

THE CONTRIBUTION OF
THE RHETORICAL *DISPOSITIO* OF 2 COR 10–13
TO THE UNITY OF 2 CORINTHIANS

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■ 1. Introduction

One of the most highly debated critical problems concerning Paul's Corinthian correspondences is the unity of 2 Cor. It was first disputed two hundred thirty-five years ago in J. S. Semler's *Paraphrasis II: Epistolae ad Corinthios*. Semler proposed that 2 Cor 10:1–13:10 should be considered as a separate letter written by Paul to the Corinthians, and to partition 2 Cor into two Pauline letters.

Even though his proposal did not gain wide acceptance or generate much debate over the next hundred years, his proposal has subsequently been set as a landmark in the ensuing controversy among the scholars of 2 Corinthians. As Betz¹ correctly noticed, Semler's proposal was the result of his investigation into a deep conviction against the traditional doctrine of the canon, which demonstrated that the canon did not exist until a much later period. Because early Christianity did not know of the canon, it was not bound by it. These underlying presuppositions continue to be the major thrust behind, and primary goal for the arguments and methodologies of the critics opposed to the unity of 2 Corinthians.

Since Semler there has been a flood of debates, books, articles, and commentaries from both sides of the scholarship, both those for and against the unity of 2 Cor. The debate continues to break new ground without exhaustion, and still generates fresh inter-

¹ Cf. H.-D. BETZ, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9. A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA 1985) 3–4.



est and new challenges from both sides². The sheer amount and depth of argumentation is both astonishing and a source of frustration, since the matter has not yet been settled. The fact that some of the same arguments proposed in support of the disunity of 2 Cor could also be used in support of its unity is troubling, to say the least. It is disconcerting to note the uncertainty as to whether one is referring to a proposal as a possibility or an assertion. Furthermore, almost all arguments against the unity of 2 Cor are based upon a set of hypothetical assumptions and historical reconstructions that are neither decisive nor proven. Moreover, the arguments for the unity of 2 Cor, which contributed to understanding the unity of Paul's argumentative rhetoric, have failed somehow to dismantle the problematic assumptions and conclusions of partition theories and to construct persuasive proposals for the letter's unity.

On this basis, the aim of the present article is not to judge methodologies, assumptions, or presuppositions behind this plethora of theories. Instead, it aspires to examine the letter by taking into consideration the logical consistency of Paul's argumentation which spans the entire letter, and the validity of the major proofs applied or implied in these arguments, by making use of our previous study of the rhetorical *dispositio* of 2 Cor 10–13³.

■ 2. Preliminary Considerations

The common argument, of those who oppose the unity of 2 Cor, considers cc. 1–9 and 10–13 as separate letters because of the abrupt change in tone. Cc. 1–9 are generally conciliatory and joyful, but in c. 10 Paul abruptly takes on a stern, emotionally charged and disciplinary stance. This has caused some commentators to suggest that cc. 10–13 comprise a letter independent of cc. 1–9.

² On this complex issue see the introduction of M. J. HARRIS, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI 2005) 1–125.

³ Cf. D. CHAAYA, *Becoming a Fool for Christ. Dispositio and Message of 2 Cor 10–13* (BUSE de Kaslik 56; Kaslik 2010).





 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE RHETORICAL *DISPOSITIO*

Moreover, according to this argument, the first seven chapters of 2 Cor were written at a time of tension between Paul and the community in Corinth that grows even greater in 2 Cor 10–13. This fact lead some commentators to note that the apostle's reasoning would be better understood if one leapt from 2 Cor 1–7 to 10–13⁴. Why do we all of a sudden find two chapters dealing with the collection for Jerusalem? What is the relationship of 2 Cor 8–9 with the rest of the letter, especially that modern scholars see in these chapters a separated block inserted between 2 Cor 1–7 and 10–13, in addition to the assumption that c. 9 is at least part of a letter separate from c. 8?

Despite these problems our rhetorical approach to this issue showed important misrepresentations within the letter's argumentation, and prepared for the recognition of the existence of important rhetorical connections between 10–13 and the argumentation in 1–7 and 8–9.

