

# Paul's Temporal Thinking: 2 Cor 2.14–7.4 as Paraenetic Autobiography

TROELS ENGBERG-PEDERSEN 

*University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Theology, Department of Biblical Studies  
Karen Blixens Plads 16, DK-2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark. Email: [tep@teol.ku.dk](mailto:tep@teol.ku.dk)*

A precise temporal (and sometimes topographical) scheme is found behind Second Corinthians at three levels: (i) 1–7 (past: Ephesus → Macedonia), 8–9 (present: Macedonia), 10–13 (future: Macedonia → Corinth); (ii) 2.12–7.16 (Troas (2.12–13) → the Hellespont (2.14–7.4) → Macedonia (7.5–16)); (iii) 2.14–7.4. For (i)-(ii), see 1 Thess 1–3 and 2.17–3.10. For (iii), I detail this temporal structure: (a) 3.1–18 → 4.1–6; (b) 4.7–5.10 → 5.11–13; (c) 5.14–6.10 → 6.11–7.4, viz. (a) Paul's initial call and (b) his life in the present and future → his general missionary practice, including to 'you', and (c) his now directly addressing 'you' with strong paraenesis.

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## 1. Introduction

Paul's Second letter to the Corinthians continues to tease its interpreters. In an excellent and authoritative article on the *Korintherbriefe* published in 2002 in the fourth edition of *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Margaret M. Mitchell first listed the various features that speak against the literary unity of the canonical letter and then noted that a 'minority' among scholars continue to accept its unity whereas 'most exegetes' have adopted one of the various partition theories. She herself ended up subscribing to the theory of finding five letters or letter fragments in the canonical letter (and changing their order).<sup>1</sup> By contrast, in his equally excellent commentary from 2010 in the *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, Thomas Schmeller adopted the hypothesis that the canonical letter is a single original letter, but also carefully considered all the problems that have been raised for that hypothesis.<sup>2</sup> One

1 See M. M. Mitchell, 'Korintherbriefe', *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. IV (ed. H. D. Betz *et al.*; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002<sup>4</sup>) 1688–94, at 1689–90.

2 For an excellent overview and discussion, see T. Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther* (2 Kor 1,1–7,4) (EKK VIII/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener/Patmos, 2010) 19–38.

might think that finding itself in such a situation, scholarship has reached an impasse. In fact, many of the problems that have been raised concerning the letter's unity continue to be rehearsed without giving much hope that a solution is within sight.<sup>3</sup> In such a situation, the best methodological position to adopt is one that reflects the advice given by the WHO during the Covid-19 pandemic: read, read, read (the text, that is)!

In this article, I will present a reading of 2 Corinthians that has only partly been offered before. It develops and emphasises the temporal and topographical character of Paul's thinking throughout the letter: both temporal and topographical in the letter as a whole, only temporal in the part of the letter that will be in focus here, 2.14–7.4. First, however, we will consider an altogether different Pauline letter: 1 Thessalonians. The aim is partly to show the extent to which Paul's temporal and topographical thinking is present already there (chapters 1–3), partly to point to a rhetorical trope to be found there that is also utterly relevant to 2 Cor 2.14–7.4 as read within its canonical context.

## 2. Two Central Features of 1 Thessalonians: *paraklēsis* and Temporality

As we know since the work of Abraham Malherbe, 1 Thessalonians is throughout a letter of paraenesis (*paraklēsis*).<sup>4</sup> Not only is Paul doing paraenesis in chapters 4–5: he is also doing it in chapters 1–3, which – as seen from a different perspective – is one big run-up to (and preparation for) chapters 4–5. Within this understanding of the letter as a whole, it is (for our purposes) extremely noteworthy that the way in which Paul does paraenesis in chaps. 1–3 is rooted in a rhetorical trope of temporality. Here are some conclusions on Paul's use of temporality in 1 Thessalonians 1–3:

- (1) In his paraenetic appeal, Paul goes back to 'Time 1' when he was with his addressees to begin with (1.2–2.12).
- (2) As part of this return, he speaks both of what happened to the addressees then (1.2–10) and also about himself (2.1–12).
- (3) He also very specifically speaks about what happened to himself in the period after he had left the congregation and before his writing and sending the letter (2.17–3.10), as it were 'Time 2'.

3 For arguments for and against the unity of 2 Corinthians as a whole, Reimund Bieringer's thorough discussion remains basic: see R. Bieringer and J. Lambrecht, eds., *Studies on 2 Corinthians* (Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum Lovaniensium 92; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994) 1–253.

4 See A. J. Malherbe, 'Exhortation in First Thessalonians', *Novum Testamentum* 25 (1983) 238–56. Also A. J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophical Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

- (4) Here one motif is his longing for them (2.17–20; 3.10). Another motif is his worry about them (3.1–9).
- (5) As part of this, he also tells a *story* about his having sent one of his co-workers, Timothy, his anxious waiting for his return (3.1–5) and his joy when he came back with good news (3.6–9).
- (6) All of this is *conceptualised* under two basic ideas, first that the Thessalonians became ‘imitators’ of Paul (and Christ) at Time 1 (1.2–2.16; cf. 1.6; 2.14), and secondly that the ideal state of the relationship between the Thessalonians and Paul will be when he will visit them again so that they will be together face to face (2.17–18; 3.10).
- (7) In the meantime, ‘we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the Lord’ (3.8). But Paul ends paraenetically, praying to God that they will grow in the proper attitudes until the day of judgement at ‘Time 3’ (3.11–13).

Putting all this together, we can see that Paul reaches his basic, paraenetic aim with the letter by drawing on various types of temporality in an underlying story of what has happened between Time 1 and the writing of the letter. This story has features that are both temporal (‘when I was with you’, ‘after I left’ etc.) and – in close conjunction with the temporal features – topographical (Macedonia and Achaia, 1.7–9; Philippi, 2.2; Athens, 3.1). Paul goes back to Time 1 and incorporates that time and extends it into the period between Time 1 and the writing of the letter, all in order to engage in renewed paraenesis in the present.

That is 1 Thessalonians, the oldest among the genuine Paulines, which may or may not be the first apostolic letter Paul ever wrote. Though utterly coherent and well rounded, it is much simpler than the later letters. Still, the features we have noted are already fully present there: temporality, story-telling and *paraenesis*. Let us now move on to 2 Corinthians, which – as is already clear from the long and coherent 1 Corinthians – belongs at a quite different stage in Paul’s letter writing.

### 3. 2.14–7.4 in Context

It is well known that the position of 2.14–7.4 between 2.12–13 and 7.5–16 is one of the major stumbling blocks for finding unity in the canonical letter. What is the point of this text coming as it does just after Paul has ‘said *farewell* (ἀποταξάμενος) to the people in Troas and *set off* (ἐξήλθον) to Macedonia’ (2.13) and before he has ‘*come* (ἐλθόντων ἡμῶν) to Macedonia’ (7.5)? That has seemed altogether baffling. However, we may note an interesting point of method here: *as* one considers the various problems that have been raised for unity, one may also notice that there are countervailing factors that weigh in on the other side even in relation to the supposed problems themselves. In the present case, it appears that 2.14–7.4 is in fact tied in very carefully at either end with what precedes and follows it. When in 2.14 Paul thanks God for

always leading him in ‘triumphal procession’, he may well be seen to generalise his reference in 2.13 to his having said ‘farewell’ to the people in Troas and having ‘gone on’ to Macedonia. Thus, the motif of travelling appears to bridge the gap between 2.13 and 2.14.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, when in 7.4 he says that he is filled with ‘encouragement’ and overjoyed in all his ‘affliction’, he very clearly anticipates the description that immediately follows in 7.5–7 of his ‘affliction’ and the ‘encouragement’ he experienced with the arrival of Titus (7.6) – which he had been waiting for already in 2.13.<sup>6</sup> It appears, then, that 2.14–7.4 is after all carefully situated within at least 2.12–7.16.

