism of Corinthians</i>					11:4, 19–21a; 12:11, 20; 13:5
4) <i>Paul threatens Corinthians</i>				(9:4–5)	10:2b–6, 11; 12:20 13:2–4, 10

	1:1–2:13	2:14–7:4	7:5–16	chs. 8–9	chs. 10–13
5) <i>Expressions of confidence with appeals for reconciliation</i>	(1:7); 1:13b–14 2:3b	5:11; (6:11–13) 7:2–4	(7:16)	8:5, 24	10:15b; 13:6
6) <i>Appeals for reconciliation</i>	(1:11)	(5:19–6:2) (recon. w/God)			11:1,16; 12:14–15 (13:9–11)

RECONCILIATION

PAUL & CORINTHIANS

– in ἀδικήσας conflict	2:5–11 majority & Paul	7:4b?	7:5–16 full recon- ciliation?
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	1:1–2:13	2:14–7:4	7:5–16	chs. 8–9	chs. 10–13
TONE CAUSTIC/HARSH					bitterly ironic, very pol./apol. & threatening
↑ ↓	apologetic (1:12–2:4)	didactic, polem./apol., & appeal			passionate concern (11:1–4, 11:29; 12:14)
	friendly, optimistic appeal (1:7; 1:13b–14; 2:3b)	great joy (7:4)	great joy, reconciliation & unreserved confidence in Corinthians	definite, friendly, optimistic appeal	optimistic appeal (10:6, 15b; 13:6)
GENTLE					“by the gentleness and leniency of Christ” (10:1a)

This schematization makes clear the tension between reconciliation and conflict; and also between a friendly, confident and optimistic tone and a bitterly ironic, threatening, apologetic and polemical tone in the letter as a whole, as well as in most of the textual units. At the same time, we admit that it is difficult to determine the emotional tone of a text. When we have, nonetheless, made an attempt, it is based on criteria such as the occurrence and degree of criticism, accusations, apology, threats, irony, sarcasm (cf. degree of causticity) and expressions of joy, consolation, optimism, confidence in and praise for the addressee (cf. degree of gentleness). In the section on method we will come back to the question of tone.

When it comes to the tension between reconciliation and conflict and the varying tone of the letter, we wish to emphasize the following issues as particularly problematic:

(a) The impression of full reconciliation between Paul and the Corinthians in 7:5–16 is in clear tension with the context of conflict elsewhere in the letter, especially in chs. 10–13, but also in 2:14–7:4 (with the exception of 7:4) and in 1:12–2:4. Against the background of 7:5–16 it is striking that 2:5–11, which also reflects the reconciliation in the ἀδικήσας-conflict, is an attempt to foster reconciliation between a majority and a minority in Corinth, and between Paul and a still-rebellious minority. Given this fact, we will critically question the rhetorical function of the description of reconciliation in 7:5–16.

(b) The optimism which is expressed in a number of expressions of confidence addressed to the Corinthians (in addition to 7:14 and 16, note especially 7:4, but see also 1:13b–14; 2:3b; 5:11; 8:5, 7, 22b, 24; 9:1–2, 10:15b and 13:6), stands in sharp contrast to the tone especially in chs. 10–13, but also in 2:14–7:4. Do the different degrees of optimism in the various expressions of confidence reflect diverse stages in the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians, or do such expressions primarily have a rhetorical function?

(c) The ironic, polemical and even threatening tone of chs. 10–13 is very different from the rest of the letter. What rhetorical function does the caustic and threatening tone of chs. 10–13 have? Further, we wish to ask how the difference in tone between chs. 10–13 and the rest of the letter should be understood? In that connection, the question arises how the introductory 10:1a “I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the *gentleness and leniency* of Christ ...,” can be reconciled with the caustic and threatening continuation in chs. 10–13.

These three questions will be discussed in this order in chs. 3–5 of this book. The common element in these questions is their relation to the tension between reconciliation and conflict in 2 Corinthians. We turn now to a discussion of various attempts by scholars to resolve the tension between reconciliation and conflict in 2 Corinthians.