2.1 The Presence of Titus in the Three Parts of the Letter

The presence of Titus in each of these three parts of the letter supports their unity. Titus is mentioned nine times in 2 Cor in the three parts of the letter (2:13; 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18 [2x]), among which we find the following references to the sending of Titus to Corinth:

1. A past visit in connection with the *Letter of Tears* (2:13; 7:6–7, 13b–15);
2. A past visit in connection with the collection, in which he had already begun the collection in Corinth (8:6)⁵;
3. A past visit connected with the collection, accompanied by a certain brother (12:16–18)⁶;

⁴ Cf. H. L. GOUDGE, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (WC; London 1927) lvii–lviii.

⁵ The complementary verbs προενήρξατο and ἐπιτελέση in 8:6 are naturally taken as referring respectively to the beginning and the completion of the same object: the collection project in Corinth.

⁶ Note the perfect ἀπέσταλκα in 12:17.



4. A visit in connection with the collection, accompanied by «the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel», in which Titus would complete the work that he had already begun (8:6; 17–18).

In analyzing Titus' missions to Corinth we notice a principal link between 2 Cor 8–9 and what precedes. For Paul's report about Titus's successful visit to Corinth in 7:13b–16 precludes the announcement of Titus's other visit that he would undertake "with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative" (8:17)⁷.

Moreover, the reference to Titus in 2 Cor 12:18 shows that he is Paul's principal agent to Corinth and portrays him as governed by the same outlook as Paul, and that their course of action has been identical. All four aorists (παρακάλεσα, συναπέστειλα, ἐπλεονέκτησεν, περιπατήσαμεν) in 2 Cor 12:18 allude to a visit or visits that Titus made to Corinth during which he organized or handled contributions to Paul's collection for Jerusalem. The identity of this visit refers to Titus's initiation of the collection mentioned in 8:6.

Furthermore, throughout the letter, the reader can sketch the action identity between Paul and Titus. Paul sees him as an ideal emissary, for he shared Paul's own commitment to strive for the Corinthians' highest spiritual good⁸. Titus's desire, as well as Paul's, was not for their money but for their souls (12:14, 18).

Notwithstanding its importance in identifying a unifying theme in 2 Cor, the presence of Titus in the three parts of the letter is insufficient to prove the unity of the letter. For this reason more internal textual evidence is required in order to understand the dynamic of Paul's argumentation.

⁷ For detailed verbal links between cc. 7 and 8 that include the idea of "enthusiasm", cf. C. H. TALBERT, *Reading Corinthians. A Literary and Theological Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (New York; NY 1987) 182.

⁸ Cf. HARRIS, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 598.



2.2 The Contribution of the Rhetorical *Dispositio* of 2 Cor 10–13 to the Unity of 2 Cor

As its methodological purpose our doctoral thesis «Becoming a Fool for Christ. *Dispositio* and Message of 2 Cor 10–13» sought to discern the rhetorical logic of 2 Cor 10–13. This study, published in September 2010⁹, has offered the field a new perspective in favor of the unity of 2 Cor.

In it we argued that the function of the rhetorical *dispositio* of 2 Cor 10–13 is understood only in consideration of 2 Cor as a whole. The main question leading to this conclusion was whether 2 Cor 10–13 is an apology or a *periautologia*. If it is a *periautologia*, why did Paul use this kind of argumentation and not another?

The study of the rhetorical *dispositio* and the argumentative progression of 2 Cor 10–13 allowed us to show that although apologetic elements do exist, nevertheless, they are subordinate to *periautologia* so as to present the argument leniently and to make it more persuasive. Although 2 Cor 10–13 contains numerous autobiographical elements (2 Cor 11:22–33), Paul does not try to defend his conduct or praise himself; rather he seeks to exhort and to succinctly underline the problem within the Corinthian community caused by the conduct of the opponents, the so-called false apostles (2 Cor 11:5, 13, 15).

This study of the *dispositio* led to the refutation of the hypothesis of disunity of 2 Cor, and found, rather, a significant interrelationship with 2 Cor 1–9.

The analysis of 2 Cor 10–13, with the help of Greco-Roman literature, allowed us to identify the genre and the *topos* of the text, the importance of irony, and the paradox of «power in weakness» in the building up of the Corinthian community (2 Cor 10:8; 12:9; 13:10). This analysis showed that Paul not only tried to change the mentality of the Corinthians, but above all to lead them in their own discernment that they might make the right choice for themselves (2 Cor 13:5).

⁹ Cf. CHAAYA, *Becoming a Fool for Christ*.