Another reason for taking 2.14–7.4 to be in its proper place relies on understanding the temporal structure of Paul’s thought in the letter as a whole.<sup>7</sup> Chapters 1–7 recount Paul’s movement in the past from Ephesus (1.8–11) via Troas (2.12) to Macedonia (2.13; 7.5), where he is at present; chapters 8–9 speak distinctly from his present stay in Macedonia (8.1–5, 6, 17–18, 22, 24; 9.2, 3–5); and chapters 10–13 look forward in anticipation of his future arrival in Corinth (12.14, 20–13.2, 10) – as it were, *from* Macedonia *to* Corinth. So, the whole letter is tightly structured both temporally and topographically: from Ephesus in the past via Macedonia in the present to Corinth in the future. In fact, Paul has constructed a *story* that takes its starting point in Ephesus, from where he had sent 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 16.8), and then topographically follows his travel via Troas to Macedonia and ends in his prospective visit to Corinth itself. Note also that the story throughout either includes the Corinthians (already in the account of Paul’s experience in Ephesus, cf. 1.11) or

5 For the general meaning of θριμβεύοντι, see Schmeller’s careful discussion, *Der zweite Brief*, 154–9. He does not, however, particularly note the connection between 2.13 and 2.14 with regard to the idea of being on the move.

6 To give but one example of the helpfulness of Schmeller’s commentary, see his comment on this (*Der zweite Brief*, 384): ‘V. 4 bereitet die Wiederaufnahme der Erzählung, die nach 2,13 abgebrochen worden war, in 7,5ff vor. Wegen dieser engen Beziehung zum folgenden Text wird V. 4 manchmal sogar von den VV. 2f getrennt und als Einleitung der Texteinheit 7,4–16 angesehen ... Das ist keine sinnvolle Lösung, denn der Vers hat vor allem abschließenden Charakter: Die Appelle in 6,11–13 und 7,2f laufen hier in einer vorweggenommenen Zuversicht aus, was ihre Erfüllung betrifft ... Diese Zuversicht wird ab V. 5 mit dem Bericht des Titus verknüpft. V. 4 hat also die Funktion einer Brücke ...’ Note that I translate παρακαλεῖν as ‘to encourage’ so that it may cover both Paul’s ‘comfort-encouragement’ as in 2 Corinthians 1 and 7 and his ‘exhortation-encouragement’ as used elsewhere, e.g. at 2 Cor 5.20 and 6.1.

7 I presented the following reading in a paper (unpublished) entitled ‘The Unity of 2 Corinthians as Reflected in the Account of Paul’s and Titus’ Travels Between Ephesus, Macedonia and Corinth’, given at the SBL Annual Meeting in San Francisco in 2011. There I also noted that this reading had already to some extent been hit upon by Philip Edgcumbe Hughes (as I only realised after I had reached it myself). See P. E. Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) xix–xxi.

is explicitly directed at them (very clearly at the end: 13.5–12). What we have, then, is a temporal and topographical story about Paul himself that has a clearly paraenetic aim. What is more, the structural similarity of all this to what we found in 1 Thessalonians 1–3 is very close. In fact, 1 Thessalonians 1–3 may in many respects be seen as a template for the much more elaborate development to be found in 2 Corinthians. When we then consider 2.14–7.4, in particular, we can see that this text, too, is very precisely *temporally and topographically situated*, namely, *between* Troas (2.13–14) and Macedonia (7.5–6), when Paul was *on his way* from one place to the other. Not only is the structure of the letter as a whole conceived in temporal and topographical terms as part of a story about Paul himself: the same apparently also holds for 2.12–7.16.

On such a reading of the position of 2.14–7.4, we should understand this text as providing the content of Paul's reflections *as* he was moving from Troas to Macedonia – on the ship, if you like.<sup>8</sup> Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to get news about the Corinthians (cf. his sending of Timothy in 1 Thess 3.2 and 5 when he could not 'bear it' any longer, 3.1 and 5). He had apparently expected to find Titus in Troas (2.13) with his report from Corinth. When he did not do so, he rushed on towards Macedonia since 'my mind could not rest' (2.13). Even when he arrived there, however, he experienced 'no rest' (7.5). 'But God, who encourages the downcast, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus' with the good news that he was able to report (7.6) – just as Paul had been 'encouraged' (3.7) in 1 Thess 3.6–8 by the return of Timothy with good news about the Thessalonians. The structural similarity between Paul's stories about Timothy in 1 Thessalonians 3 and about Titus in 2 Corinthians 2 and 7 is very close. Only, in the later letter it is embedded in a topographical and temporal story of much grander proportions, one that covers the letter as a whole.

All this sets the scene for posing a question about the structure and content of 2.14–7.4 itself. Here I will argue that Paul conceived this text, too, in very precise temporal terms.<sup>9</sup> Once this is seen, a number of features of 2.14–7.4 fall into place that will yield a clearer understanding of the overall content. I will continue to check my proposed readings against Thomas Schmeller's commentary. That is partly because he carefully

8 I miss a proper appreciation of this point in scholarship in general. However, Margaret M. Mitchell at least notes this of 2 Cor 2.14–7.4: 'This letter has as its dominant motif the *procession*, a *traveling parade* of Christ's ambassador (5.20) *on his way to Corinth*.' See M. M. Mitchell, 'The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics', *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict. Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall* (ed. T. J. Burke and J. K. Elliott; Novum Testamentum Supplements 109; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 17–53, at 29–30 (emphasis added). But she should have said this: on his way from Troas to Macedonia.

9 This again, I believe, has not been seen before, not even by myself in *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 198–205. There I was concerned with the role of the *pneuma* in 2.14–7.4. That point is highly relevant to the interpretation of the whole passage that I will give here. But the *temporal* structure of the passage eluded me then.

considers all the points that speak both for and against the unity of the canonical letter and very judiciously sifts their argumentative value, partly because he also rightly focuses on the precise structure of Paul's *argument* throughout the letter.

#### 4. The Overall Theme of 2.14–7.4<sup>10</sup>

It is reasonably clear and undisputed that 2.14–17 presents Paul's overall theme in the whole of 2.14–7.4: a question and a brief indication of the answer.<sup>11</sup> The question is: who is 'competent' (ικανός) to preach the gospel (2.16)? And the answer is (2.17): Paul – because he speaks (λαλεῖν) the word (λόγος) of God as from *sincerity* (ἐξ εὐκρινείας).

However, this is in fact only half of Paul's theme. The other half, which is already implicit in what he says in 2.17 about his *speaking* (λαλεῖν), namely, that he is *addressing* some *other* people, is this: that his reflections on the first half of the theme (his own competence) are in fact directed to a distinct group of people, namely, the Corinthians. Paul is *not* just reflecting on his own 'competence' (ικανότης, 3.5–6; cf. 2.16) in a general sense. He is doing it with respect to – and throughout 2.14–7.4 constantly as directed *at* – the Corinthians. This part of Paul's theme is directly taken up in 3.1–3, where he also introduces the issue of his 'self-recommendation', viz. towards the Corinthians. The motif of self-recommendation comes up in 2.14–7.4 at the following places: 3.1; 4.2; 5.12; 6.4. The directness towards the Corinthians is explicit at the following places: 3.1–3; 4.5, 12 + 13–15 (including 4.15: τὰ γὰρ πάντα δι' ὑμᾶς!);<sup>12</sup> 5.11–13, 20; 6.1, 11–13, 14; 7.1–4. These connections evidently help to keep the whole text closely together. In addition, the fact that whatever Paul says of himself is constantly directed at the Corinthians indicates that it is not altogether adequate to designate this text as Paul's 'apology'.<sup>13</sup> As we shall see, the 'forward' direction of Paul's argument fits much better with seeing the whole text as basically a piece of *paraklēsis*.<sup>14</sup>

In short, Paul is reflecting on his own competence, suggesting that it consists in his sincerity 'as coming from God (and) facing God' (2.17),<sup>15</sup> and constantly directing his account of his own competence to the Corinthians for paraenetic purposes.

10 This and the next section basically recapitulate what I have stated elsewhere in a FS essay to be published in 2022.

11 For the identification of 2.14–17 as the beginning of our text, see Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 152.

12 'For everything is for your sake.'

13 Thus Schmeller *passim* together with many others.

14 Similarly, chapters 10–13 are not primarily a self-defence, but a piece of *paraklēsis* that is grounded in a self-defence. The paraenetic character comes out clearly at both beginning (10.1–2) and end (13.5–11).

15 This description of his sincerity matches later developments in the text: for 'coming from God' compare, e.g. 3.4–18; 4.1, 6; 5.5, 18; for 'facing God' compare e.g. 5.15 (Christ, not God) and 5.20.

