CHAPTER 9

Can Words Be Violent or Do They Only Sound That Way?

Second Corinthians: Verbal Warfare from Afar as a Complement to a Placid Personal Presence[1]

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I. Aggressive Language in Second Corinthians

Paul insults his opponents in Corinth by calling them "false apostles," "deceitful," "disguising themselves as apostles of Christ," and mimicking Satan as "his servants" (2 Cor 11:13–15; cf. 11:3–4, 23[2]). These are aggressive words, accompanied by martial images in 10:2b-6, where he threatens to deal with these intruders harshly. Paul does not even deem them worthy of being addressed directly; he only fusses about them to the Corinthians. And after the thunderstorm of conflict is over, Paul offers forgiveness solely to the Corinthians (1:1–2:13; 7:5–16; esp. 2:6–10), even to the anonymous individual who had terribly hurt him during his second visit in Corinth (2:1, 5–10; 7:12; 12:21; 13:1–2). He does not mention forgiveness for the intruders.[3] His conflict with them was not about compromising and integrating, it was about expelling, about winning or losing. It was an exorcism—in the name of "God's power," which Paul conjured up several times (6:7; 4:7; 12:9, 12; 13:4, 8).

The expressions in 11:13–15, ψευδαπόστολοι, δόλιοι, μετασχηματιζόμενοι

1. See 2 Cor 10:1–2, 10–11: Allegedly, Paul is "humble when face to face . . . but bold when away"; "his letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence weak, they say."

2. In 11:3, he accordingly compares them to the snake that seduced Eve. They preach another Jesus and another gospel; their spirit is not Paul's (11:4). They call themselves "Christ's servants" (11:23) and "servants of righteousness" (11:15), but this is only camouflage (11:15), as Satan "disguises himself as an angel of light" (11:14).

3. Although they still seem to be in town, according to 5:12c.

εἰς ἀποστόλους, διάκονοι τοῦ Σατανᾶ, are apotropaic invectives. Carried away by emotion, Paul, for the first time in the history of the Greek language, coins the word ψευδαπόστολος.[4] The intruders are accused of being cunningly deceitful, of pretending to be apostles, while they serve Satan. The latter label sounds similar to Matt 12:24; 9:34; 10:25, where Jesus is accused of acting in the name of "Beelzebul, the prince of demons."[5] Anthropological studies of pre-industrial societies[6] illuminate remarkable parallels to this first-century labeling. Accusations of demon possession are typical for social groups with confused internal relations, that is, in situations in which different contenders intensely struggle for leadership and no clear mechanisms are established to settle the question of authority. The accusation of demon possession thus is a medium of control, the worst label possible ("he is a witch!"), particularly when the possessing demon is supposed to be Satan himself. Paul could not have thought of anything worse! In 2 Corinthians, he fought tooth and nail for his leadership role in Corinth, which was about to be snatched away by "Satanic" intruders. He employed all possible means. The highly emotional invective of Satan possession was his last resort to discredit and shame his opponents.

Quintilian does not deal with witchcraft accusations, but he comments on the affective side of speeches. Any invective, particularly a verdict of demon possession, is emotionally charged. "Appeals to feelings," Quintilian writes, "are necessary if there are no other means for securing the victory of truth" (*Inst.* 6.1.8). Emotions, he adds, contribute a maximum of power (*vis*) to the speech (*Inst.* 6.2.2 [*vis,* of course, can be even translated as violence]). If an orator achieves the stirring up of wrath and hate (*irasci, odisse*) in the judges—in the situation of 2 Corinthians, the Corinthians themselves were the judges—then these "lose all sense of enquiring into the truth of arguments" (*omnem veritatis inquirendae rationem iudex omittit occupatus adfectibus*). They are "swept along by the tide of passion" (*Inst.* 6.2.6).

In pre-industrial societies, two other factors often also correlate with the accusation of demon possession—as they did in the situation of 2 Corinthians. (a) Indictments of witchcraft frequently occur in health-care contexts.[7] No doubt, the "signs, wonders and mighty works" of the Corinthian charismatic intruders comprised healing attempts (cf. 2 Cor 12:1–7, 11–12; 5:12; 13:3). (b) Witches are considered hypocrites and deceivers, hiding their evil inner nature behind facades.[8] Paul accordingly com-

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4. The same is true for ψευδάδελφος in 11:26; Gal 2:4 and for εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον in 2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6. See also ὑπερλίαν below. Paul's wrath gives birth to new words and expressions. ψευδάδελφος and ψευδαπόστολος were inspired by the LXX's ψευδοπροφήτης (e.g., Jer 33:8, 11, 16).

5. As pioneers, B. J. Malina and J. H. Neyrey (*Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew* [Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988], 1–32) correctly applied Mary Douglas's witchcraft theory to Matthew 12. The same needs to be done here.

6. E.g., M. T. Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), esp. iii, 109–14, 119; L. Mair, *Witchcraft* (New York: World University Library, 1969), esp. 203, 208, 216; E. Goody, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State," in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations,* ed. M. Douglas (New York: Tavistock, 1970), 207–44, esp. 211; M. Douglas, "Introduction: Thirty Years after Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic," in ibid., xviii.

7. Cf. G. P. Murdock, *Theories of Illness: A World Survey* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), esp. 42, 57–63.

8. Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 1982, 113; M. Douglas, "Introduction: Thirty Years after Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic," in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations,* ed. Douglas, xiii–xviii, xxvi–xxvii.

bines his indictment of Satan possession with the expressions "deceitful," "disguised as apostles," and "pseudoapostles" (δόλιοι, μετασχηματιζόμενοι εἰς ἀποστόλους, ψευδαπόστολοι).[9]

By using invectives, Paul employed a typical polemical tool of his time.[10] In his letters, particularly in 2 Corinthians 10–13 and Galatians, he participated in a general culture of quarreling and disputing. This polemical culture culminated in invectives, as exemplified in Cicero's speeches against Catilina, in Sallust's writings against Cicero, in some poems by Archilochos and Catullus, in Ovid's *Ibis* and in many other documents.[11]

Cicero, for instance, accuses Catilina of madness and magic. In *Against Catilina* (e.g., 1.1, 2, 8–10, 12, 15–16, 22–23, 25, 31, 33; 2.1), Cicero repeatedly uses the invective that Catilina is carried away by *amentia* (madness), *scelus* (maliciousness) and by *furor*, which can be translated as wrathful and insane ecstasy. He and his criminal companions try to ruin (*exitium*) the entire world (*orbis terrarum*). He attacks the temples of the "eternal gods." By leaving the city, he would purify it (*purga urbem*)! His robbery is godless (*impium latrocinium*). Maybe he "cursed and solemnly consecrated" his bloodstained dagger in secret rituals (*initiata sacris ac devota*); he thus is suspected of having a magical conspiracy with the gods of the underworld. Jupiter may plague this monster (*monstrum*) with "eternal punishments" (*aeternis suppliciis*) even after his death. Among Cicero's countless vituperations, these probably come the closest to Paul's accusation of evil-demon possession. Furthermore, like Paul's

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9. See also 2 Cor 5:12: Their exterior only looks good.