DOLLY CHAAYA

Finally, the study of the *dispositio* helped underline the characteristics of the real apostle. They are found in the itinerary that Paul proposes to follow. This progressive compulsory itinerary reproduces the example of Christ who «was crucified out of weakness, but lives by the power of God» (2 Cor 13:4). This proposal enables the reader to discern the marks of unity of 2 Cor developed below.

■ 3. A Proposal for the Unity of 2 Cor

The first question before we embark on the arguments in favor of the unity of 2 Cor is whether Paul in cc. 8–9 and 10–13 changes completely the theme of discussion presented in cc. 1–7.

From 2 Cor 1–7 the accusations against Paul are immediately seen: Paul is not an apostle, because he is not up to his ministry, and therefore his apostolate is considered inferior. The argumentation of 2 Cor 10–13 responds very well to these accusations, where Paul shows that it is enough to belong to Christ in order to be an apostle. Hence, the argumentation of 2 Cor 10–13 provides evidence that the true problem is who is the real apostle?

Through the three *synkriseis* of 2 Cor 10–13¹⁰, Paul testified that his apostolate is not inferior; but that it is an inverted self-praise contrary to human logic. Noticeable between 2 Cor 10–13 and 2 Cor 1–7 is the list of *peristaseis* which bears witness to the gradual progression of the Pauline argumentation. In 2 Cor 4:8–10 the issue deals with the relationship between Paul and Christ. In 2 Cor 6:4–10 it deals with Paul and the community, and in 2 Cor 11:23b–29, it deals with Paul, Christ and the community.

Yet, what is the relationship of 2 Cor 8–9 with the rest of the letter, especially that several authors see in these chapters a block separated from 2 Cor 1–7 and 10–13? Here we remember par-

¹⁰ Paul develops his argumentation in 2 Cor 10–13 through three *synkriseis* with his opponents: 2 Cor 10:7–18; 11:5–15; and 11:16–12:10; Cf. CHAAYA, *Becoming a Fool for Christ*, 100–171.



ticularly Hans Dieter Betz, who in his commentary of 1985, does not see any relationship between 2 Cor 8–9 and the other literary units of the letter, and thinks that cc. 8 and 9 were different and independent letters¹¹. Contrary to Betz, in 2002, Kim, in his book *Die paulinische Kollekte*¹², sees in 2 Cor 8–9 only one unit, but does not explicitly mention the relationship of these two chapters with the rest of the letter. In addition to Betz's and Kim's observations, other authors see doublings in cc. 8–9 as indications that the two chapters regard two separate letters.

On the basis of what preceded it is useful now to consider the relationship between 2 Cor 1–7 and 8–9.

3.1 The Relationship between 2 Cor 1–7 and 2 Cor 8–9

The first question is whether Paul completely changes the theme from 1–7 to 8–9. 2 Cor 1–7 seem to have a good conclusion, the reconciliation between Paul and the community, a fact that indicates a pacific relationship. 2 Cor 8–9 draws upon another theme, that of the collection for Jerusalem. But what are the motives for the collection that are not seen in 2 Cor 1–7?

Paul uses *διακονία* and its cognates (2 Cor 8:4, 19, 20; 9:1, 12, 13) and *χάρις* (8:1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 16, 19, 9:8, 14, 15) as the keywords for the collection for Jerusalem (2 Cor 8–9). But these two words are also employed as the key concepts to defend his gospel and apostleship in cc. 1–7 (*διακονία* and cognates, 2 Cor 3:3, 6, 7, 8, 9 [x2]; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3, 4; *χάρις*, 1:2, 12, 15; 2:14; 4:15; 6:1), which indicates that cc. 8–9 are a continuation and conclusion of the rhetorical discussion in cc. 1–7. That is, one side of the ministry is evangelization (service) and the other side is the collection (concern for others). Paul tries to resume the latter, because it was suspended because of suspicions against him. However these two key concepts are rarely seen in the rhetorical discussion in cc. 10–13. Even though these two keywords do

¹¹ BETZ, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 27.

¹² K.-M. KIM, *Die paulinische Kollekte* (Tübingen 2002) n. 22.



DOLLY CHAAYA

not occur often in 2 Cor 10–13, the argument demonstrates the function of these two significant terms in the latter rhetorical unit: it is Paul's ministry (διακονία) that is under consideration (cf. 2 Cor 11:8, 23), and it is God's grace (2 Cor 12:9) that, without eliminating it, transforms Paul's weakness into power and remains with the community as an eternal presence and blessing (2 Cor 13:13)¹³.