1.2 History of Interpretation: Attempts to Resolve the Tension

Scholars in the last two hundred years have been divided about whether or not the marked tensions between reconciliation and conflict, together with the great difference in tone in 2 Corinthians, can be explained within a unified letter. The tension between reconciliation and conflict, and the

varying tone in 2 Corinthians has been the greatest reason for the different partition theories which have been proposed. On the other hand, different unity theories seek to show how the impression of both reconciliation and conflict can be held together within a unified letter. The main question of this book leads us, therefore, into a large and intense scholarly debate concerning the letter's literary character.

The following presentation of the different partition and unity theories is framed by the question of how satisfactorily the different theories mediate the tension between reconciliation and conflict, and between the gentle/optimistic tone and the caustic/threatening tone of the letter. The overview of the scholarly work thus also offers our own evaluation.⁸ It also suggests a framework for the problem that this book will attempt to answer.

There has long been a vigorous debate between representatives of different partition and unity theories – and it still continues. A purely chronological overview will therefore quickly become very convoluted.⁹ It is not our goal to discuss as many individual scholars as possible; others have done extensive work here.¹⁰ We shall rather seek to outline the

⁸ Emphasis and perspective in a history of interpretation is necessarily influenced by the viewpoint taken by the scholar himself on an issue. For a possible corrective perspective we refer to other histories of interpretation which outline the partition and unity theories for 2 Corinthians. Among those who argue for the letter's unity, two accounts by R. Bieringer should be emphasized. In the first article Bieringer, R. (1994a) 67–105 discusses the different partition theories, in the other, different unity theories, Bieringer, R. (1994b) 107–130. Bieringer does not consider any of the previous partition and unity theories to be fully convincing. In his own article Bieringer, R. (1994c) 131–179 gives an account of and defends his own understanding of 2 Corinthians as unitary; this is done in a dialogue with other hypotheses. Bieringer bolsters his conclusion with two further articles: Bieringer, R. (1994e) 223–253 (originally written earlier) and Bieringer, R. (1994d) 181–221 (which discusses the question concerning the opponents in 2 Corinthians). Bieringer, R. (1994f) 551–570 offers his own analysis of 2 Cor 6:14–7:1, which includes a history of interpretation of this passage. Of those who hold to the Semler-Windisch hypothesis (i.e., 2 Cor consists, in this order, of two parts, 1–8(9) and 10–13), we can mention the accounts given by Barrett, C.K. (1973) 5–36, Furnish, V.P. (1984) 30–48, Martin, R.P. (1986) xxxviii–lii and Thrall, M.E. (1994) 3–77. Of these, Thrall is the most detailed. Among those who hold to the Hausrath-Kennedy hypothesis (i.e., chs. 10–13 is the tearful letter and chs. 1–9 is a later letter of reconciliation), we can especially mention the monograph of Aejmelaeus, L. (1987) and the article by Dautzenberg, G. (1987) 3045–3066. Among those who hold to the Schmithals-Bornkamm hypothesis (i.e., 2 Cor consists of (a) 2:14–6:13 with 7:2–4, (b) 10:1–13:10 as the tearful letter (c) 1:1–2:13 with 7:5–16 as a letter of reconciliation (d) 8 and 9), we refer to Betz, H.D. (1985) 3–36.

⁹ Betz, H.D. (1985) 3–33 follows, in part, a chronological approach to the history of interpretation of 2 Corinthians.

¹⁰ See the references in n. 8 above.

special characteristics of the various partition and unity theories, which will then be discussed critically in the light of the main questions addressed by this book. However, before we come directly to the question of the letter's literary character, we give an overview, detailing the interpretation of certain historical events which function as basic premises for some of the literary theories.

1.2.1 Events which Occasioned the Writing of 2 Corinthians

One of the questions relevant in this connection is whether or not 2:1; 12:14 and 13:1–2 refer to two earlier visits to Corinth by Paul, and, in that case, when the second visit took place. 2:1 actualises further the question of whether or not there is a connection between Paul's second visit to Corinth and the ἀδικήσας-conflict (2:5–11 and 7:5–16). The ἀδικήσας-conflict led to the so-called tearful letter (2:4; see also 2:3, 9; 7:8 and 12). The question of whether or not this tearful letter can be identified is debated. The history of interpretation of 2 Corinthians shows that there are three main views concerning how these questions are to be related to each other.