10. See, e.g., the slandering verdicts of demon possession in Matt 12:24; 9:34; 10:25; 12:43–45 (the latter text indirectly aims at some of the scribes and Pharisees); Cicero's invectives (note 16 below) or the collections of material in note 11 below.

11. Cf., e.g., C. Hosius, G. Krüger, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur bis zum Gesetzgebungswerk des Kaisers Justinian*, II (Munich: Beck, 1935), esp. 429, 495, 651–52; I. Opelt, *Die lateinischen Schimpfwörter und verwandte sprachliche Erscheinungen* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1965); R. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 111 et al.; J. Crook, "*Sponsione provocare*: Its Place in Roman Litigation," *JRS* 66 (1976): 132–38; I. Opelt, *Die Polemik in der christlichen lateinischen Literatur von Tertullian bis Augustin* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1980); A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius: The Scholar and His Caesars* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 44–45; M. W. Gleason, "Festive Satire: Julian's *Misopogon* and the New Year at Antioch," *JRS* 76 (1986): 106–19; E. Pólay, *Iniuria Types in Roman Law* (Budapest: Akademie Kiadó, 1986); J. H. D'Arms, "Slaves at Roman *convivia*," in *Dining in a Classical Context*, ed. W. J. Slater (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 171–83; F. Pina Polo, "Cicéron contra Clodio: el lenguaje de la invectiva," *Gerion* 9 (1991): 131–50; D. Schmitz, "Schimpfwörter in den Invektiven des Gregor von Nazianz," *Glotta* 71 (1993): 189–202; C. A Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 35–36; O. F. Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Ancient Rome* (Baltimore, MD: Duckworth, 1995), 49–51 et al.; A. Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), esp. 8, 12–13, 57–98; J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 79, 116–29, 197, 205, et al.; P. L. Schmidt, "C. Suetonius Tranquillus (Antiquarische Schriften)," in *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*, IV, ed. K. Sallmann (Munich: Beck, 1997), § 404; D. Potter, "Entertainers in the Roman Empire," in *Life, Death and Entertainment in the Roman Empire*, ed. D. Potter and D. J. Mattingly (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 256–341; M. G. Peachin, "Friendship and Abuse at the Dinner Table," in *Aspects of Friendship in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed M. G. Peachin, Journal of Roman Archaeology, Supplementary Series Ser. 43 (Portsmouth, RI: JRA, 2001), 135–44; M. Roller, *Constructing Aristocracy: Aristocrats and Emperors in Julio-Claudian Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 148–54; etc.

opponents, Catilina's allies are accused of deceiving and camouflaging their real face and need to be unmasked (*dissimulant* 2.17; . . . *ut id, quod latebat, erumperet* 2.27; *omnia . . . , quae erant contra salutem omnium cogitata, illustrata et patefacta vidistis* 3.21). In the same way that Paul and the intruders are contenders for leadership in Corinth, Catilina and Cicero are rivals for the consulate. Cicero's funniest invective complains that Catilina is "a lot of damaging scummy sewage water [*sentina*]" that needs to be "bailed out of the city" (1.12; 2.7; cf. in 1 Cor 4:13 Paul's self-denigration περικαθάρματα).

While this culture of debate is alien to most present-day intellectuals, it is not to many modern politicians. What are its characteristics—apart from witchcraft accusations? All of the following five features can be found in 2 Corinthians (cf., e.g., 2 Cor 11:3, 13–15; 2:15–16 [either black or white]; 2:17; 1 Cor 4:18–19; 5:2; Gal 1:8–9; 2:11, 13; 5:12; Phil 3:18–19; 1 Thess 2:15–16; Rom 16:18 and the texts below).

- The adversaries often do not attempt sensitively to explore the motivations and reasons of their opponents. They frequently quote the enemies' views in biased, emotional and—even more important—highly selective ways,[12] so that it is difficult for historians to reconstruct the positions of the opponents.
- Often no differentiation between persons and views is made. Therefore, the polemics can be personally insulting and hurtful (e.g., 2 Cor 11:13–15).
- Adversaries, especially in court, often do not look for balanced compromises. Frequently, there is only winning or losing; the polemic aims at running the opponents into the ground—as in 2 Corinthians 11.
- The corresponding debating pattern, therefore, often is based on binary logic, on exclusive either-ors, on black and white, on axes of evil and sons of light, on a Satan-Christ opposition.[13]
- The rhetorical means include *suggestive questions* (e.g., 2 Cor 11:7; Gal 4:9; 1 Cor 5:6; 6:2–3, 5, 15–16; 9:4–13; 11:22) and direct[14] or indirect[15] *accusa-*

12. E.g., 1 Cor 6:12; 8:1; Gal 6:12–13; 1 Thess 5:3. The opponents "enslave" the Corinthians, "strike them in the face," "devour" (like a snake; see 11:3), "take over" and "magnify themselves" (11:20; cf. 2:17). This kind of polemic does not give much information about the opponents' views and actions, even if we interpret "devour" as "devour your assets," which was an often used metonymy, according to Quintilian, *Institutio* 8.6.25.

13. E.g., 2 Cor 11:14–15, 23 (Satan-Christ); 6:15; cf. also, e.g., 6:14b; 2:15–16. According to anthropological research, labeling as witches (Paul: "servants of Satan") often occurs in groups guided by dualistic views. An individual's misdeeds are put into a cosmic context; they are perceived as so bad that the Prince of Evil himself is seen behind them (Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 114).

14. E.g., 2 Cor 5:12: Their façade only looks good, not their heart. Or 6:12: Your heart is narrow.

15. An author can indirectly accuse his enemies by assuring that he himself avoids doing shameful things that he tacitly insinuates are done by the opponents. See 2 Cor 10:15,16b ("we proclaim . . . without boasting of work already done in someone else's sphere of action"); 2:17 ("we are not peddlers of God's word—like so many"); 4:2; 3:1.

tions. Other instruments are *irony*[16] or humorously distorting *parody* of the opponents' self-image: the intruders in Corinth seem to have presented themselves as apostles inspired by God's powerful Spirit. Paul, however, repeatedly ridiculed them ironically as "super apostles."[17] Paul himself not only coined the terms ψευδαπόστολος, ψευδάδελφος, and εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον, but also the adverb ὑπερλίαν ("super") for the first time in the Greek language by merging ὑπέρ ("over") and λίαν ("very much"). Οἱ ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι are "the beyond-excess" or "beyond-measure apostles."[18] Paul must have had a wily smile on his lips when he made up this word. Maybe he particularly had the opponents' charismatic experiences in mind, of which they boasted so much that he felt pushed to mention his own ecstatic experiences as well (cf. 12:1–7, 11–13; 5:12; 13:3). Later authors reading the New Testament gladly picked up this new word for their own writings.[19]

Paul used numerous *sarcasms*[20] of this caliber (e.g., Gal 5:12[21]) to *shame* the intruders in Corinth (2 Cor 11:13–15; 10:12; 12:11) and also not sparing the Corinthians themselves.