## 5. The Structure of 2.14–7.4

With this settled, we may consider the exact structure of 2.14–7.4. Schmeller has argued that after the introductory account of Paul's theme in 2.14–17, the text has three parts, 3.1–5.10, 5.11–6.10 and 6.11–7.4. While 3.1–5.10 is entitled *Der herrliche und verborgene Dienst*,<sup>16</sup> 5.11–6.10 is called *Der Dienst der Versöhnung*<sup>17</sup> and 6.11–7.4 *Aufforderung zur Versöhnung*.<sup>18</sup> Schmeller also subdivides 3.1–5.10 into two sections, with the break coming between the end of 4.6 and the start of 4.7. While 3.1–4.6 celebrates *Der herrliche Dienst des neuen Bundes*,<sup>19</sup> 4.7–5.10 develops *Das verborgene neue Leben*.<sup>20</sup>

There is much in this that makes initial sense, and Schmeller's division is also adopted by many other scholars. I will argue, however, that if we recall what we said about the overall theme of 2.14–7.4, there is a somewhat different structure that better expresses the underlying line of thought. What we are after here is Paul's *inventio* and *dispositio*.<sup>21</sup> As he went about conceiving the whole letter, he structured it (as we noted above) in temporal terms: first on the time between Ephesus and Macedonia, then on the present time in Macedonia, and after that looking into the future and his arrival in Corinth. Paul's *inventio* takes the same form in his reflection in 2.14–7.4 on his own competence vis-à-vis the Corinthians: first on his own *call* (the ultimate event way back that began it all: Time 1 in Paul's own life) – and its relevance to his missionary practice, especially including his way of addressing the Corinthians; then on his present way of life (Time 2) looking distinctly into the future (Time 3) – and the relevance of either to his missionary practice and way of addressing the Corinthians; and finally, on his relationship *all through* with (a) Christ and (b) God as a preacher of the gospel – and its relevance for his *now* addressing the Corinthians. From the past to the present and the future – to *here and now!*

In terms of chapters and verses, the structure looks as follows:

- 3.1–4.6 Section 1: the call in the past – and its missionary relevance
- 4.7–5.13 Section 2: the present and future way of life – and their missionary relevance
- 5.14–7.4 Section 3: the direct relationship with Christ and God – and its missionary relevance now

16 Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 168 ('the glorious and hidden service').

17 Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 306 ('the ministry of reconciliation').

18 Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 361 ('exhortation to reconciliation').

19 Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 168 ('the glorious ministry for the new covenant').

20 Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 250 ('the hidden new life').

21 For the rhetorical centrality of the *inventio*, see Cicero's *De inventione*. Regarding the two first parts of rhetoric, Cicero says this (1.7.9): 'Invention (*inventio*) is the discovery (*excogitatio*) of valid or seemingly valid arguments (*res verae aut veri similes*) to render one's cause plausible. Arrangement (*dispositio*) is the distribution (*distributio*) of arguments thus discovered (*res inventae*) in the proper order' (my own translation based on the LCL).

With this division, there are three fundamental tasks vis-à-vis the division proposed by Schmeller: to show that 3.1–4.6 draws on Paul’s understanding of his own call; to show that 5.11–13 belongs together with 4.7–5.10; and to show that 6.11–7.4 belongs particularly closely with 5.14–6.10 so as to turn these two passages into a single section. Throughout, it is important to see that what we are trying to imagine is Paul’s *inventio* as he was *conceiving* (and ordering) the line of thought in 2.14–7.4 as a whole, that is, how it was meant to proceed from one topic to the other and why it was meant to proceed in that particular way. To tease the reader, let me put it this way: we must become able to see that 2.14–7.4 as a whole *issues* in Paul’s twice repeated ἰδοὺ νῦν (‘See, now’) in 6.2 and in his *spelling out* this ἰδοὺ νῦν in the manner in which he moves directly from (6.3–)10 into 6.11.

### 5.1 Section 1 (3.1–4.6): Paul’s Call and its Relevance to his Missionary Practice, including ‘You’

In 3.1–3, Paul elegantly argues that he is not at all about to begin recommending himself since there is no need for anything like that in relation to the Corinthians. They *are* his letter of recommendation, a ‘Christ letter’ that has been ‘(ad)ministered’ (διακονηθεῖσα) by him and written on their hearts by means of the *pneuma* of the living God’.

Three things are worthy of note here. We have already seen that Paul brings in the notion of self-recommendation, to which he will keep coming back. Also, the idea that the letter, that the Corinthians are, has been ‘(ad)ministered’ by Paul is important.<sup>22</sup> It points directly forward to the talk in 3.6 of God’s having made Paul *competent* (ικανός) as a *minister* (διάκονος) of a new covenant and to the repeated contrast in 3.7–9 between a ‘ministry (διακονία) of death’ connected with (the Law of) Moses (3.7), which is also a ‘ministry of condemnation (κατάκρισις)’ (3.9), and a new ‘ministry of the *pneuma*’ (3.8), which is also a ‘ministry of justification (δικαιοσύνη)’ (3.9). Finally, the notion of ministry is taken up in 4.1 in a manner that connects 4.1–6 very closely with 3.1–18: ‘Therefore, since we have *this* ministry etc.’

The third noteworthy thing about 3.1–3 is that through its talk of the Corinthians as being themselves a letter of recommendation, it is very precisely heading towards bringing in the notion of God’s *pneuma*, which is explicitly contrasted with something written in ink or on tablets of stone (3.3). Since the latter is a clear reference to the Law of Moses, Paul is already moving towards the contrast he draws in 3.4–18 between the Law of Moses and Christ, where the point is that Paul himself is characterised by possessing the *pneuma* whereas ‘Moses’ is not.

It is this last point that shows what Paul is actually talking about. In 3.4–6, where he takes up the notion of his ‘competence’, he explains it as follows: God

<sup>22</sup> Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 169 sees this and rightly translates διακονηθεῖσα in 3.3 as follows: ‘dem [the letter] unser Dienst gilt’.



has himself made him competent (ικάνωσεν) as a minister of a new covenant, 'not of letter, but of *pneuma*' (3.6). In short – this is what this verse actually means – God has called him<sup>23</sup> as a minister of a new covenant *by giving him his pneuma*. That is why Paul's competence does not consist in his 'having thought something up for himself' (λογίσασθαί τι ὡς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν, 3.5). Instead, his competence is 'from God' (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ). Recall here a central motif in Gal 1.1–17, namely, the contrast between Paul's having whatever he has from some human being (including himself) and his having it directly from God. Moreover, the latter was precisely what his *call* consisted in, according to Gal 1.1 and 1.11–16.

The reference just made to Galatians is not meant to be merely heuristic. Instead, I suggest that Paul is himself directly drawing here on Galatians (which I take to be earlier). That understanding helps us to see what is going on in the rest of 2 Corinthians 3. The reason why Paul opposes himself to Moses may not be found anywhere in the Corinthian situation, as if the Law of Moses had been an issue there.<sup>24</sup> Instead, Paul wanted to spell out *the special character of the call that had turned him into a minister of a new covenant*. It consisted in his having received the *pneuma*, and the contrast between (the Law of) Moses and the *pneuma* is aimed to bring out what is special about the latter.

And what is that? Answer: that it brings *life* (3.6);<sup>25</sup> that it gives liberty of speech (παρρησία, 3.12); that it gives freedom (ἐλευθερία, 3.17);<sup>26</sup> that it enables a person directly to see the glory of Christ and to undergo a metamorphosis into that (3.18).

Why, then, was it important to Paul to bring out the pneumatic character of his call here in 2.14–7.4? 4.1–2 provides the answer. It is because Paul's experience of the call explains why he *administers* his ministry *in a way that directly corresponds to the character of the call itself*. There is nothing hidden, shameful, cunning or false in his preaching. Instead, 'by the open declaration of the truth' he commends himself 'to the conscience of every human being in the sight of God' (4.2). That is the only type of missionary practice that is in complete conformity with Paul's having come to possess the *pneuma* when he was called. That was what has made him competent as a missionary (3.4–18). And that competence has been shown in all his missionary practice, including the one towards the Corinthians (4.1–6).

However, that practice does not always work. If it does not, though, the fault is not Paul's. *If* his gospel is 'hidden' so as not to be accepted by some people, then that is because they themselves belong with 'those who are perishing' (4.3), the 'unbelievers' whose 'minds the god of this world has blinded' (4.4) so that they

23 Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 183 sees that the aorist in ικανώσεν speaks for seeing Paul to be referring to his call. He does not, however, extend this to characterise the whole of 3.1–4.6.