Beyond the χάρις and διακονία motifs of cc. 8–9, already developed in cc. 1–7, another key concept is καύχημα/καύχεσις (cf. καυχάσθαι) seen in both sections and culminating in 10–13.

Moreover, there are significant contrasts between θλίψις (tribulation) and παράκλησις “consolation” and between λύπη “sorrow” and χαρά “joy” that are consistently seen in 1:1–2:13; 2:14–7:4; 7:5–16; cc. 8–9, but these are not seen in the main section of cc. 10–13.

Furthermore, in 2 Cor 8–9 there are no future verbs as in 2 Cor 10–13, especially in what concerns the usage of the verb καυχόμαι. This demonstrates that in 2 Cor 8–9, the future arrives once the collection is ended, because it is connected to a concrete situation, while in 2 Cor 10–13 the future is open and applicable to any situation.

On the rhetorical level Paul makes progress argumentatively: in 8:1–7 he addresses himself to the Macedonians, giving the first *exemplum* when he treats the problem of the collection. The function of this *exemplum* is not only to praise the Macedonians, but also an appeal to imitate their generosity. They have not only contributed to the collection but have also offered themselves (2 Cor 8:5) following the *exemplum* of Christ who “though He was rich, yet for (their) sake He became poor, that (they) through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). In order to make this appeal Paul plays on the *pathos* of the Corinthians. First he enunciates a double paradox expressing the Macedonians' joy despite their tribulations; the Macedonians offered from their poverty, but their generosity was copious (2 Cor 8:1–2); second, he com-

¹³ Cf. CHAAYA, *Becoming a Fool for Christ*, 95.



 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE RHETORICAL *DISPOSITIO*

pare (synkrisis) the Macedonians, who were poor but generous, with the Corinthians, who were much more rich, but halted the collection (8:2, 7). With this technique Paul attacks the Corinthians with αἰσχύνη “shame” against their καύχημα “boasting” of riches, as evidenced in 2 Cor 9:2–4. In addition, the word ἀπλότης of 2 Cor 8:2 means “generosity” and “simplicity”, which is later applied (2 Cor 11:3) in a nuptial metaphor.

Paul also progressively shows the *exemplum* of Christ (2 Cor 8:9). In this paradigm there is also an inverted paradox between richness and poorness. This second paradigm praises Christ, and it is more intense, because the richness of the Corinthians has been given through the grace of God and not out of their own merit. Here Paul exhorts the Corinthians to examine themselves, to discern if their love is genuine (2 Cor 8:8). However, the Corinthians hesitated and their objection resides in the fact that Paul was gathering the collection for himself (2 Cor 2:11; 7:2; 9:5; 12:17–18). Since they were not able to give generously and as a result of their genuine love for others, the Corinthians needed to examine themselves regarding whether or not they belong to Christ. In this case Paul introduces his own *exemplum* (2 Cor 10–13) inviting the Corinthians, in the end, to make their own decision.

Before moving to the relationship between 2 Cor 8–9 and 10–13, we would like to add that cc. 8 and 9 are not repetitive. The beginning of c. 9 περὶ μὲν γάρ “then with respect to” does not indicate the beginning of a new letter, but the beginning of a new section in the same letter, because it introduces the reason or the cause of the matters mentioned in c. 8¹⁴. Moreover, the *exempla* are gradually rendered more intense before beginning c. 10. Besides, when the Corinthians failed to discern their love, another discernment was necessary, that of their conformity to Christ.

¹⁴ Cf. BALDANZA, “Quale definizione culturale per la colletta?”, *Lat* 50 (2009) 435.



DOLLY CHAAYA

3.2 The Relationship between 2 Cor 8–9 and 2 Cor 10–13

Traditional approaches to an understanding of cc. 10–13 identify and characterize the intonation and argumentative modality of this section as distinctive from that of 1–9¹⁵. This has caused some commentators to suggest that cc. 10–13 comprise a letter independent of cc. 1–9. In fact, since at key points in the argument of cc. 1–9 one meets with reference to prior correspondence causing some disturbance within the community, cc. 10–13 have been identified with this so-called *Letter of tears*¹⁶. Nevertheless, the informed rhetorical approach to this issue has shown important misrepresentations of the argumentative circumstances, as well as important rhetorical connections between 10–13 to the argumentation in 1–9.