Sarcastic Shaming of the Intruders

(a) 2 Cor 10:12a: "We do not dare to . . . compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves." According to Quintilian (*Inst.* 11.1.15–17, 21–22), self-praise evokes hatred, ridicule, and disapproval in other people. "Let us therefore leave it to others to praise us." In uncoded text, Paul would be saying: I do not dare to compare myself to contemptible persons. (b) In 2 Cor 10:12b, in addition, Paul ridicules the intruders for measuring themselves by reference to themselves, which only fools do.[22] (c) 2 Cor 12:11b: "I was not at all inferior to the super-apostles, even though I am nothing." If a "nothing" is not "inferior" to something else, then the something, even the "super-something," is nothing itself! In a similar way, Cicero insults Catilina's men as good-for-nothing (*Against Catilina* 2.11: *nequitia*).

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16. Saying the opposite of what one really means (Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.15). See, e.g., the fool's speech in 2 Cor 11:(5–12), 17–12:13: Paul's strength is not based in his own qualities—as the fool says—but in God's power.

17. 2 Cor 11:5; 12:11. The expression frames the fool's speech, creating an *inclusio*.

18. The adverb is put into an attributive position, thus qualifying as attribute.

19. E.g., Athanasius, *Orationes tres contra Arianos* 26.376.3; John Chrysostom, *In epistulam ad Ephesios* 62.46.56.—The same is true for Paul's newly created word ψευδαπόστολος, which is happily picked up by later authors, e.g., by Justin, *Dialogue* 35.3.7, and Ps.-Clement, *Homiliae* 16.21.4.2.

20. σαρκάζω = to tear flesh (σάρξ) like dogs.

21. Cf. a similar joke in Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.12.21: The castrated Cybele priests have no weapons in their hands, only tambourines.

22. Paul here counterattacks the intruders' accusation against him that he only commended himself without having letters of recommendation by others (cf. 2:17c-3:6). Attack is a good defense, he seems to think (10:12b).

Sarcastic Shaming of the Corinthians

(a) In 2 Cor 12:16, the term "*over*load" (καταβαρέω) sarcastically exaggerates: Paul did not overload the Corinthians, because he did not take *anything* from them. (b) In 2 Cor 11:19–20, Paul formulates in a sarcastic tone: "you gladly put up with fools [i.e. the intruders, v.18], although you are wise yourselves [so you think (cf. 1 Corinthians 1–3, esp. 3:18), but in reality you are fools], because you accept when someone enslaves you, devours [your assets], takes over, magnifies himself, strikes you in the face." And in 11:21, he adds the ironic-sarcastic comment: "To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!"[23] (c) 11:1b also needs to be interpreted as a sarcastic remark: Paul is confident that the Corinthians will tolerate his foolishness (of self-praise), because (vv. 2–4) they happily also accept that the Satanic snake lures them away from "integrity," "sincerity" and the true "gospel." In other words, they happily will accept Paul's foolishness, because they are open to all kinds of stupidity, thus being fools themselves. (d) 11:16c stands parallel to 11:1b: "let no one think me foolish; *but if you do* [which is likely, because you yourselves are fools], accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little." (e) 11:7–11: The apostle humbled himself by "stripping [συλάω exaggerates sarcastically] other churches [of their money] and accepting support from them in order to serve you. And when I was with you and was in need, I did not *burden* anyone, for my needs were supplied by the friends who came from Macedonia. So I refrained and will continue to refrain from *burdening* you in any way." For hospitable Mediterranean people, this "refraining" hurt their pride as hosts. Paul already had to explain his behavior in 1 Corinthians 9; now he rubs new salt in the old wound. The formulation is sarcastic–ironic because it acts as if it were as a favor for the Corinthians that Paul does "not burden" them.[24] In reality, however, the Corinthians *wanted* to be "burdened" in order to keep their honor as hosts. (f) 12:13: "For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!" As in 11:7–11, the terms "burden" and "wrong" are ironic–sarcastic. The Corinthians were indeed "less favored," because Paul did not take any support from them. This shamed their pride as hosts. Paul indeed had a reason to ask forgiveness for shaming his hosts, but his repentance was a joke: He did not really think that his policy of "refraining" from taking Corinthian money was wrong (see 11:9 at the end). In addition to these many instances of his sarcastic shaming, Paul was good at nonsarcastic shaming.

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23. Irony: (a) Of course, it was to Paul's honor that he did not strike and devour. (b) Paul acts as if he had been willing to devour assets and strike, as if only his weakness held him back. In reality, he never wanted to do anything like that. (c) "Too weak" is quick witted, because "Paul is weak" was one of the Corinthians' allegations against him (e.g., 10:1–2, 10–11; 12:10; 13:3–4). Here, his flaw turns out to be a virtuous strength!

24. ἀβαρής. The οὐ κατενάρκησα οὐδενός literally means, "I did not grow totally numb and slothful toward anybody," i.e., "I did not press heavily upon anybody."

Nonsarcastic Shaming of the Corinthians

(a) 12:14–15: Paul shames the Corinthians, who are used to the reciprocal and honor-maintaining *do-ut-des* principle. He emphasizes that he, as a parent, *gives up everything* for the benefit of his Corinthian children *without expecting* any material goods in return (he only hopes for more love: 12:15c). (b) 11:7, 11: "I humbled *myself* so that you might be *exalted*," and I did it out of "*love*" for you. Quintilian comments on court cases of fathers who are intimately connected to their sons, but were hurt by them. They should emphasize their affection for the sons; "the only way to excite indignation against them is the manifestation of the fact that they still love them" (*Inst.* 6.2.14). To manifest love, in this case, means shaming the wrongdoers. (c) 13:7: Paul's goal is "that you may not do wrong; *not* that *we* may appear to have met the test, but that *you* may do what is right, though *we* may seem to have *failed*." Paul, indeed, occasionally claims that he does not care much about what others think about him (1 Cor 4:3–5). Is this uncoded speaking based on his selfless theology of the cross, or mere rhetorical positioning on his part? Even if one takes his claim as not having any irony or sarcasm in it, it is shaming nevertheless. (d) 13:9: "We are glad when *we* are weak and *you* are strong." This is not sarcastic either, because Paul indeed considers it a virtue for him to be "weak" so that Christ can be strong in him. He honestly also wants the Corinthians to flourish. On the other hand, when Christ is strong in him, he *is* strong; when the Corinthians think they are strong because of their own qualities, then *they* are weak. This dialectic is tacitly implied in 13:9, which adds an ironical touch to the sentence, without making it sarcastic. (e) 4:10, 12, 15: Because *we* "carry in the body Jesus' death," "*death* is at work *in us*, but *life* in *you*." "All [is done and happens] for *your* sake." Could Paul push the guilt button any harder?