24 Schmeller (e.g. *Der zweite Brief*, 179–80) agrees on this.

25 For this idea compare again Galatians, where Paul claims that the Law could *not* 'generate life' (3.21).

26 Compare again Galatians (5.1, 13).

cannot see Paul's truth. In fact, they literally cannot see (ἀγύοσα) 'the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God' (4.4). What Paul is after here is once more – as in 3.5–6 – to locate his gospel in Christ and God as opposed to himself. In 4.5 he spells this out in relation to Christ, claiming that he does not proclaim 'himself' (ἑαυτοῦς) but 'Jesus Christ as lord' and himself as a slave 'because of Jesus'. And in 4.6 he refers it all back to God, who once said 'Let light shine out of darkness' and who has now 'shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'.

We need to see two points about 4.5–6, in particular. First, in 4.5 Paul not only calls himself a slave because of Jesus, but a slave of *you* (ὑμῶν) because of Jesus. Whereas in 4.1–4 he has described his own missionary activity in relation to *all* people (cf. 4.2), in 4.5 he speaks distinctly of and to the Corinthians. This very clearly shows that all of Paul's general reflections have a very specific ultimate target: 'you'.

The second noteworthy point is that when Paul backs up his missionary activity with a reference to God (4.6), what he mentions is – just as in 3.5–6, but now with a different vocabulary – his own call: when he himself saw the glory of God on the face of Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> It is clear that Paul is here referring to the same event as the one in 3.5–6, though now in terms of a vision as against reception of the *pneuma*. The move from one thing to the other is very nicely prepared in 3.18, which is *both* about the *pneuma* (cf. 3.17) and *also* about 'seeing the glory of the lord' (3.18). Thus: from 3.5–6 (*pneuma*) via 3.17–18 (*pneuma* and vision) to 4.6 (vision).

For our purposes, 4.1–6 makes three points that are of central importance for understanding the overall shape of 3.1–4.6. First, Paul shows how his missionary practice directly reflects his possession of *pneuma* (4.1–2). Having the *pneuma* with the character that Paul has spelled out in 3.7–18 *issues in* the kind of openness in his missionary practice that he describes in 4.1–2. Secondly, he ties his missionary practice in *specifically with the Corinthians* (4.5). Thirdly, he locates his relationship with both Christ and God very specifically in his own call (4.6), which is precisely the moment when he received the *pneuma*. Thus, underneath Paul's very rich vocabulary of various concepts and metaphors, there lies a wholly clear line of thought: from Paul's own *call* (a vision that also consisted in receiving the *pneuma*) and the corresponding *missionary practice* – to 'you'. That is: 3.1–18 → 4.1–6, specifically 4.5 ('you'). We will find the same basic model in the next two sections: from something central about Paul's own 'Christ experience' and the corresponding missionary practice – to 'you'. It is difficult not to admire the clarity of mind that has brought this forth, as it were *underneath* the richness of thought and metaphor on the surface of the text.

27 Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 248 rightly argues that Paul is speaking of his own call in 4.6.

**5.2 Section 2 (4.7–5.13): Paul's Way of Life in the Present and the Future and its Relevance to his Missionary Practice, including 'You'**

In spite of what we have said about 3.1–4.6, one may well ask why Paul introduces his own call again in 4.6: one would have thought that this motif had been sufficiently covered in 3.4–18. However, the transition to the next section, beginning at 4.7, shows why: Paul now intends to show how the call, which *began* his whole experience with Christ (at the *Pauline* Time 1), plays out in his concrete way of life in the *present* (Time 2) and – as we will see – in the *future* (Time 3). Thus, we move from the past to the present and the future. It is important to see, however, that 'the present' in this context stands not for the very moment of writing, but for the whole period of Paul's living and preaching after his call and up to the present moment – and eventually, as the text gradually makes clear, up until his future death and/or resurrection.<sup>28</sup> The present of which Paul speaks here is a rather general one: his life as a preacher *between* his call and his death and/or resurrection.

We already know that in order to understand Paul's line of thought, we must be on the lookout for 'You-texts' where Paul addresses the Corinthians directly in the second person. Noting this will help us to structure Paul's argument. With that in mind, what we find in 4.7–15 is the very structure that we already know well. Paul begins with describing how the *pneuma* that he had received at his call (Time 1) inhabits his body in the present (Time 2). It is a treasure that he has 'in clay jars' (4.7). He does not explicitly mention the *pneuma* here, but when he says that 'this extraordinary power (δύναμις) comes from God' and not from himself, the reference is clear. The power is the *pneuma*.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, when he says that 'the *life* of Jesus' is made visible in his body and mortal flesh (4.10–11), he is once more referring to the *pneuma*. For as he said in 3.6, 'the *pneuma* gives life'. Thus in 4.7–12 he is describing how the *pneuma* that he received at his call is working in his own mortal body in the present. But why this description right here? 4.12 provides the answer: 'so that death is at work in us [that is, in Paul himself], but life (is at work) in – *you!*' In other words, Paul is describing himself in 4.7–11 *for the purpose* of addressing the Corinthians. That, moreover, is what he actually does in 4.13–15, where he even goes so far as to claim that 'everything (τὰ ... πάντα) is for *your* sake' (4.15). Thus the basic model is clearly present in 4.7–15: first about Paul himself, then about the Corinthians *in the light of* the former.

However, 4.13–15 also points forward, and in fact to the rest of section 2. In 4.13, Paul has said that since he has the *pneuma* (n.b.) of faith, he also

28 For 'or', compare 1 Cor 15.51, which allows for resurrection without previous death. This idea may also lie behind Paul's statement in 2 Cor 5.1 that 'we know that *if* the earthly tent that is our house is destroyed, we have a building from God etc.'.

29 As far as I can tell, Schmeller (ad loc.) does not make this point clear.

‘speaks’ (λαλεῖν), namely, in his missionary practice: once again, from the call to the missionary practice. He justifies this by claiming in 4.14 that he knows (εἰδότες) that God, who has raised the lord Jesus from the dead, will also raise ‘us’, that is, Paul himself, and bring ‘us’ into his presence – ‘together with you’.<sup>30</sup> Here the *pneuma* (of faith) that Paul received at his call and which comes to expression in his missionary practice is further strengthened by Paul’s knowledge that God will raise both himself and the Corinthians, and even raise them *together*: once again, from the past to the present – and now also into the future; and furthermore: ‘together with you’ (4.14).

The same holds true for 4.16–18, which one may well see as functioning as a bridge between 4.7–15 and 5.1–13.<sup>31</sup> Here Paul is back with himself again.<sup>32</sup> To begin with (4.16), he explains that while his ‘outer human being’ is wasting away day by day, his ‘inner (human being)’ is renewed. That might itself pertain to the present, but the next two verses show that Paul is looking forward to the future. He speaks of ‘an eternal weight of glory’ that is being produced in him (4.17) and says that he ‘looks at ... what cannot be seen’, but is ‘eternal’ (4.18). The two references to what is eternal (αἰώνιον) are taken up immediately in 5.1, which directly speaks of the future resurrection.<sup>33</sup>

In 5.1–10, Paul then brings out how he expects the resurrection to be. As so often, he speaks of a ‘we’. In the light of what immediately precedes in 4.7–12 and 4.16–18, it is initially likely that his ‘we’ refers primarily to himself here.<sup>34</sup> This is confirmed by the fact that there is no ‘You-text’ in 5.1–10. The only wider reference that we find is at the very end of this passage, where Paul mentions that ‘all of us (τοὺς ... πάντας ἡμῶς) must appear before the judgement seat of Christ’. This shows that although Paul’s ‘we’ in 5.1–10 as a whole refers primarily to himself, it is of course also true that what he says of himself will also hold true for all Christ-believers, including his immediate addressees. After all, he himself serves as a model for them. Still, in order to grasp the overall argument, it is very important to be clear on when the ‘we’ stands primarily for himself.

That Paul refers primarily to himself in 5.1–10 is shown by the fact that he quite clearly continues to do so in 5.11–13; see in particular 5.11a and 12a.<sup>35</sup> That is also where he brings in a ‘You-text’ that corresponds to those we have met previously:

30 I take the ‘us’ (ἡμῶς) of 4.14 to refer primarily to Paul himself precisely because he goes on to add ‘together with you’.