It is difficult not to admit an abrupt change in intonation and modality when cc. 10–13 are read after the volitional appeals of cc. 8–9. Tones of defensiveness, irony (sometimes playful, sometimes serious) and a shift in the position of authority (*ethos*) of Paul vis-à-vis his audience enter into the discourse in a way that seems abrupt, if not altogether risky in its potential to alienate the community.

However, while cc. 10–13 reflect a rhetorical strategy that is certainly risky, the argument as it develops in 10–13 is not at all unanticipated given the above argumentation in cc. 1–9. Indeed, to understand the function of 10–13, it was necessary to read it as part of an argument that extends throughout 2 Cor. Only in that way does its success, as a risky venture, make any rhetorical sense.

¹⁵ The arguments against the unity of these chapters are as follows: (1) the introduction of c. 9 is typically used by Paul to start a new section of thought; (2) the discussion in c. 9 is redundant; (3) there is an apparent contradiction between 8:10 and 9:3–5; (4) the content is addressed to two different groups (Corinth and Achaia); and (5) differing occasions are pictured between 8:20 and 9:3–5; cf. C. H. TALBERT, *Reading Corinthians. A Literary and Theological Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (New York, NY, 1987) 181–182.

¹⁶ Cf. L. L. WELBORN, “The Identification of 2 Corinthians 10–13 with the «Letter of Tears»”, *NT* 37 (1995) 138–153.



 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE RHETORICAL *DISPOSITIO*

Throughout the argument in cc. 10–13, frequent reference to the *topoi* of “confidence” (cf. 1:23–2:11, 3:1–4; 8:22; 9:4; 10:2), “boasting” (cf. 1:12–14; 7:6–16; 8:24–12:9), “obedience” with respect to “testing” (cf. 1:23–2:11, 6:11; 9:13; 10:5–6), “building up” rather than “tearing you down” (cf. 4:7–6:10; 10:8; 12:19; 13:10), the catalog of “afflictions” (cf. 1:3–11; 4:8–11; 5–6, 7:5; 8:2; 11: 23b–27), being “beside oneself/beyond the limits” (5:13), the argumentative presence of Satan (2:11; cf. 6:15; 2:11; 11:14; 12:7), and love (2:4, 6:11–12; 8:7–24; 13:11–13) are made. Additionally, the argument functions upon the basis of the dissociation of human versus divine standards of judging the ministry and the *ethos* of Paul (cf. 4:17–6:10). Paul’s opponents seem to have used a wide range of criteria by which they evaluated Paul’s ministry. Yet, perhaps one of the more subtly undermining methods of the opponents was to draw attention to marks that accompanied their own ministries, which on the surface seemed to validate their ministry. There are at least four in this category, including appeals to Jewish pedigree; claims of visions and revelations; use of fine sounding rhetoric; and an ability to financially sustain one’s own ministry.

Moreover, in the progress of the argumentation from 2 Cor 8–9 to 2 Cor 10–13 Paul gives three consecutive *exempla*: the *exemplum* of the Macedonians (2 Cor 8:1–5); the *exemplum* of Christ (2 Cor 8:9); and his personal *exemplum* (2 Cor 10–13); second, as we have seen from the preceding chapters, the problem is not between Paul and his opponents as much as it is between Paul and the Corinthians; third, the apologetic elements of 2 Cor 10–13 are not applied by Paul ultimately for self-defense, but for the purpose of education and imitation: as Paul modeled his life on Christ’s ministry in “humility and forbearance” (2 Cor 10:1), the Corinthians are invited to discern if their life is conformed to Christ or not.