All of these Pauline remarks, most of them antithetically formulated, try to oblige the Corinthians to settle the conflict in favor of the apostle. Similar formulations by Cicero want to oblige the audience in the same way: "Don't think about *my* rescue, only about *you* and *your* children. If in my consulate *I* need to suffer all . . . pains, I will . . . gladly endure them, as long as *you* . . . gain honor and rescue through *my* labors."[25] "I myself have . . . endured a lot and I have healed a lot through my pain, while you were in fear only."[26] "*I* snatched *you* . . . from the worst massacre . . . , whatever destiny is waiting for *me alone*, it should be endured."[27] "Think about *yourselves*, . . . save *yourselves*, but stop sparing *me* and thinking about *me*. . . . If anything happens, *I* will die in a calm and collected way . . . that they all are saved together with *you*, even if some kind of force should oppress *me*."[28] "The well-being of the *society*

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25. *Against Catil.* 4.1: *Obliti salutis meae de vobis ac de vestres liberis cogitate. Mihi si haec condicio consulatus data est, ut omnes acerbitates, omnes dolores cruciatusque perferrem, feram non solum fortiter, verum etiam libenter, dum modo meis laboribus vobis populoque Romano dignitas salusque pariatur.*

26. 4.2: *Multa pertuli, multa concessi, multa meo quodam dolore in vestro timore sanavi.*

27. 4.2: *. . . ut vos populumque Romanum ex caede miserrima . . . eriperem, quaecumque mihi uni proponetur fortuna, subeatur.*

28. 4.3: *Consulite vobis . . . conservate vos . . . mihi parcere ac de me cogitare desinite . . . si quid obtigerit, aequo animo paratoque moriar . . . uti salvi sint vobiscum omnes, etiamsi me vis aliqua oppresserit.*

should overrule the concern for the dangers that threaten *my* person."[29] I "saved all this by taking over the danger all by myself."[30] Cicero is the subject of this sentence—not a Christ figure! An audience that feels a little guilty and obliged toward the orator is easier to steer; they are ready to comply with the speaker's wishes. Paul knew this as well as Cicero.

(f) In 2 Corinthians 8–9, Paul's fundraising project is set up in a way that the Corinthians will lose face in front of the Macedonians and of the two delegates of the churches if they do not donate abundantly: 9:2–4 (καταισχύνω!). (g) Finally, consider 8:7: Because the Corinthians excel in "faith and speech and knowledge," as they claim, they would lose face if they did not "excel in this gracious work also."

II. Is Aggressive Language Violent?

Is all of this violence? Is it abusive? The sarcasm might be entertaining, even for those who are addressed. But are the invectives of 11:13–15 violent (witchcraft accusation: "Satan's servants, disguised as apostles")? We will try to assess the insults against the intruders first. Quintilian calls coarse abuse (*inhumane convicior*) a rhetorical mistake (*vitium*).[31] We definitely do not want this debating style to be taught to our children in school. The children, however, read it in the Bible! Legal texts may assist us in finding out whether or not such invectives were perceived as violent in antiquity.

The word *iniuria* had the general sense of offense[32] or the specific sense of insulting the honor of another person.[33] The latter sense is differentiated again. In the late third century C.E., Pseudo-Paulus states: "We suffer *iniuria* either inside or outside the physical body . . . outside the physical body through public invectives (*conviciis*) and *libelli famosi*."[34] Physical violence and verbal insults thus were perceived as being

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29. 4.9: . . . *meorum periculorum rationes utilitas rei publicae vincat.*

30. 4.23: [Cicero] *qui haec omnia suo solius periculo conservarit.*—Other passages in the same speeches run along the exact same line. 2.15: *est* mihi *tanti . . . huius invidiae falsae atque iniquae tempestatem subire, dum modo a* vobis *huius horribilis belli ac nefarii periculum depellatur*; 4.18: *non ad vitam* suam, *sed ad salutem* vestram; 4.19: *habetis ducem memorem* vestri, *oblitum* sui, *quae non semper facultas datur.*

31. *Inst.* 3.8.69. And *convicium* (revilement) makes the speaker disliked (6.2.16). On the other hand, Quintilian in 6.3.28, at least sometimes (*nonnumquam*), permits abusing the opponent in a court setting on the forum, without, however, specifying the *nonnumquam*. He only repeats that the insult, like a boomerang, might shame the abusing speaker more than the opponent.

32. "*In*iuria is called everything that is *not* done according to the law," *iniuria dicitur omne quod non iure fit* (Justinian, *Institutes* 4.4. pr.).

33. Justinian, *Institutes* 4.4. pr. (*contumelia*, disdain and disrespect for another person); *Digesta* 47.10; *Codex Justinianus* 9.35; M. Kaser, *Das Römische Privatrecht,* I (Munich: Beck, 1955), 21–22, 139–40, 520–22.

34. (a) *Sententiae* 5.4.1, p. 185 ed. Liebs [1993]. See also 5.4.16, p. 187 (the dignity of a person is insulted by a slanderous song, *canticum*, sung in public; also this is an *iniuria*); Justinian, *Institutes* 4.4.1 (*iniuria* as public verbal invectives, *convicium,* or as a slanderous writing or poem, *ad infamiam alicuius libellum aut carmen*); *Codex Justinianus* 9.35.5 (*convicium* as something *iniuriosum*; 290 C.E.); 9.35.9–10 (it is already *iniuria* to call a free person a slave; 294 C.E.). (b) *Iniuria* as violence toward the body, on the other hand, is reflected in, e.g., Justinian, *Institutes* 4.4.1, 6–9, 11; Ulpian ("if someone hits or wounds

comparable. Slanderous words and broken bones were put side by side (*Lege duodecim tabularum de famosis carminibus, membris ruptis et ossibus fractis).*[35]

The comparability is also demonstrated by Quintilian. An orator often needs "to make ills, which are usually regarded as tolerable, seem unendurable, as for instance when we represent insulting words as inflicting *more* grievous injury that an actual blow" (*Inst.* 6.2.23). If we take out the rhetorical amplification, we learn that verbal insults are either *as bad as* a grievous physical injury or *less bad.* In any case, they were compared to physical violence. The same is true for Seneca's probably exaggerated remark that slaves hated verbal abuse more than beatings (*De constantia sapientis* 5.1); at least, they considered them as equally bad.

The very fact that both physical beatings and verbal insults could be lumped together under one term (*iniuria*) speaks volumes. Only later did the European languages differentiate. In English, the Latin term *inuiria* became *injury*, while the German *Injurie* exclusively focuses on verbal abuse.

In imperial Rome, the *libelli famosi* were defamatory pieces of writing, published mostly anonymously in political battle, often insulting the emperor, but also used in personal quarrels. Those who composed and spread them were threatened by punishments, which became more and more severe over time. By the third century C.E.,[36] the authors were not allowed to witness in court anymore, according to Ulpian, or they were deported to islands.[37] In the fourth century, they were threatened by capital punishment; whoever got hold of such a piece of paper needed to destroy or burn it right away (*Codex Justinianus* 9.36.1–2 [365 C.E.]). According to Ulpian, free persons and slaves were rewarded for reporting an author of a defamatory paper.[38]

Luckily, Paul did not put personal names beside the invectives of 2 Corinthians 10–13, and fortunately no Roman judge would have had an idea what "servants of Satan" and "disguised apostles of Christ" meant.[39] Otherwise, the Corinthian intruders could have been tempted to sue Paul! I am not saying that 2 Corinthians 10–13 was a *libellus famosus.* The legal texts only show that invectives in general were considered dangerous and hurtful; they not only hurt individuals, but also harmed the

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another person in the theater or on the forum, he commits a terrible *iniuria*," *si in theatro vel in foro caedit et vulnerat . . . atrocem iniuriam facit; Dig.* 47.10.9 [Ulpian, 57 ad edictum]); Ps.-Paulus, *Sent.* 5.4.1, p. 185 (blows and rape: *verberibus et illatione stupri*).