31 So also Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 271 (‘ein Gelenkstück zwischen 4,7–15 und 5,1–10’).

32 Compare the beginning of 4.16: ‘So we do not lose heart ...’.

33 Cf. Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 283: ‘Die in 4,16–18 bereits angedeutete Zukunftsperspektive tritt ab 5,1 in den Mittelpunkt.’

34 This is in agreement with Schmeller’s conclusion from his careful discussion of the various readings on offer, *Der zweite Brief*, 286.

35 ‘Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we *try to persuade others*’ and ‘We are not *commending ourselves* to you again.’ This ‘we’ can only be Paul himself.

4.1–6 in relation to 3.4–18 and 4.(12)13–15 in relation to 4.7–12.<sup>36</sup> Note then the precise connection between 5.10 and 5.11: whereas 5.10 speaks of appearing before the judgement seat of Christ, 5.11 states that it is because Paul himself ‘knows the fear of the lord’ that he performs his missionary practice in such a way that he lies completely open to God. Here his missionary practice, which he immediately goes on to apply directly to his behaviour vis-à-vis the Corinthians (‘you’), is stated to *reflect* his own *knowledge* of what is going to happen in the future, on the day of judgement after his resurrection.

This is the basic argument for taking 5.11–13 together with what precedes.<sup>37</sup> In 5.1–13, Paul goes back from the future (or rather: his *knowledge* of the future; cf. οἶδαμεν, ‘we know’, in 5.1, εἰδότες, ‘knowing’, in 5.6 and εἰδότες, ‘knowing’, in 5.11) to his missionary practice in the present as directed towards ‘you’. We will see shortly that he also begins something new in 5.14.

Suppose we are right in seeing 4.7–15 and 5.1–13 as two parallel sections that go from Paul himself to ‘you’, but are focused on the present and the future, respectively. In that case, why should we take the two sections *together* as constituting section 2 of 2.14–7.4 as a whole? The answer should be clear enough. What Paul describes in 4.7–12 (the presence of the *pneuma* in his mortal body) does not make any real sense *apart from* his conviction about the future. That is what is made clear already in 4.14 (with one more εἰδότες, ‘knowing’), and as we saw, 4.16–18 also points distinctly forward to 5.1–10. In addition, Paul explicitly says in 5.5 that it is God who has ‘prepared us’ for the resurrection by having ‘given us the *pneuma* as a guarantee’. The *pneuma* that Paul has in the present is a guarantee for the resurrection in the future and the role it will play then.

This is one reason why one cannot be quite happy with Schmeller’s characterisation of 4.7–5.10 as being about *Das verborgene neue Leben* (‘the hidden new life’). What is missing here is Paul’s emphasis on the *presence* of the *pneuma within* his mortal body in the temporal present. This presence is due, as we know, to Paul’s having received the *pneuma* in his original call. But the *pneuma* is also present, as we noted in regard to 5.5, as a guarantee for the resurrection. Thus, although Paul’s present life takes place in his mortal body, it is *not* primarily characterised by that body but by the presence of the *pneuma within* it

36 Incidentally, note how the ‘we’ in 3.18 works in the same way as the ‘all of us’ in 5.10.

37 By contrast, Schmeller (*Der zweite Brief*, 307) sees 5.11–13 as an ‘Überleitung’ to the new section (5.11–6.10) on *Der Dienst der Versöhnung* (306). I believe that this possibility is excluded not just by the general structure we have discovered of first on Paul himself, then on the consequences for his preaching, including to the Corinthians, but also, and in particular, by the similarity of 5.11–13 to 4.1–2, which precisely begins the latter half of this structure. Διὰ τοῦτο, ἔχοντες τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην of 4.1 (‘Therefore, since we have this ministry’, where διακονία has been the theme of what precedes) is very close to Εἰδότες οὖν τὸν φόβον τοῦ κυρίου of 5.11 (‘Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord’, where φόβος has been the theme of the preceding verse). And 4.1–2(6), as everybody agrees, belongs with 3.1–18.

in anticipation of the latter's future role. Indeed, in 4.10–11 he explicitly states that 'the life of Jesus' is *not* 'hidden' (*verborgen*) in his body and mortal flesh. On the contrary, it is being *revealed* (φανερωθῆ in both verses).<sup>38</sup>

Before leaving 4.7–5.13, we should take explicit notice of two facts concerning Paul's application in 5.11–13 of all that precedes to his missionary practice and directly to the Corinthians. One is that according to 5.11 this application consists in Paul's own 'openness' (πεφανερωῦσθαι) to God and his hope for a corresponding 'openness' (again πεφανερωῦσθαι) 'in your consciences'. Both the idea of 'openness' and the appeal to the 'conscience' directly recall 4.2, as does the reference in 5.12 to his self-recommendation. As already noted, this further strengthens the claim that 5.11–13 functions in relation to 4.6–5.10 in the same way 4.1–6 does in relation to 3.4–18.

The other noteworthy fact about 5.11–13 is that Paul ends in 5.13 with the startling claim that 'if we have been beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you'. How was Paul 'beside himself' and what does he mean? The Corinthians probably knew.<sup>39</sup> But the underlying idea seems clear enough. It is that the proper relationship with God requires total dedication and that, *in* being totally dedicated to God, one will also be *restrained* in one's relationship with other human beings.<sup>40</sup> It is this attitude that is lacking among Paul's opponents as described in 5.12. And it is also this attitude that Paul goes on to spell out in what follows in a manner that one can only call 'theological'. Thus 5.13 again functions as a bridge between 5.11–13 and 5.14–21.

We may summarise on section 2 as follows. In the period after his call and before his death and/or resurrection, Paul possesses the *pneuma* that he received in his call *within* his mortal body as a guarantee of its role and activity in the future resurrection. Moreover, he has it in such a manner that 'the (resurrection) life of Jesus' is already made visible in that mortal body. That, then, also determines his preaching (cf. 4.13), and it is all directed at 'you' (4.15). The same holds true for his *knowledge* of his future resurrection ('knowledge' in 4.14, 5.1, 5.6 and 5.11), which

38 The basic argument for finding this 'revelation' in Paul's *present* is that he speaks of it as occurring 'in our mortal flesh' (4.11). This can *only* refer to the present. Contrast Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 262, who both claims that Paul is straightforwardly speaking of his 'Auferstehungsleben' ('resurrection life', which lies in the future) and also says: 'Bereits in der Gegenwart *antizipiert* Paulus das Auferstehungsleben' (emphasis added). The latter is closer to the truth – which is that Paul claims that the 'Auferstehungsleben' is *already beginning* to be *seen in* his mortal body. After all, he *has* received the *pneuma*.

39 Quoting Blass–Debrunner–Rehkopf, Schmeller (*Der zweite Brief*, 314 n. 47) argues that the aorist in ἐξέστημεν may have a 'general' sense ('wir haben uns auf Verzücktheit eingelassen', 'wir sind von Sinnen gewesen'). But even then, the Corinthians must have had some idea of what he is referring to.

40 Incidentally, I see this as *the* basic idea behind the inner connection of theology and ethics in Paul.

again issues in the special character of his preaching (5.11–13) and is specifically directed at 'you' (5.11–13).

### 5.3 Section 3 (5.14–7.4): Paul's Direct Relationship with Christ and God – and its Relevance Now

The structure of section 3 may initially present some problems. For instance, does 5.21 belong with what precedes it or not?<sup>41</sup> Also, how is 6.1–2 related to what precedes?<sup>42</sup> Does it begin a new passage or not?<sup>43</sup> And what about the transition between 6.10 and 6.11? Is 6.11–7.4 in some way connected with what precedes? Or does it constitute an altogether new section?<sup>44</sup>

There is one issue that we need to address before we begin: who is the 'we' of which Paul repeatedly speaks in this section? He begins as follows: 'For Christ's love constrains (συνέχει) us since we have become convinced that ...' (5.14).<sup>45</sup> Who is the 'we' here? Let it be stipulated – as we already said – that even when Paul is speaking of himself as a 'we', what he says will also be relevant, not only to all Christ-believers, but also to his addressees. Nevertheless, the way he proceeds in 5.16–20 shows pretty clearly that in this whole passage Paul is in fact referring primarily to himself.<sup>46</sup> For instance, in 5.18 the second 'we' unmistakably refers to Paul himself.<sup>47</sup> And 5.20 insists that in fact it is God himself who is providing encouragement 'through us', that is, Paul himself. This reading actually also fits 5.14 (quoted above), since the aorist in κρινάμενος ('convinced') suggests that Paul is referring to some specific event of having *become* convinced about the import of Christ's love. Such an event will be individual as opposed to general. We should conclude that throughout 5.14–6.2 – and in fact up until 6.10 – Paul's 'we' refers primarily to himself.