The following table summarizes the three *exempla* based on the rhetorical device, emotions and ethics applied in each *exemplum*:



DOLLY CHAAYA

Exemplum 1	Macedonians (8:1-7)	Corinthians (9:1-5)
Rhetorical devices	double contrasts (tribulation/joy; poorness/richness)	contrast (preparedness/ unpreparedness)
Emotions	shame/pride and competition	shame/pride and competition
Ethics	generosity and meanness	honor and dishonor
Exemplum 2	Christ (8:8-15)	God (9:6-10)
Rhetorical devices	contrast (richness/poorness) and discernment of love	double comparisons (greed/blessing; sorrow/joy)
Emotions	competition; willingness	sorrow and joy
Ethics	love and equality	love and righteousness
Exemplum 3	Paul (12:9-10)	Christ (13:4)
Rhetorical devices	contrast (weakness/power) and discernment of conformation to Christ	contrast (weakness/power)
Emotions	irony, amplification, and self-praise	death and life
Ethics	humility and forbearance	humility and forbearance

The question remains as how to associate the theme of the collection with cc. 10–13 and read it as a continuation rather than as an interruption.

In 2 Cor 8–9, despite their poverty, the Macedonian Christians eagerly participated in the offering for the saints of Jerusalem. The term Paul uses to describe their poverty may well be translated “dirt poor”¹⁷. Their poverty, however, did not diminish their extreme joy, nor did it affect the size of their gift. Paul identifies the gift as the “riches of single-mindedness” (πλοῦτος τῆς ἀπλότητος,

¹⁷ The Greek is actually κατὰ βάθους, a term well translated by HUGHES, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 228, as “rock bottom”.





 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE RHETORICAL *DISPOSITIO*

8:2). Although the size of the gift is unknown, four elements in the text suggest it was substantial. First, Paul calls it “riches” (πλοῦτος), a rare term to use in such context. Second, it is described as “to their ability and beyond” (8:3-4), indicating the sacrificial nature of the gift. Their giving began with ability and moved to their inability (“beyond themselves”). Third, they begged Paul to allow them to give (8:4). This statement reflects both their insistence on giving and their pitiable situation. Here again Paul uses the word “grace” to describe the gift. If Paul were troubled by the size of the gift, he accepted it because it came from the grace of God. Fourth, Paul took great care in the administration of the gift.

Each of these factors suggests that generosity is not dependent on the possession of significant resources, but is a matter of the purposes of the heart. Paul says as much in his commendation of the Macedonians (8:5). They “gave themselves first to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God”. Their giving was twofold: to the Lord and to us...the financial gift represented a higher giving than was expressed. The real issue was their relationship to the Lord and the personal implications it brought. The material gift was “natural” because they had already cared for the greater matter of presenting themselves to the Lord. That prior commitment led them to commit themselves to Paul and the concerns he brought to their attention. Thus the gift was truly Christian. It was an outworking of their relationship with Christ; it was a participation in the lives of other Christians, and it was sacrificial. The Macedonians were indeed exemplary in their giving.

A second motivation is the completion of the work of Christ in them. Here Paul builds on the desire of all mature Christians to grow in grace. In 8:7-9 Paul lists six virtues in two triads. The first triad includes faith (πίστις), utterance (λόγος), and knowledge (γνώσις). Even a cursory reading of the Corinthian correspondence reveals the importance of utterance and knowledge.¹⁸

The second triad commends the church for qualities that are more directly related to the offering. First, they possess great zeal

¹⁸ For further details on this matter, cf. CHAAYA, *Becoming a Fool for Christ*, 165-167.





DOLLY CHAAYA

(σπουδή). This term is frequent in these chapters. Generally it stands for a zeal to do properly what is correct. If that meaning is correct here, Paul commends them for their desire and ability to implement the plans for the offering. Second, they are commended for their love (ἀγάπη). Third, they are to cultivate the gift (grace) of giving. The argument is simple yet demands responsible action. Since the church was spiritually rich and prided itself on the manifestations of spiritual gifts, they should bring that spiritual heritage to bear on the material and financial needs of other Christians. If they would devote themselves to the offering it would provide an occasion for them to develop another Christian grace in their lives, both individually and corporately.

The proof of their claim to these spiritual qualities depended upon the exercise of love shown in the offering. The motivation is threefold: (1) the development of the complete person so that every area of life falls under the lordship of Christ and the process of sanctification; (2) the complete exercise of their spirituality calls for a tangible act of love; (3) motivating factor is the completion of a previous commitment made for the offering.