35. Ps.-Paulus, *Sent.* 5.4.6, p. 186. The formulation appears under the heading of *De inuriis.* In the *acta* of the *curia Iovis* from Simitthu, CIL VIII 14683, the offenses of *maledicere* and physical violence are also set side by side.

36. *Dig.* 47.10.5 (Ulpian, 56 ad edictum; first quarter of the third century): *intestabilis.*

37. At the end of the third century, Ps.-Paulus, *Sent.* 5.4.15, p. 187 (because of a *carmen famosum* or similar *cantica*); cf. 5.4.11, p. 186 (because of *calumnia*, slander); 5.4.17, p. 187.

38. *Dig.* 47.10.5 (Ulpian, 56 ad edictum); see also *Codex Justinianus* 9.36.2.1 (365 C.E.); 9.35.3 (denunciation of *iniuria* is encouraged; 239 C.E.).

39. The Jewish language background of these verbal aggressions is illuminated not only by Matthew 12 or Jer 33:8, but also, e.g., by Qumran's Hodayot 1QH XII 7, 10–14, 16–17, 20,22–23 (anonymity of the enemies, prophets of falsehood, agents of Belial, twisting the Torah). For violence and apocalypticism, see P. Lampe, "La littérature apocalyptique: un Dieu violent et un ethos orienté vers la violence?" in *Dieu est-il violent? La violence dans les représentations de Dieu,* ed. M. Arnold and J.-M. Prieur (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires, 2005), 31–48.

common good (*publica utilitas*) (*Dig.* 47.10.5 [Ulpian, 56 ad edictum]). In other words, reviling was no trifle; the power of words was feared.[40] Λοιδορεῖν (abusing, reviling) can even drive ghosts away, Philostratus narrates (*Vit. Apol.* 2.4). This remark, as strange as it might sound today, shows that at least some people attributed magic power to abusive words, not only when they were formulated as curses. The Roman epic writer Lucanus, a contemporary of Paul's, tells a story about the magic power of insulting: In a magically compelling prayer, the female magician Erictho adjured the underworld beings to give away their secrets by insulting the lord of the underworld as "the worst arbitrator of the world" (*pessime mundi arbiter*).[41] Abusive verses chanted at generals during triumphs or at newlyweds on their wedding night were meant to have apotropaic power.[42] Yes, invectives were considered violent, no matter whether they were perceived as magically loaded or not. They were regarded as violent—and dangerous.

Violence in antiquity, however, was understood a little differently than today. Today, in an individualistic way, we primarily focus on the individuals' physical or psychological pains that they suffer when they are victimized by physical or verbal abuse. In antiquity, of course, the gravity of a physically violent act was also assessed according to the severity of the injury: Was it a wound or just a bruise from a beating with a stick (*si quis ab aliquo vulneratus fuerit vel fustibus caesus*)?[43] An even more important criterion, however, was whether or not a physically or verbally violent act was done in public, as the legal texts show,[44] and even where it was done in public. Especially bad was a crowded place like the theater and the forum[45] (or a public gathering of assembled believers where Paul wanted his letter to be read). This means the most hurtful part in a physically or verbally violent act was losing face! *To be shamed was the worst part.*

At stake is the issue of honor and shame, which can also be seen from the fact that (a) the punishment for insulting (*obprobrium aut quid contumeliose dicere*) became more severe if the abused person was of elevated social rank.[46] (b) Complementarily, the lower the social rank of the insulting subject, the smaller was the shame and any associated punishment was reduced. Usually, children, slaves and other low-class buffoons got away with insulting social superiors. Their verbal abuse was perceived

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40. See also 2 Cor 12:20: Paul himself is in fear (φοβοῦμαι) of καταλαλία and ψιθυρισμοί—which, however, does not hold him back from actively slandering in 11:13–15.

41. The lord of the underworld seems to be the god of the dead; Lucanus 6.742–743. See also the *Law of the Twelve Tablets*, 8.1a, where *malum carmen incantare* probably means magic spells, not just simple reviling.

42. Cf. L. Bonfante, "Roman Triumphs and Etruscan Kings: The Changing Face of the Triumph," *JRS* 60 (1970): 65; S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage:* Iusti coniuges *from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 166.

43. E.g., Justinian, *Institutes* 4.4.9. The medical parameters for measuring the gravity of an injury apparently were simple.

44. (a) For physical violence, see, e.g., *Dig.* 47.10.9 (Ulpian, 57 ad edictum); Justinian, *Institutes* 4.4.9. (b) For verbal violence, see the many references to public (*publice*) shaming in the texts quoted above; e.g., Ps.-Paulus, *Sent.* 5.4.16., p. 187. Also, the term *convicium* (revilement) in itself usually implies a larger audience; cf. Kaser, *Privatrecht*, I, 521.

45. E.g., *Dig.* 47.10.9 (Ulpian, 57 ad edictum); Justinian, *Institutes* 4.4.9.

46. E.g., *ILS* 7212, col. ii, 26–28; regulations of the burial club of Diana and Antinous in Lanuvium.

more as entertaining than as hurting the honor of the superior.[47] Verbal abuse did not really do harm as long as no socially equal or higher person was the one insulting. It did hurt, however, when socially higher or equally ranked persons verbally maligned a person,[48] which was considered bad style.[49]

The most hurtful part was not what we today would measure in individualistic medical and psychological terms; it was measured in the sociological category of honor and shame. Now we understand why physical and verbal violence were categorized together in Roman law: They both violated the honor–shame balance. While we focus on the protection of the individual as such,[50] when reflecting about violence, the ancients concentrated more on the protection of the individual's *social relations*.

To sum up, Paul's invectives against the intruders in Corinth (11:13–15; 10:12–15, 16b, 18; 12:11b; cf. 11:3f.) attempted to function as powerful and violent acts of shaming, that is, of ostracizing and socially excluding. In fact, his slanderous unmasking of the intruders as Satan's camouflaged agents was an *exorcism*—not of the intruders, but of the Corinthian congregation. In his view, this church needed to be cleansed from demonic elements.

As far as we can see, after the conflict was over, the intruders' influence faded; they disappeared from the Corinthian stage without being forgiven by Paul. Paul's letter of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 1–8[51] shows that the "unmasking" in 2 Cor-

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47. See, e.g., Seneca, *De constantia sapientis* 11.3 (children's foul talking cannot really insult a wise person; and the more contemptible any slave is, the more loose tongued can he be). See further J. H. D'Arms, "Slaves at Roman *convivia*," esp. 172–75; J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour*, 96; M. Peachin, "Friendship and Abuse," esp. 138–39.