Seen in that light, it becomes clear that the first passage in section 3 consists of 5.14–21.<sup>48</sup> What Paul does here is on the one hand to recall and spell out the basic

41 See Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 318.

42 See Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 341–2.

43 See again Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 318.

44 The latter is Schmeller's position, as we saw. Behind it lies the following understanding of 5.11–6.10: 'In diesem zweiten Abschnitt innerhalb der Apologie, der mit dem ersten (3,1–5,10) Ähnlichkeiten im Aufbau hat, werden erneut die Größe (5,11–21) und die paradoxe Verborgenheit des paulinischen Dienstes (6,1–10) behandelt.' What is missing here is (a) an understanding of the *direction* of it all towards the Corinthians, which only comes with full force in 6.11–13, and (b) a full understanding of the '*paradoxe Verborgenheit*', corresponding to what we found in 4.7–15. After all, the Paul of the latter half (6.6–10) of his self-description in 6.3–10 is very far from being just 'hidden'.

45 For the meaning of συνέχει here, see Schmeller's careful discussion, *Der zweite Brief*, 321 n. 76, in favour of the translation 'beherrscht'. I personally prefer the same translation as at Phil 1.23.

46 This, too, is well argued by Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 321–2.

47 '... and who has given *us* the ministry of reconciliation'.

48 See again Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 318, for discussion and the same conclusion.

meaning of the Christ-event, which is 'theological' in the sense that it speaks of what Christ and God have done.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, he also does something entirely different when he ties *his own* missionary figure into the theological story. In more detail, the section develops as follows.

In 5.14–17, Paul speaks of what Christ has done: he died for all, hence all have died (5.14), for the purpose that 'those who live' will 'no longer live for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them' (5.15). It is highly noteworthy that in 5.14–15 Paul is repeating an idea he had already articulated *about himself* in Galatians (2.19–20) as follows:<sup>50</sup>

<sup>19</sup>For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; <sup>20</sup>and *it is no longer I who live*, but it is Christ who lives in me. And *the life I now live in the flesh* I live in the faith(fulness) of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

On the one hand, Paul is dead; on the other hand, to the extent that he (nevertheless) now lives, he lives in some special way. In both passages, the effect of the Christ-event on Paul is that he now lives in a manner that is totally directed towards Christ dead and resurrected. The consequence, as he goes on to claim in 2 Cor 5.16–17, is that he no longer 'knows anybody according to the flesh' (5.16). Instead, 'if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation' (5.17). Here, too, it is noteworthy that Paul again draws on Galatians for the striking expression of a 'new creation' (cf. Gal 6.15). And we should remember that in Galatians, too, it was Paul himself who instantiated this complete novelty.

What Paul has described in 5.14–17 is, as it were, the content and purpose of the Christ-event and its effect on himself. In 5.18–21, he turns from Christ to God and declares that what he has just described is something that was set into motion by God in order to provide 'reconciliation' (*καταλλάσσειν, καταλλαγή*). With whom? As 5.19 shows: with the whole world (*kosmos*). However, as shown by the *preceding* verse (5.18), the entity whom God has reconciled with himself through Christ is in the first place – Paul himself (5.18a)! For it is obviously to *him* that God has 'given the ministry of reconciliation' (5.18b). Similarly, according to 5.19, when God reconciled the whole world with himself in the Christ-event (by not counting '*their*' trespasses against them), he also 'entrusted the message (*logos*) of reconciliation to *us*', that is, to Paul himself.<sup>51</sup>

49 Well argued by Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 318, who speaks of the 'abstraktere, lehrhaftere Ausrichtung' of this text.

50 Not noted by Schmeller.

51 Compare the fine discussion in Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief*, 329–30. He rightly speaks of an 'Ausweitung der Perspektive' in 5.14–15, 5.16–17 – and 5.18–19. But Paul everywhere begins from himself.



So, in 5.14–17 Paul has connected himself with Christ and in 5.18–19 with God. The point of it all becomes clear in 5.20, where he concludes (cf. οὖν) that ‘we’, that is, Paul himself, are an ambassador (πρεσβεύειν) for *Christ* in the form that (ὡς) it is *God* who encourages (παρακαλεῖν) ‘through us’.<sup>52</sup> In other words, Paul has become a kind of ‘medium’ for God. It is *God* who does the encouragement *through* Paul. Note also the care with which he brings in both Christ and God here, reflecting that 5.14–17 spoke of Christ and 5.18–21 of God. But *what* encouragement is Paul talking about? The answer is given in the verse itself, where he once more calls upon both Christ and God: ‘we entreat (you) on behalf of Christ, *be reconciled* to God’. Here the second person plural imperative in ‘be reconciled’ is of course hugely important. By contrast, there is no *explicit* ‘you’ as the object of ‘we entreat’ (δεόμεθα). That only *comes* with the imperative. Note also that after this huge application of the whole Christ-event in its most flagrantly theological form directly to the Corinthians, Paul *returns* to ‘speaking theology’. In 5.21 he brings in two more dimensions of the Christ-event: that it occurred ‘for our sake’ (ὕπερ ἡμῶν) with regard to ‘sin’ (ἁμαρτία) ‘in order that in him [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God’. This may – indeed, I would say, it *should* – once more remind one of Galatians (e.g. Gal 1.4 and 5.4–5). In any case, it belongs at the same theological level as the underlying story that Paul draws on and articulates in that letter.<sup>53</sup>

The basic point that Paul has made in the whole of 5.14–21 is that he, Paul himself, is a kind of medium for God in such a way that it is God himself who is encouraging people *through* Paul. In other words, when Paul ‘entreats on behalf of Christ’ and when he says ‘be reconciled to God’, it is actually God himself who speaks as it were through the mouth of Paul. It goes without saying that Paul’s direct imperative in the second person plural acquires tremendous force in this way.<sup>54</sup>

However, it is important to see that the overall theological character of 5.14–21 also means that there is something highly generalised about that direct address to the Corinthians. It reflects what Christ has done and what God has done and it is

52 It is one of the absolutely crucial facts about the whole of 2.14–7.4 that Paul directly employs the core notion of *paraklēsis* in only two places: here and at 6.1. The importance of this cannot be overstated.

53 In addition, it belongs at the same abstract, theological level as the rest of 5.14–21, which is why Schmeller is certainly right in taking 5.21 together with what precedes. That also explains why Paul’s ‘we’ here refers to all human beings.

54 This ties in closely with the point I made in *Cosmology and Self* that through Paul’s mouth blows the material *pneuma*, which is directly aimed at the Corinthians (cf. 6.11–13): see n. 9 above. Incidentally, this explains, I believe, why in 3.4–4.6 Paul went back to his own reception of the *pneuma* at Time 1 as the first moment in his temporal scheme in 2.14–7.4 as a whole: his aim was to identify the moment when he received (from God) what he is now going to blow into the Corinthians again, namely, the *pneuma*.

spoken by Paul as nothing but a direct medium of God. In a certain sense, this is all highly abstract. But then, in 6.1, something new happens. Here Paul again speaks of himself, but now in an entirely different key: 'Working, then, *together* [with him, that is, God], *we* encourage (παρακαλοῦμεν) you also not to have accepted the grace of God in vain.'<sup>55</sup> The Paul who speaks here is not (just) a direct medium of God, but somebody who quite concretely works *together* with God (συν-εργοῦντες). What is more, this is a Paul who just as concretely encourages the Corinthians not to *have* received – as they once did receive it – God's grace in vain. Here Paul is not speaking in the previous generalised manner, but very specifically as an apostle *to the Corinthians*.<sup>56</sup> After an immensely important verse, 6.2, to which we will come back, he in 6.3 begins a long self-description, which we must also consider more carefully. The point is this. With 6.1, Paul begins talking as an apostle and 'encourager' directly to the current situation of the Corinthians. He evidently continues to have God directly behind him and to act as his medium. But he is now directly addressing the Corinthians in the situation in which they find themselves, one in which they once *did* receive God's grace, but now apparently risk having received it in vain.<sup>57</sup> With this change in Paul's apostolic posture, it would be more than surprising if he were *not* to do what he *announces* in 6.1 that he is doing: encouraging the Corinthians not to have received God's grace in vain. But where and how does he in fact do that?