The Traditional Interpretation

The first position is referred to as the traditional interpretation – even though it is supported in recent scholarship by a small group of exegetes. Until F. Bleek (1830) it was almost the unanimous view. This reconstruction assumes that 2 Cor 2:1; 12:14 and 13:1–2 only refer to one earlier visit by Paul in Corinth before he wrote 2 Corinthians.¹¹ Alternatively, some claim that the second visit, which 2:1, 12:14 and 13:1–2 could give an impression of, must have happened before 1 Corinthians.¹² The offender (7:12), who also caused pain (2:5), is identified by these scholars with the sexual sinner in 1 Cor 5. It must have been afterwards that Paul was drawn into the conflict, with him, subsequently, being opposed by a larger, or lesser, group of Corinthians (cf. 7:7, 11–12). The tearful letter is, according to this theory, 1 Corinthians.¹³ Thus, these exegetes envisage a direct continuity between 1 and 2 Corinthians.¹⁴

¹¹ See Baur, F.C. (1866–67) 337–339, Hilgenfeld, A. (1871) 100–101, Heinrici, C.F.G. (1900) 7–8 and 17–19, Golla, E. (1922) 38, Dockx, S. (1974) 192, Hyldahl, N. (1973) 302–305, Hyldahl, N. (1986) 103, Engberg-Pedersen, T. (1996a) 75–76 and Bosenius, B. (1994) 7–13.

¹² John Chrysostom and Erasmus quoted in Bleek, F. (1830) 615, n. 1, Meyer, H.A.W. (1862) 6–7, and Zahn, T. (1909) 263. Among recent commentators who take such a view, we can mention Hughes, P.E. (1992) 31–33, 52 and Hall, D.R. (2003) 243–246.

¹³ In addition to the aforementioned scholars, we can also mention Semler, J.S. (1776) 39, n. 43, de Wette, W.M.L. (1845) 165–166, Rückert, L.J. (1837) 419, 421, Baur, F.C. (1866–1867) 332–333, Borse, U. (1984) 175–202, Hall, D.R. (2003) 223–235 and Long, F.J. (2005) 136–137 as examples of this interpretation.

¹⁴ See the historical overview of the question of continuity or discontinuity between 1 and 2 Corinthians in Bieringer, R. (1996) 6–7.

F. Bleek (1830)

Like some previous scholars, F. Bleek (1830) argued on the basis of 2 Cor 2:1, 12:14 and 13:1–2 that Paul must have been in Corinth twice before he wrote 2 Corinthians.¹⁵ Further, he thought that the travelogue in 2 Cor 1:15–16, 23 indicates that Paul had not seen the Corinthians after 1 Corinthians. Consequently, both visits must have occurred before 1 Corinthians.¹⁶ Of greater importance was Bleek's thesis that the tearful letter could not have been identical with 1 Corinthians. For 1 Cor 16:10–11 gives the impression that Paul sent Timothy to Corinth in order to give Paul news of how 1 Corinthians was received. In 2 Corinthians Timothy is a co-sender of the letter (1:1) while Titus has been in Corinth in order to inform Paul of how the Corinthians responded to the tearful letter (cf. 2:12–13 and 7:5–16). On this basis, Bleek concluded that the tearful letter must have been written between 1 and 2 Corinthians and that it has since been lost.¹⁷ Bleek gave two alternative interpretations of the ἀδικήσας-conflict: (a) The offender was still identified with the sexual sinner from 1 Cor 5, but the conflict now concerned the fact that the person involved continued with his sinful behaviour (incest) in open conflict with Paul's condemnation. For that reason he called in doubt Paul's apostolic authority.¹⁸ (b) Alternatively, Bleek suggested that the wrongdoing was an open and gross insult of Paul or his representatives, which was at the same time destructive of Paul's apostolic authority.¹⁹ There is scarcely any recent scholar who places both of these visits *before* 1 Corinthians, at the same time as the tearful letter is claimed to have been written in the period *after* 1 Corinthians. This alternative is, therefore, first and foremost of interest for the history of interpretation. Bleek's foundational work leads into the last alternative.