48. Cf., e.g., Seneca, *De constantia sapientis* 5.1.

49. Cf., e.g., Gellius, *NA* 7.11.1; *P. Oxy.* XII 1406 (edict of Caracalla).

50. Honor/shame is only one of our many categories of psychological pain inflicted by violence.

51. Unfortunately, we cannot avoid using the source-critical knife in 2 Corinthians, because the different text blocks reflect different situations and significantly change in style. There is no room to elaborate on this subject here. I see a chronology of three letters that later were compiled into what we call "2 Corinthians." Chronology: (a) Intruders in Corinth and accusations against Paul. (b) The unsuccessful second visit. (c) *An apology written "with tears,"* at least partly preserved in chaps. 10–13. (d) The Corinthians change their mind; Titus conveys the good news (cf. 7:5–7). (e) *Letter of reconciliation*, at least partly preserved in chaps. 1–8 (without the un-Pauline verses 6:14–7:1 and with verses 2:12–13 originally standing between 7:4 and 7:5. With this little relocation, the transitions between the different passages of this letter become much smoother. The γάρ in 7:5 is equivalent to δέ, as in 10:12; 11:5 [*v.l.* δέ]; 1 Cor 10:1; Gal 1:11 [*v.l.* δέ]; 5:13 and Rom 1:18; 2:25; 5:7; 12:3; 14:5; cf. the grammarian Trypho Alex., Fragm. 54, ed. v. Velsen, about this occasional equation). 2 Corinthians 2:3–4, 9; 7:8–12 look *back* at chaps. 10–13, and the πάλιν in 3:1; 5:12 refers *back* to the boasting in the fool's speech of chaps. 10–13. The πεφανερῶσθαι (perfect tense) at the end of 5:11 looks *back* at the Corinthians' change of mind (see above in d), which, as Paul hopes, continues in the present (therefore the perfect tense). According to 5:12c, the intruders are still in town, but their influence has faded. This letter is much more moderate in tone than the letter "written with tears" (2 Corinthians 10–13). Its own apologetic parts try to cement (see 5:11c!) the Corinthians' change of mind. (f) A *third letter*, which (like ch. 8 in the letter of reconciliation) tries to rekindle the collection and at least partly is preserved in ch. 9. For the history of research, see recently, e.g., E.-M. Becker, *Schreiben und Verstehen: Paulinische Briefhermeneutik im Zweiten Korintherbrief,* Neutestamentliche Entwürfe zur Theologie 4 (Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 2002), 3–19. Her own solution (pp. 95–100), however, is not very convincing (e.g., the aorist in 2:3–4 is not taken seriously, which is unwise in light of the aorists in 7:8–9 and of the present tense in 1:13a. For 3:1; 5:12, which look *back* at 10–13, see above).

inthians 10–13 took away the power that they had exercised over the Corinthians. If words such as those in chapters 10–13 can force rivals to surrender, then words are violent.

The conviction of Satanic possession became a standard insult of heretics in the early church, classically formulated by Cyprianus and imitated by many followers,[52] among them European and even early-American witch hunters of post-Reformation times.

III. Aggressive Language: a Hermeneutical Approach

Was Paul an aggressive Mediterranean hothead, unworthy of "Christ's meekness and gentleness" (2 Cor 10:1)? What, if anything, can be said in his defense?

(a) Paul's invectives were *reactive* aggression not only to hurting insults that he had been confronted with during his second visit in Corinth, but also to the disparagements of his apostleship by rivals who tried to snatch the Corinthian congregation from his influence. He attacked to *defend* himself, reasserting his threatened authority. Undoubtedly,[53] he would have subscribed to Quintilian's observation that "humanity [*humanitas*] takes over as soon as rivalry [*aemulatio*][54] disappears" (*Inst.* 11.1.16).

In an additional way, Paul's aggression was *reactive* insofar as he was spurred by his opponents to use strong words. They blamed him for being weak, meek, and contemptible and therefore lacking any power bestowed by Christ (10:1–5, 7, 10–11, 14–15; 11:5–6, 21, 30; 12:1, 5, 7, 9–10, 12; 13:2–5, 9–10; 4:7–12; 6:5, 8–10; 1:11–12; cf. 11:1, 16). He was pushed to show that he too could speak out forcefully.

Is all of this an "excuse"? Maybe it is because Paul knew very well how to suffer violence *without* hitting back. He even mentioned this nonaggressive reaction to experienced violence several times in 2 Corinthians when enumerating his apostolic afflictions (4:8–16; 6:5, 8–9; 7:5; 11:23–27, 32; 12:10). Only now that his authority in his own congregation had faded and his gospel, a theology of the cross, was about to be rejected (11:4; 6:1) did his patience run out. His response was fueled by desperation.

(b) Interestingly enough, Paul himself felt uneasy about being aggressive in 2 Corinthians. Talking aggressively was not his normal style. At the end of the letter written "with tears," he rationalized: "I write these things while I am away from you, so that when I come, I may not have to be severe in using the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down" (13:10; cf. 10:8). Later, in the letter of reconciliation, he clearly spells out the *constructive* effect of the strong words in the letter written "with tears"; it almost sounds like an excuse:

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52. See, e.g., Cyprianus, *De Ecclesiae Unitate* 3 (*[diabolus] rapuit de ipsa ecclesia homines . . .*); 17; *Sententiae Episcoporum* 1 (*antistes diaboli*); etc.

53. See section (b) below.

54. For the rivalry between Paul and the intruders, see 10:12; 11:12 and the entire speech of the fool (11:[5–12]17–33; 12:1–13).

> Even if I grieved you with my letter, I do not regret it. . . . I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved *into repenting*; for you felt a *godly grief*, so that you suffered *no loss* through us. For godly grief produces a *repentance* that leads to *salvation* and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. See what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves. . . . So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, nor on account of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your zeal for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God (7:8–12; cf. 2:4).[55]

By claiming that his verbal aggression was *constructive* and assuring that he does not regret it, he indirectly shows that he felt uneasy about having used these strong words before (cf. also 10:9). Paul knew perfectly well that human gentleness and forgiving should correspond to "Christ's meekness" (10:1; 2:7, 10), not verbal warfare. "Peace" and "love" therefore are key words in 13:11; 2:8, and "reconciliation" in 5:18–20.

(c) Paul's emphasis on the constructive nature of his harsh criticism of the Corinthians needs to be explored in yet another direction. It shows that the slandering words directed against the intruders and the sometimes sarcastic, ironic, and shaming remarks addressed to the Corinthians differ in quality.

Paul scorns and shames the intruders publicly in the Corinthian church assembly and, as we have seen, does not even consider them worthy of being addressed in the second person. In his eyes, hope is lost with these opponents; they are and should remain nothing but outsiders and deserve nothing but devastating critique.

The harsh words directed to the Corinthians, however, attempt to be the frank speech (*parrēsia*) between insiders, between friends.[56] This kind of frank speech, far from being mean spirited, wants to be constructive, "beneficial," and "useful" (ὠφέλεια), as Plutarch calls it,[57] by altering the behavior and attitude of people close to the speaker's heart; hope for them is not lost (cf., e.g., 2 Cor 13:9b, 11–13). Accord-

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55. Paul even considers the apostolic tearing down of 10:3–5 constructive, since it gives room for "knowing God" and "obeying Christ." And in 1:15, he expects his pain-causing and severe actions (cf. 13:2–3; 2:1–2) during his next visit to be a "grace."