This is where the long self-description given in 6.3–10 becomes of crucial importance. It is well known that it is borne by a set of present participles: 'giving' (διδόντες) in 6.3 and 'recommending' (συνιστάντες) in 6.4. This is followed in 6.4–5 by the use of an ἐν ('in') to indicate a great number of (gradually more and

55 I am intrigued by the καί in front of παρακαλοῦμεν in this verse. To my ear, it brings out the *difference* I am after between Paul's own encouragement of the Corinthians in this verse and God's encouragement of them as *spoken* by Paul in 5.20.

56 In fact, he explicitly goes back to *their* 'Time 1': 'we also encourage you not to *have* accepted the grace of God in vain'. I believe that the aorist in δέξασθαι points directly back to that primary event. Schmeller (*Der zweite Brief*, 341) seems to have sensed the change in 6.1. Commenting on (θεοῦ) παρακαλοῦντος in 5.20 and παρακαλοῦμεν in 6.1, he says: 'Eindeutig ist die Wiederaufnahme von παρακαλοῦντος (5,20) durch παρακαλοῦμεν (6,1). Während Paulus zuvor als Gesandter Gottes aufgetreten war und dessen Aufruf weitergegeben hatte, verlagert sich jetzt der Akzent auf seine eigene Tätigkeit, die freilich eng auf Gott bezogen bleibt (συνεργοῦντες).'

57 I am fascinated by the *general* character of 5.14–21 (within the whole of 2.14–7.4), which nevertheless issues in an imperative (of 'encouragement') directed wholly explicitly at the Corinthians (5.20) – only to be followed, as we will see, in 6.1–7.4 by Paul's reaching his ultimate goal of issuing the strongest possible *personalised and direct* imperative (6.13 + 7.2) of 'encouragement' (cf. 6.1) to them. In this connection, note the following difference between his imperative in 5.20 and later. In 5.20, he urges the Corinthians to be reconciled to *God*, whereas later they are urged to respond to *himself*.

more adverse) external circumstances ('in afflictions, hardships, calamities etc. '), then in 6.6–7a by an ἐν ('with') that indicates a set of internal attitudes with which Paul *responds* to the adverse external circumstances ('in purity, knowledge, patience etc. '), then in 6.7b–8a by a διὰ ('through') that indicates positive and negative means through which Paul *handles* the adverse external circumstances ('with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left etc. '), and finally in 6.8b–10 by a ὡς ('as') that indicates an opposed set of *character traits* in Paul himself that are displayed through his handling of the adverse circumstances ('as impostors and yet being true etc. '). Here it is particularly noteworthy that the list of character traits very quickly turns into being once again one of – present participles ('as being unknown and yet being known etc. '). The last two of these are the following: 'as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything' (6.10). We must ask: then what? Now, it is common knowledge in scholarship that such a list of present participles basically functions as a set of finite verbs.<sup>58</sup> But is that really adequate here? A much better way of understanding the whole of 6.3–10 is to see Paul here as, as it were, drawing in his breath for about the sixty seconds it takes to *say* these eight verses – and then blowing it out with full force when he finally produces a finite verb at 6.11: 'Our mouth stands open towards you, Corinthians, etc.' Put differently, editors of the text should place 6.11 directly after 6.10 and separate the two verses not with a full stop but with a colon that indicates the huge anacoluthon of 6.3–10 *plus* 6.11. Thus understood, 6.3–10 constitutes one long run-up to 6.11. 6.3–10 is Paul 'working together with God' in all the circumstances and ways he lists to provide encouragement to the Corinthians, but the actual content of that encouragement comes in 6.11–13, issuing in particular in 6.13: 'In exact return [to Paul's own attitude as described in 6.11–12] – I speak as to children – do you, too, open wide your hearts (to me).'

The point is this. In 5.14–21, Paul has described himself as a medium for God, whose encouragement is in fact God's own. In 6.1, he announces that he is now about to encourage the Corinthians much more concretely, as Paul *himself* (who is precisely working *together* with God) and as directed to the current situation of the Corinthians, who risk having received God's grace in vain. In 6.3–10, he describes the circumstances of his missionary practice and his various ways of reacting to them. This might seem rather general but in fact is not. For he begins (in 6.3–4) by speaking of his 'ministry' (διακονία), which he has previously connected directly with the Corinthians, and even by recalling the idea of self-recommendation (συνιστόντες ἑαυτούς), which he has also previously connected

58 Schmeller (*Der zweite Brief*, 344) rightly rejects connecting the participles of 6.3–10 with παρακαλοῦμεν in 6.1, but then says: 'Näher liegt es, in διδόντες den Ersatz eines finiten Verbs zu sehen' (with a reference to Blass-Debrunner-Rehkopf). I just cannot make that fit my Greek ear. A participle is a participle.

directly with the Corinthians. What we have, then, in 6.3–10 is Paul giving an account of himself that is *directly* connected with the ‘You-text’ of 6.11–13. What is more, this *connection* (of self-description and a ‘You-text’), which we have found several times throughout 2.14–7.4, has now received a name: it is what Paul’s ‘encouragement’ of the Corinthians (of 6.1), his *paraklēsis*, *consists in*. Thus understood, 6.3–13, as introduced by 6.1, constitutes the apex of 2.14–7.4 as a whole. It is this text, and not least Paul’s concluding imperative in 6.13, to which *everything* in that whole text has been directed as part of Paul’s *inventio* behind the text.

### **6. Paul’s Temporal Way of Thinking in 2 Cor 2.14–7.4 – Not Least Including 6.2**

To summarise what has emerged from our discussion so far: whereas section 1 of 2.14–7.4 went back to Paul’s call (the original moment) and based his missionary practice on that and section 2 then spoke about the present and anticipated the future and based his missionary practice on *that*, section 3 begins (in 5.14–21) by being not at all specifically temporal. Rather, it focuses in a general way on the meaning of the Christ-event. However, that picture changes drastically in 6.1 when Paul introduces his specific encouragement of the Corinthians.<sup>59</sup> Is there any timeframe for that? If I am right in seeing the content of Paul’s encouragement as contained in what he says in 6.3–13, then the time is clearly *here and now*, either as Paul writes this to the Corinthians or as they receive and read it. In sections 1, 2 and 3 up until 5.21, Paul has spoken somewhat generally both of himself and of his missionary practice, even when addressing the Corinthians (‘you’). *Now*, however, in 6.3–13 as introduced by 6.1, he speaks very concretely in terms of time (it is now!) and place (in the present letter).

In the light of this, it seems rather fantastic that Paul should himself have focused specifically on that very moment in time. In 6.2, he quotes from scripture concerning an ‘acceptable time’ and a ‘day of salvation’ and then adds on his own account: ‘*See, now* is the acceptable time; *see, now* is the day of salvation!’ With his repeated ἰδοὺ νῦν (‘see now’), Paul himself identifies the present moment as the one that really matters, the moment when he is (now) encouraging the Corinthians to respond positively to himself (6.11–13). Once again, it is difficult not to admire the clarity of thinking that lies behind this whole text.

We should conclude that as part of Paul’s *inventio* behind 2.14–7.4 there lies a very clear temporal idea. In sections 1 and 2, Paul speaks first of his own call (Time 1) and then of his way of life in the present (Time 2) as anticipating the future (Time 3) and in both cases what they meant for his missionary practice, not least vis-à-vis the Corinthians. Next (section 3, 5.14–21) he gives a general,

<sup>59</sup> It is noteworthy that the old chapter division at this point recognises the change.

almost non-temporal statement of the overall theology behind it all and what this meant for his own *general* role as a missionary – *and then* (section 3, 6.1–7.4), as part of that account, he provides a very concrete *application* of that role in a specific address to the Corinthians, at whom everything in the whole of 2.14–7.4 appears to have been directed. Moreover, here there is an exceedingly strong temporal emphasis on the specific present of *now*!