H.G.A. Ewald and the Majority of Later Interpreters

H.G.A. Ewald (1857) moved Paul's second visit (2 Cor 2:1; 12:14 and 13:1–2) to the period between 1 and 2 Corinthians so that the tearful letter became a response to the event that occurred during Paul's second visit, i.e., the ἀδικήσας-conflict. A large majority of later interpreters share this view. Paul's second visit is, then, usually referred to as the "interim visit" (German: "Zwischenbesuch"), while the tearful letter is denoted the "interim letter" (German: "Zwischenbrief"). This interpretation is justified on the basis of four arguments: (a) The travel plans in 2 Cor 1:15–16 are understood as a later, revised plan in relation to the travel plan in 1 Cor 16:3–12. When Paul came to Corinth, and was confronted with the wrong being done there, he left the city with a promise of a

¹⁵ Bleek, F. (1830) 614–624.

¹⁶ Bleek, F. (1830) 615. On this point Bleek has been later followed by Klöpffer, A. (1874) 34.

¹⁷ Bleek, F. (1830) 625–632. Borse, U. (1984) 195–198, especially 196 and n. 52, have attempted to argue against this by claiming that Titus and Timothy are two different variants of the same name. Accordingly, he maintains that 1 Corinthians must be the tearful letter. Alternatively, he envisages that Timothy did not reach Corinth. Based on 1 Cor 4:17 and 16:10 Hall, D.R. (2003) 45 and 247 argues that Timothy has been sent by Paul prior to 1 Corinthians and that the same verses indicate that Timothy has not yet arrived at Corinth. Because Timothy had already left for Macedonia, Titus was sent as the bearer of 1 Corinthians. None of the arguments are convincing.

¹⁸ Bleek, F. (1830) 433–434.

¹⁹ Bleek, F. (1830) 629–630. The majority of later exegetes draw on this last hypothesis.

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Appendix II: Personal relationships expressed with the preposition or compounds of αυ

	2 Corinthians	1 Corinthians	Romans	Galatians	Philippians	1 Thess
Human relationship with Christ/God/Spirit	13:4	5:4	6:4, 5, 8; 8:16, 17, 26, 28, 29, 32	2:9	1:23; 3:10, 21	4:14, 17; 5:10
God/Christians & this world	6:15, 16	5:9; 11:23				
Other relationships		1:2; 5:11; 7:5, 12, 13; 16:16, 19	9:3; 11:17; 16	2:12, 13; 3:9		2:14; 4:17
Relationships among the addressee		5:4; 11:17, 18, 33, 34; 12:24, 26; 14:23, 26			1:1, 27; 2:2	
Paul & his co-workers	8:18, 19, 22,	3:9	16:1, 3, 7, 9, 21	1:2; 2:1, 3	2:22, 25; 4:3, 21?	3:2
Paul/co-workers & others	1:2	16:4		1:14	4:21?	
<i>Paul/co-workers & the addressees</i>	1:11, 21, 24; 4:14; 7:3; 8:23	4:8	1:12; 15:30, 32		1:7; 2:17, 18; 3:17; 4:14	

Personal relationships expressed with the preposition υπερ

	2 Corinthians	1 Corinthians	Romans	Galatians	Philippians	1 Thess
Christ's offering for us & God/Spirit for us	5:14, 15, 21	11:24; 15:3	5:6, (7), 8; 8:27, 31, 32, 34; 14:15	1:4; 2:20; 3:13		5:10
Other relationships	5:20; 9:14; 12:10	1:13; 4:6; 12:25; 15:29	8:27, 31; 9:3; 10:1; 15:9; 16:4		1:29; 2:13	
<i>Paul's praying for addressees</i>					1:4	
<i>Addressees' praying for Paul/co-workers</i>	1:11		15:30			
<i>Paul's/co-workers' affection for addressees</i>	(1:7); 7:4, 14; 8:16, 24; 9:2, 3; 12:13					
<i>Addressees' affection for Paul/co-workers</i>	5:12, 7:7, 12; (12:6)				4:10	
<i>The positive effect of Paul's ministry for addressees</i>	1:6; 12:15, 19					