PAUL, THE CORINTHIANS AND THE BIRTH OF CHRISTIAN HERMENEUTICS

In a series of exchanges with the Corinthians in the mid-50s AD, Paul continually sought to define the meaning of his message, his body and his letters, at times insisting upon a literal understanding, at others urging the reader to move beyond the words to a deeper sense within. Proposing a fresh approach to early Christian exegesis, Margaret M. Mitchell shows how in the Corinthian letters Paul was fashioning the very principles that later authors would use to interpret all scripture. Originally delivered as the Speaker's Lectures in Biblical Studies at Oxford University, this volume re-creates the dynamism of the Pauline letters, in their immediate historical context and beyond it in their later use by patristic exegetes. An engagingly written, insightful demonstration of the hermeneutical impact of Paul's Corinthian correspondence on early Christian exegetes, it also illustrates a new way to think about the history of reception of biblical texts.

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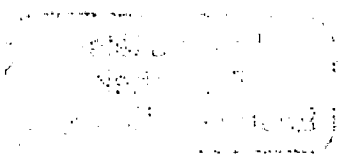
Jean McGowan MacDonald, *in memoriam*



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Preface

The present volume contains the text of the Speaker's Lectures in Biblical Studies, which I gave at the University of Oxford in Trinity Term of 2008. The six spoken talks appear here largely as they were delivered on that occasion. They are meant to be read as lectures, and as a series. The approach I take here, of "reading Paul backwards and forwards," is both in service of a particular historical argument about the hermeneutical impact of Paul's Corinthian letters on early Christian exegesis, and in illustration of another way to think about and represent the "history of reception" or *Wirkungsgeschichte* ("history of effects") of biblical texts. In particular what I seek to re-create in these lectures is a sense of the dynamism of the Pauline letters, both in their own immediate historical contexts and in their later role as active sacred scriptures for the late antique Christian movement. It is this interactive nature of Paul's epistles that some of the customary modes of explication, and in particular the commentary and its revived modern *catenae* of early Christian exegesis, have such a difficult time re-creating for the reader, as the multi-dimensional quality of that interaction becomes flattened to the linear dimensions of the written page. That method of collection and arrangement (important as it is) is also overly determined by the conceptualization of the enterprise as an examination of how early Christian interpreters *commented on* a given text, rather than how they *commented with* it. In these lectures I propose a new way of thinking about early Christian exegesis that takes the strategic and rhetorical quality of this interpretive work more seriously. The "agonistic paradigm of interpretation" that I propose both grounds early Christian exegesis in its native historical context (that of Greco-Roman rhetorical education) and offers a medial path between the rhetorical labels of "literal" and "allegorical" exegesis which are used as forms of self-identification and self-defense by early Christian authors, and all too often given a credulous acceptance and replication in contemporary accounts of ancient exegesis.

In an attempt to trace a history of Christian hermeneutics forward and backward I also seek to explore other native categories (beyond the "literal"/"allegorical" divide) that were operative from very early on, such as the tension between the clear and the unclear, the testimonial and the mysterious, as already inaugurated by Paul in the remarkable series of letters he wrote to Corinth in the mid-50s. The story of Paul's attempt to clarify the meaning of his letters to the Corinthians becomes, as we shall see, an inner-biblical process that fashioned a storehouse of hermeneutical principles from which his devoted followers in years to come would justify their own interpretive feats. The man who called himself "all things to all people" (1 Cor 9:22), that quintessential claim of strategic adaptability, was to become the patron and exemplar of an early Christian exegesis (extending throughout the Mediterranean landscape of late antiquity) that would emulate his interpretive variability. My argument takes to its logical conclusion the insistence in some earlier and much more recent scholarship on the rhetorical underpinnings of early Christian exegesis. This requires less of a systematic approach than is customarily the case (it does not separate out the Alexandrines from the Antiochenes), but it allows us also to appreciate the "live radio" quality of early Christian exegesis, and its quick-witted employment of biblical evidence for the case at hand. Proper understanding of the rhetorical techniques involved in ancient exegesis counsels appropriate caution about prematurely systematizing from any single moment of interpretation and the rationale given there. This is because such an understanding complicates in a useful and necessary way the dichotomy between theory and practice, since when we attend to ancient rhetorical "theory" in those "practical" handbooks of instruction, we see that literate people were taught to invoke the right "theory" at the right time in support of a particular interpretation, appealing either to the letter of the text or to its deeper intent. A common complaint against "allegory" (in antiquity as well as now) is that it is "arbitrary." To the contrary, I seek to show that this is in fact the last thing figural exegesis is. But this is no less true for "literal" readings. All early Christian exegesis is strategic and adaptable, and all the elite authors knew what commonplaces to appeal to for readings that aligned with either side of the rhetorically constructed divide between readings that appealed "to the letter" and those that appealed "to the spirit." The goal of ancient biblical interpretation was utility to the purpose at hand, however contextually defined. And this began with Paul.