If this is all correct, then why has the *temporal* structure of the whole of 2.14–7.4 not been seen? Several answers offer themselves. One is that Paul's own writing throughout 2.14–7.4 is quite thick: full of ideas and metaphors that are only rarely explicitly spelled out and connected. In a way, he has himself made it difficult to follow his underlying line, which taken by itself is wholly clear. Another is that scholars have invariably, and for a good reason, focused on the many individual theological topics that go into this whole text – the relationship between Paul and Moses (alias Judaism), the understanding of the resurrection, the theology of the Christ-event, and much more. The present reading has insisted, first, that Paul's discussions of all these topics serve a function, which has to do with the way his stance is reflected in his missionary practice, and here not least with respect to the Corinthians ('you'); and secondly, that beneath Paul's account of these various topics lies a simple and completely consistent temporal scheme.

### 7. Once More 2.14–7.4 in Context: Paul's Use of a Temporal Scheme<sup>60</sup>

It is time to go back to the overall question of how to understand 2.14–7.4 in its context as part of the whole letter. If this text is a statement of Paul's reflections on his competence as a missionary, not least in relation to the Corinthians, as he was travelling between Troas and Macedonia, then how does the specific content of the text as we now know it fit in with that role?

The first point to note is that it fits it exceedingly well. On his travel, Paul will have thought (so he implies) of all the things he says: his original call and his way of life in the present and as anticipating the future – and how both things are respectively reflected in his missionary practice, both in general and vis-à-vis the Corinthians (sections 1–2). He will also have reflected on his own role in relation to the overall content of the Christ-event, which is one of *reconciliation*, and how that must lead him to call the Corinthians to be *reconciled* with both God and himself (the whole of section 3). In these various respects, 2.14–7.4 fits in exactly with what Paul may have been reflecting as he was travelling between Troas and Macedonia, worried as he was about getting news from Corinth (cf. 2.13 and 7.5–7).

However, we must also note that in one respect, 2.14–7.4 does *not* fit the bill as comprising the content of Paul's reflections on his travel, namely, his use in 2.14–

60 This section basically recapitulates material from the FS essay referred to above in n. 10.

7.4 of the second person plural, which comes to the fore particularly strongly in section 3 (5.20 and 6.1–7.4). Paul was able to do many things that few others would do. But it stretches the imagination to think that he would actually (in either thought or word) address the Corinthians *directly* as he was travelling towards them. If anything, he would have thought or spoken of ‘them’ instead of ‘you’. If so, we must say that Paul’s own account in the letter of this hypothesised occasion *breaks down* whenever he has (on the present hypothesis) turned a third person plural thought *about* ‘them’ into a second person plural address *to* ‘you’.

This observation shows the immense importance of precisely the ‘You-texts’ in 2.14–7.4. *They* are Paul’s target in that text, and employing a ‘you’ instead of a ‘they’ of course makes the whole thing much more dramatic and relevant in a letter *to* the Corinthians. Two things follow from this.

The first is that in writing the letter Paul was apparently keen on spelling out to the Corinthians once more the extent of the concern about them that filled him *before* it was – apparently – resolved by the arrival of Titus from Corinth and *in spite of the fact* that it was resolved by him. As several scholars have seen, this just means that at the time of writing the letter to the Corinthians *from* Macedonia and *after* Paul had been comforted by Titus, the apostle *continued* to be concerned about them.<sup>61</sup> This should come as no surprise since the rest of the letter, not least the concluding four chapters (10–13), amply confirms this. Indeed, it is precisely in *this* light that these chapters should be understood.

The second thing that follows from the breakdown of Paul’s conceit of reporting in 2.14–7.4 his thoughts while travelling between Troas and Macedonia is that this report may well be more or less fictive in the sense that it need not be just a documentary report of whatever reflections Paul may actually have been having during that travel. We may believe Paul when he says in 2.13–14 and 7.5 that he went to Troas and from there to Macedonia. We may also believe that he was concerned to meet Titus coming with news from Corinth. Finally, we may believe that while waiting for this news Paul in *some* way did reflect on his own

61 This has been very well seen by Schmeller. In his volume 1 (*Der zweite Brief*, 387), he says of 7.4 in relation to 7.5–16: ‘Vereinbar wird V. 4 mit dem Folgenden dann, wenn man berücksichtigt, dass hier wie dort Versöhnung nicht nur beschrieben, sondern auch betrieben wird ... Die Äußerung von Trost und Freude ist an beiden Stellen nicht einfach nur eine Reaktion auf die erreichte Versöhnung, sondern zielt auf ihre Vertiefung und Ausweitung. In V. 4 wird das durch den Kontext und durch den Zusatz “in all unserer Trübsal” deutlich, der auch die mit der Gemeinde bestehenden Konflikte einschließen dürfte. Zu 7,5–16 gibt es eine Parallele in 2,5–11, die zeigt, dass auch nach dem Tränenbrief und der Rückkehr des Titus nicht alle Probleme gelöst sind. Die vollständige Versöhnung steht also noch aus, wird aber an beiden Stellen vorweggenommen. Die Erwartung, dass sie dadurch gefördert wird, ist in der antiken Briefliteratur ... und Rhetorik ... verbreitet.’ Schmeller also rightly refers here to I. Vegge, *2 Corinthians: A Letter about Reconciliation. A Psychological, Epistological and Rhetorical Analysis* (WUNT 11/239, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

competence as a preacher – and even in relation to the Corinthians. What we need not believe is that his reflections took exactly the form he gave them in writing the letter. For we already know of one change he would have made: from the third to the second person plural. For all we know, he might have made many more changes. Indeed, he might have invented the whole story!<sup>62</sup>

What we have, then, are two dimensions of 2.14–7.4 that we need to keep entirely separate. There is first the level of whatever reflections Paul may have had *then*, that is, during his actual travel from Troas to Macedonia. Secondly, there is the level of what Paul is reporting *now*, that is, while writing the letter, *about* his reflections *then*. It goes without saying that it is the latter level that is the important one: it belongs to what we have in front of us and can read, study and analyse after about 2,000 years. But it is critically important to recognise that there is also the first level, on which Paul is drawing as a writerly conceit *in* writing the text at the second level. He is ('now') telling the Corinthians the story of what he was thinking *then*. That fits in with and supports the claim that, in writing his letters, Paul made strong use of *a temporal scheme*.

## 8. Conclusion

I have been concerned to show the role of 2.14–7.4 within the whole of 2 Corinthians read as a single unit. A major tool has been to diagnose Paul's use of an elaborate temporal and topographical scheme that he has created for paraenetic purposes. We have seen this use in both 1 Thessalonians 1–3 and 2 Corinthians as a whole. More specifically, we have seen that Paul's temporal and topographical story about himself, Timothy and the Thessalonians in 1 Thess 2.17–3.10 constitutes a structural template for a much more elaborate use of the same kind of story about Paul, Titus and the Corinthians in 2 Cor 2.12–7.16. Our main concern, however, has been the discovery within 2.14–7.4 itself of a further example of Paul's temporal thinking in a very precise structuring of that whole section that everywhere goes from facts about Paul himself to his missionary practice: (1) 3.4–18 → 4.1–6; (2) 4.7–5.10 → 5.11–13; and (3) 5.14–21 + 6.1–10 → 6.11–13 + 7.2–4. Here the idea is again distinctly temporal: from Paul's own past (his call) to his way of life in the present and the future and on to the moment he himself identifies as here and now (6.2). At that point he in a sweeping movement gathers up all his more and more extended mentions of the Corinthians ('you') into two cases of encouraging them directly (5.20; 6.1), first

62 In spite of this, it remains crucial to see that 2.14–7.4 is temporally *situated* by Paul not at all in the writerly present (as almost all scholars have taken it), but *before* his arrival in Macedonia as told in 7.5. That is what the whole of Paul's *story* in 2.12–7.16 is all about, a story that is just as clearly situated in the past as what he says in 1.8–2.11: he arrived in Troas, he left Troas for Macedonia, he reflected *while travelling* on his competence *viz-à-viz* the Corinthians, he arrived in Macedonia, etc.

to be reconciled with God (5.20) and then with Paul himself (6.11–13 + 7.2–4). The power of this is enormous. But it is structured – and indeed, I suggest, made possible – by Paul’s use of a very precise underlying temporal scheme.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> I am grateful to Thomas Schmeller for helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.