56. Cf. 2 Cor 7:8–12 in section (b) above and 2 Cor 7:4; 3:12; 6:11. For frank speech between friends, as discussed esp. by Philodemus and Plutarch, see the excellent articles by P. Sampley, "Paul and Frank Speech," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. P. Sampley (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), 293–318; idem, "Paul's Frank Speech with the Galatians and the Corinthians," in *Philodemus and the New Testament World*, ed. J. T. Fitzgerald, D. Obbink, and G. S. Holland, NTSup 111 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 295–321. Cf. Plutarch, *How to Tell the Difference between a Flatterer and a Friend*, 51C: *parrēsia* is "the language of friendship." Further cf. Cicero, *Amicitia*, 88–100; Maximus of Tyre, *Orationes*, 14; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.*, 77/78.38; 33.9; Philo, *Her.*, 19; Julian, *Or.*, 6.201A-C. In the first century C.E., the concept of friendship did not exclusively involve equals anymore, as it did prior to the Common Era. The relationship between friends could be asymmetrical between people of unequal status, as between Paul and the Corinthians: On the one hand, they were equal in their relation to Christ (see, e.g., Gal 3:28); on the other hand, he was their apostolic "father" who founded their church and as such felt responsible for them (e.g., 2 Cor 11:2; 12:14b). For asymmetrical friendship between unequal persons, see D. Konstan, "Friendship, Frankness and Flattery," in *Friendship, Flattery and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World*, ed. J. T. Fitzgerald (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 8–9.

57. Plutarch, *How to Tell the Difference*, 51C; 55B; 59D; 63B; 64C; see also Philodemus, *On Frank*

ing to the first-century C.E. rhetorician and philosopher Philodemus (*On Frank Criticism*, col. XIXb), it is the job of a true friend to exercise *parrēsia.* And Plutarch (*How to Tell the Difference*, 73D) confirms that friends watch each other closely both "when they go wrong" and "when they are right." According to him, it is difficult to find a good friend who is "frank with us" and "blames us when our conduct is bad"; "there are but few among many who have the courage to show frankness rather than favor to their friends."[58] The frank words can range from simple and harsh rebukes (σκληρός, πικρός, σφοδρός) to criticism mixed (μικτός) with various degrees of praise, to "the gentlest of stings."[59] Flattery (Plutarch, *How to Tell the Difference*, 59C), on the one hand, and shaming insult and abuse (λοιδορία), contemptuous, "acrimonious and inexorable,"[60] on the other, are, however, situated beyond the two extreme ends of this scale, no longer belonging to frank speech between friends.[61]

While Paul's shaming and insulting remarks about the intruders are located outside the friendly scale, his frank remarks to the Corinthians are at the harsh and severe end of the scale. The entire letter lacks any elements of praise. Paul therefore was anxious about its reception in Corinth (cf. 2 Cor 7:5–7). In my opinion,[62] the frank remarks to the Corinthians risk moving even beyond the zone of speech between *friends*, becoming insulting (λοιδορία), because they infringe on the strict rules that Plutarch and Philodemus impose on frank speech between friends. According to these philosophers, when people are speaking harshly to a friend they should not pursue self-interests (Plutarch, *How to Tell the Difference*, 71D) or try to boost their reputation (Plutarch, *How to Tell the Difference*, 52B; Philodemus, *On Frank Criticism*, col. XXIIIb); neither should their frank speech "derive from some hurt that has been received" (Plutarch, *How to Tell the Difference*, 66E–67A) nor should it be done "out of envy" (Philodemus, col. XXIIIa) or in anger (Philodemus, frgs. 2, 12, 38, 70). Paul, however, *does* write out of self-interest, anger, and hurt when he tries to rescue his severely tarnished reputation as a legitimate apostle in 2 Corinthians 10–13. He had been badly insulted and humiliated during his second visit. He even seems to act out of envy because the intruders are about to take over his leadership in Corinth. The intention of his tearful letter was not only to serve the "benefit" (ὠφέλειαν) of the Corinthians, as he claims;[63] for the most part, it attempted to be "beneficial" for himself. Thus, in 2 Corinthians 10–13, Paul falls short of Plutarch's and Philodemus's

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Criticism, frgs. 1, 32; cols. Xb, XVIIb, ed. D. Konstan et al., SBLTT (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); Dio Chrysostom, *Or.*, 32.5, 7, 11.

58. *How to Tell the Difference*, 66A. According to Plutarch, it is the duty of a friend to accept the odium that could come from frank criticism: 73A; cf. 56A. For the connection of *parrēsia* and genuine friendship, at least since Aristotle, see further A. Fürst, *Streit unter Freunden: Ideal und Realität in der Freundschaftslehre der Antike* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1996), 133–34.

59. Philodemus, *On Frank Criticism*, frgs. 7; 58; 60; col. VIIIb; Plutarch, *How to Tell the Difference*, 69E; 72C. As examples, cf. 2 Cor 6:13; 7:2, in the letter of reconciliation.

60. It "seeks for glory in other men's faults, and to make a fair show before spectators;" Plutarch, *How to Tell the Difference*, 59D; 71A; Philodemus, *On Frank Speech*, frg. 60.

61. See the helpful graphic illustration in Sampley, "Paul and Frank Speech," 296.

62. Contrary to Sampley's assessment of Paul's frank speech in 2 Corinthians 10–13 (Sampley, "Paul and Frank Speech," 304–9).

63. See section (b) above.

strict criteria of frank speech between friends.[64] Nonetheless, his self-understanding was that he did not want to devastate but to build up the Corinthians when speaking severely to them; in his own perspective, his letter *was* "beneficial" for the Corinthians, he assures.[65]

This Pauline self-conception needs to be taken into consideration when we try to assess the violence in Paul's harsh words against the Corinthians on the one hand and against the intruders on the other. Maybe not for people like Plutarch and Philodemus, but at least for Paul himself, there *was* a difference in the level of criticism of the two groups. Therefore, at least in Paul's perspective, the Corinthians should have considered the harsh words addressed to them as less violent. They were fired out of love (2 Cor 2:4).

The readers' response and author's intention, however, are two different things. What if the Corinthians were familiar with the strict standards for frank speech between friends that authors such as Plutarch and Philodemus noted? Then they could have understood parts of 2 Corinthians 10–13 as destructive insult and no longer as constructive frank speech between friends. Then they might have feared having lost a friend. In any case, 2 Cor 10–13, the letter "written with tears,"[66] saddened them (2 Cor 7:8–9).[67] Otherwise, we do not know their exact reactions. But we do have enough clues indicating that this painful letter *did* turn the Corinthians around[68]—despite the fact that Paul's frank words toward the Corinthians border on being insults. After all, the tearful letter included not only severe words to the Corinthians but also the crafty "speech of a fool" that touted those of Paul's qualities that the Corinthians especially valued in an apostle. Maybe this fool's speech in particular impressed the Corinthians and convinced them to realign with Paul. Also Titus, whose mediating role in the conflict should not be underestimated, might have presented the letter very effectively in the Corinthian assembly. We will never know what exactly turned the Corinthians around after they had received the letter of 2 Corinthians 10–13.