I would like to thank Professor John Barton and the Speaker's Lectureship committee of the University of Oxford for the invitation to deliver

these lectures, and my host, Professor Christopher Rowland, for a most generous welcome, and memorable conversation on an array of topics, including the unthinkable hope that the junior senator from Illinois just might have a chance for the Presidency of the United States. A particular pleasure of the two weeks was the time for delightful renewed conversation about hermeneutics and New Testament theology with Professor Robert Morgan. Thanks are due also to Professors Christopher Tuckett, Markus Bockmuehl and John Muddiman, and the cohort of New Testament students for their hospitality and engagement with the lectures during my two weeks in residence. It was a special honor that my friend and colleague Professor Frances M. Young was in attendance at these lectures. Her enormous influence on my thinking, particularly from her own magnificent Speaker's Lectures of 1992/3, will I am sure be evident to the reader, even though we do part company on some essential issues.

I have been the beneficiary of careful reading of the manuscript, and stimulating conversation on the ideas in play here, by generous and keen scholarly friends, including Professors Hans Dieter Betz, Paul Brooks Duff, Robert M. Grant, Wayne A. Meeks, David P. Moessner, Ilaria Ramelli, Calvin Roetzel, Richard A. Rosengarten and Kathryn Tanner. In the interim between the delivery of the lectures and now I have had the pleasure to meet and engage in conversation with Professor Kathy Eden of Columbia University, whose work, as these pages show, has been very important in crystallizing my thinking here about the rhetorical underpinnings of early Christian exegesis. I would also like to thank the students in my seminar on Early Christian Biblical Interpretation at the University of Chicago in the winter of 2008, where I tested some of the ideas of these lectures through close reading of some of the key patristic sources, for their constructive and careful dialogue on the texts and ideas. My research assistant, Scott Bowie, gave me the benefit of his astute eye on proofreading, and on the Bibliography and reference checking, for which he deserves thanks.

I am grateful to my editor at Cambridge University Press, Laura Morris, for warm encouragement and able assistance throughout the publication process, and to Timothy Bartel for expert work in the copy-editing of this manuscript.

Special thanks are due to my husband, Rick Rosengarten, and our daughters Nora and Katie, for enduring my two-week absence while giving the lectures at Oxford and the many weeks more that I was lost in thought preparing them. Their love and patience are remarkable and enrich my life beyond measure.

Individuals can change lives. Jean McGowan MacDonald, the college professor who first introduced me to the academic study of religion, and to biblical studies in particular, altered mine forever by her dazzling teaching and honesty in the quest for knowledge. She died on December 16, 2007. I have dedicated these lectures to Jean's memory, with love, admiration and continuing gratitude.

Note on style

The emphasis in these lectures is on the primary sources, which I have translated in order to draw direct connections in the arguments and the terminology they use (all translations are my own, except as indicated). I have kept the Greek in transliterated form[1] so that readers, even those without skills in Greek, can both follow the direct allusions to scriptural passages by Greek patristic commentators and see how early Christian exegetical vocabulary is developed both from the existing literary-rhetorical culture and from biblical terminology (Pauline and other). The notes clarify some translation decisions, and also direct readers to the critical editions of the Greek text used. References to secondary literature are, in keeping with the lecture format, quite restricted. To a large degree these lectures represent a coming together of various strands of my own previous research in the Corinthian correspondence and in patristic exegesis of Paul, as the notes reflect. My indebtedness to and differences from a host of conversation partners, past and present, will nonetheless, I hope, be readily apparent.