Each of these aspects has deep argumentative roots in cc. 1–9, roots that are presupposed by and required for cc. 10–13 to function. The argument beginning in 10:1–18 shifts from the “confidence” and “boasting” Paul expressed about “you” in cc. 8–9, to one that now centers on his self-praise (“me”). Paul does so by drawing from the dissociative movement found in 4:7–6:10 that shifts the foundation upon which to judge boldness and weakness from a human standard to a divine one. The relational shift to authority, which takes place here, has already been anticipated in previous arguments that introduce “obedience” with respect to the receipt of a previous letter in 2:9; 6:11 and 9:13. It is particularly with respect to “punishment” (10:6) that the stakes here have been raised above that which went on before. This intensification is noted immediately, but is also defined as possible: Making use of the previous philosophical pair of “earthly tent/building from God” (cf. 5:1), it is an authority derived from the Lord “for building up and not for tearing you down” (cf. 2:4, 7:9–11, 8:8, 9:13).

Once the ironic argumentation begins to build, making refer-



 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE RHETORICAL *DISPOSITIO*

ence to a catalog of afflictions already noted in 1:3–11, 4:8–11, cc. 5–6, 7:5 and 8:2, Paul’s self-praise reaches a summit that is reminiscent of being “for God” (5:13; note 11:23 “I am talking like a fool”). There is no inconsistency here with respect to the standards set in 10:15–17, since the boasting is for Christ (cf. 12:10–11). This position of authority allows him the confidence, “now that I am ready to come” (12:14–13.4), that it may be done “for the sake of your building up” (12:19; cf. 13:10), precisely the same reason given for his previous correspondence (cf. 1:23–2:11; also 5:1). On this basis Paul can place the responsibility for his response on the community (10:1–2; 12:20–21; 13:2, 5–7), once again making appeal to the notion of “testing” he has made reference to throughout the correspondence (2:9, 6:11, 9:13), this time testing “yourselves” (13:5).

It is clear, therefore, that the argumentation of cc. 10–13 draws extensively and frequently upon the previous argumentative groundwork laid in cc. 1–9. Indeed, the success of the risky venture of asserting authority through a dissociative technique employing an ironic modality of argumentation depends upon the previous and multiple argumentative threads it employs from the earlier discourse. This venture has been carefully and thoughtfully anticipated, planned for in advance.

In contrast, if cc. 10–13 were extracted from the rest of the letter, their argumentative situation would be wholly unanticipated. Indeed, it is precisely this accusation that leads historical critics to wrongly extract them in the first place. As we have shown, however, while the shift in intonation and the ironic modality may appear abrupt in comparison to the previous chapters, they in fact represent an anticipated and carefully planned shift in the argumentative situation.

■ Conclusion

The global theme of 2 Cor is “who is the true apostle?” This theme begins with 1:12 and expands from 2:14 to 5:10. In 2 Cor 7:5–16 Paul says that his love for the community is not in conflict with his attitude, and in 2 Cor 8–9 he implicitly responds to



DOLLY CHAAYA

this affirmation by showing that the grace of God is paradoxically manifested in poverty, that it is associated with weakness, which is in turn the human vessel in which God's power is also paradoxically manifested. Consequently, the clue that helps to read the letter consists in a double contrasting movement of humiliation and elevation.

The *dispositio* of 2 Cor 10–13 presents Paul as he is in reality and without ignominy. Being a real apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul does not disguise himself; on the contrary, everything is exposed in the brightness of sunlight. Using his own *exemplum* and autobiography in 2 Cor 10–13, Paul makes himself the instrument of irony, laying emphasis, from the beginning, on power in weakness. In other words, after having discussed the theme of the collection for Jerusalem in 2 Cor 8–9, Paul was ready to explain his motives and the purpose of his ministry so that it would not be misunderstood, and thus the Corinthians would not think that the collection was an action limited to material gain for his ministry. From the beginning of c. 10 Paul affirms that ministry is designated as a target to “take every thought captive in obedience to Christ” (2 Cor 10:5). For this purpose, Paul urges the community to discern and examine itself to make the right choice, without disregarding the trickery of Satan (cf. 2 Cor 2:11; 6:14–15; 11:14) and the negative aftermaths of self-reliance (cf. 2 Cor 1:9; 3:5; 4:7).

Abstract

A long-standing dispute among exegetes of 2 Cor regards the letter's unity. As research into this matter has continued, theories abound all the more, but a solution to the problem has remained elusive. This paper makes progress toward a solution showing that a consideration of the letter's logical argumentation in the light of the rhetorical devices utilized by Paul, and based upon the rhetorical analysis of the dispositio of 2 Cor 10–13, indicates the probability of its unity.





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