It might also have been Paul's *ethos*, of which he reminds the Corinthians in this letter, this time again in line with Plutarch's standards for frank speech between friends.

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64. The apostle himself seems to feel this flaw. Not very convincingly (at least for modern readers), 2 Cor 12:19 assures: No, I am not apologetically pushing my own case, to the contrary, I write all this for your own benefit.

65. Besides 2 Cor 12:19, see section (b) above, where 2 Cor 7:8–12; 10:3–5, 8; 13:10; 1:15; 2:4 are discussed. The constructive nature of his apostolic work in general is furthermore stressed by the inclusion that 10:18 and 13:10 create.

66. See n. 51 above.

67. For this reaction to frank speech, see also Philodemus, *On Frank Criticism*, frg. 61.1; 82.7.

68. See n. 51 above and Rom 15:26, which documents that Paul's collection was successfully completed in Corinth. Romans itself was written in Corinth, where Paul was hosted by Gaius in his house, which was a center of the Corinthian congregation (Rom 16:23). All this would not have happened if the congregation had not realigned with Paul after the tearful letter. Also in the 90s C.E., Paul and his writings were still an authority for the Corinthians, according to *1 Clement* 47.

> Frankness of speech ought to have . . . *ethos*; . . . every man's frank speaking needs to be backed by *ethos*, but this is especially true in the case of those who admonish others and try to bring them to their sober senses. . . . The speech of a man light-minded and mean in *ethos*, when it undertakes to deal in frankness, results only in evoking the retort: Wouldst thou heal others, full of scores thyself (Plutarch, *How to Tell the Difference*, 68C; 71E–F). Frank critics need to correct "their friends precisely as they correct themselves" (72A); in addition, their *ethos* needs to be consistently good (52A).

"*Parrēsia* draws upon a reservoir of goodwill" built up by the consistently virtuous life of the one who speaks frankly.[69] Correspondingly, Paul emphasizes his dependability and the consistency of his behavior (2 Cor 11:12; 12:12; 13:2). He points out that he always has acted as a true and benevolent friend toward them and still does (e.g., 11:2a, 20–21a; 12:12–13a, 17, 19b; 13:8, 10; 10:8), and that he loves them (11:11; 12:15, 19).[70] Such assurances function in a double way. On the one hand, they highlight Paul's virtuous *ethos* in general; on the other, they specifically picture him as a friend to the Corinthians, which helps to abate the impression that he overplayed the harshness of his criticism of the Corinthians by bordering on being insulting to them.

(d) The harsh tearful letter—and this might be another "excuse" for Paul—was the last resort, in the apostle's eyes.[71] Before he used the strong words of chapters 10–13, he in vain had tried to win the Corinthians back in a less violent way.[72] But he had failed, so that a more aggressive writing style seemed to be the only means left.

Cicero formulated in a similar way that aggressive severity can be constructive and therefore the last tool that one sometimes needs to pick up, although meekness in general is of higher value than aggression: "What needs to be cut away, I will not tolerate to keep on, for fear that it ruins the *community*"; the severity serves the common good (*Against Catilina* 2.11: *quae resecanda erunt, non patiar ad perniciem civitatis manere*). "There is no room left for meekness, the matter urges severity" (2.6: *non est iam lenitati locus, severitatem res ipsa flagitat*). "Who is more meek than me? . . . I will be severe and stormy . . . , we will be regarded as merciful, if we act in the toughest way against these [evil] people . . . If we wanted to be more lenient, we necessarily would gain the reputation of the highest cruelty, because the country and the citizens would perish!" (4.11–12; cf. 4.13).

In view of 1 Corinthians 5, especially 5:6–13, we confidently can assume that Paul would have agreed with these remarks by Cicero. Paul held that sometimes people need to be handled harshly if all other methods have failed *and* the com-

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69. Sampley, "Paul and Frank Speech," 297; cf. Plutarch, *How to Tell the Difference*, 73B.

70. Cf. Philodemus, *On Frank Speech*, frg. 14: When a speaker is "vehemently indicating his own annoyance, he will not, as he speaks, forget 'dearest' and 'sweetest' and similar things."

71. For severe frank speech between friends as an ultimate means, see Plutarch, *How to Tell the Difference*, 69E–F.

72. During his second visit in Corinth (cf. 2:1, 5–10; 7:12; 12:21; 13:1–2), Paul had tried in person to settle the conflict between him and the Corinthians in a nonviolent, "weak" way. The attempt failed, so that Paul felt compelled to write the aggressive letter of 2 Corinthians 10–13, which *did* achieve its goal of winning the Corinthians back.

mon good, the Christian congregation, is endangered. Paul saw the danger that the Corinthian church might have received God's grace in vain (6:1) and abandon the right gospel (11:4) if it followed the *theologia gloriae* of the intruders. This theology saw God's power at work solely in charismatic mighty acts and not in human weaknesses. Both factors, his personal authority and the true gospel, were probably fused in Paul's mind, with him, as far as we know, being the only representative of an outspoken *theologia crucis* at his time. In other words, if he lost his influence in Corinth, the Corinthians would neglect the "word of the cross" with all the implications of a Christian cross existence.[73] For Paul, the rejection of his authority and of his *theologia crucis* with it was a situation in which even verbal aggression was allowed in order to shield both. It was a paradoxical situation: A *theologia crucis* that supported an ethos of nonaggressive reactions (4:8–16; 6:5, 8–9; 7:5; 11:23–27, 32; 12:10), an ethos preferred by Paul,[74] was defended in a bold and verbally violent way, because other effective means no longer seemed to be at hand. Did pragmatism overrule theological ideology? Paul did not solve the paradox. He was caught in it.

Nonetheless, as an "excuse" for his violent reaction, the apostle could plead that his Corinthian friends had ventured too close to the cliff, and that he, like any committed friend, screamed a call of warning out to them and slandered and banished those who had led them astray. Contrary to the insults against the intruders, the verbal aggression toward the Corinthians was couched in caring and love.

Is verbal violence the *ultima ratio*? Maybe—as a very last resort, definitely not, according to Paul, as a first choice; and whether or not it is a choice at all for *us* cannot be discussed here.[75] Furthermore, in all hermeneutical attempts we should not forget that verbal violence, streaming from a pen, is not the same as bloodshed flowing down a sword. However, it can lead there, and in church history it did.

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73. For Paul's *theologia crucis* and its various implications, see P. Lampe, *Die Wirklichkeit als Bild: Das Neue Testament als ein Grunddokument abendländischer Kultur im Lichte konstruktivistischer Epistemologie und Wissenssoziologie* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 2006), 88–90, 145–49.

74. See section (b) above.

75. For criteria, see Lampe, *Die Wirklichkeit als Bild,* 167–79, 188–89.