[1] With this object in view, I shall as far as possible cite key terms (nouns) in the nominative case and verbs in the infinitive (but in other instances I render the full phrases in their inflected or conjugated form as they stand in the text).

Abbreviations

Full publication information may be found in the Bibliography.

BDAG	Bauer, Danker, Arndt and Gingrich (eds.), *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edn. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
CCSG	Corpus christianorum, series graeca (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977–)
GCS	Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte (Berlin: Akademie Verlag)
GNO	*Gregorii Nysseni opera*, ed. Werner Jaeger (Leiden: Brill, 1952–)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press)
LPGL	Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961)
LSJ	Liddell, Scott and Jones, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, 9th edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940, suppl. 1968)
PG	*Patrologia graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1844–64)
RGG	*Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 4th edn. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1998–2007)
SC	Sources chrétiennes (Paris: Éditions du Cerf)
VCSup	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae (Leiden/Boston: Brill)
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature)

CHAPTER 1

The Corinthian diolkos*: passageway to early Christian biblical interpretation*

Sometime in the last quarter of the fourth century, at the request of Olympias, deaconess at Constantinople, Gregory of Nyssa penned an opening to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. In the very first sentences of the Prologue he sets his work within an exegetical *agôn*, a conflict or trial, between two current approaches to biblical interpretation, the "literal" and the "allegorical":

> Since some ecclesiastics deem it right to stand always by the literal meaning (*lexis*)[1] of the holy scripture and do not agree that anything in it was said through enigmas and allegories (*ainigmata kai hyponoiai*) for our benefit (*ôpheleia*), I consider it necessary first to speak in defense (*apologeisthai*) of these things to those who bring such accusations against us, because in our view there is nothing unreasonable in our seriously studying all possible means of tracking down the benefit (*ôphelimon*) to be had from the divinely inspired scripture.

Casting himself as the defender of allegory against its accusers, Gregory's first step is to invoke the standard rhetorical appeal to *ôpheleia/utilitas* as the measure of a sound and salutary interpretation. He develops the point into a rule, as follows:

> Therefore, if indeed the literal meaning (*lexis*), understood as it is spoken (*hôs eirêtai nooumenê*), should offer some benefit, we will have readily at hand what we need to make the object of our attention. But if something that is said in a hidden fashion (*meta epikrypseôs*), with certain allegories and enigmas (*hyponoiai kai ainigmata*), should yield nothing of benefit according to the readily apparent sense (*to procheiron noêma*), we will turn such words as these over and over in our mind. This is just how the Logos that teaches us in Proverbs[2] has instructed us to understand what is said as either a parable (*parabolê*) or a dark saying (*skoteinos logos*) or a word of the wise (*rhêsis sophôn*), or as one of the enigmas (*ainigmata*) (Prov 1:6). When it comes to the insightful reading (*theôria*) of such passages that comes via the elevated sense (*anagogê*), we shall not beg to differ at all about its name – whether one wishes to call it *tropologia*, *allêgoria*, or anything else – but only about whether it contains meanings that are beneficial (*ta epôphelê noêmata*).

Thus far the Cappadocian has given his own clear statement of principle, disregarding terminological borderlines and urging the quest for the useful reading above all,[3] whether it can be found in the "literal" reading or must be delved for in the figurative. The Logos itself attests a predisposition for generic diversity (as the Proverbs passage shows), but Gregory is speaking not so much about compositional allegory as about interpretive allegory.[4] So how will he be able to justify from the exegete's side the insistence on the supra-literal sense as more than a personal preference or whim? Like many a trial lawyer before and since, Gregory brings forward precedent, pre-eminent precedent:

> For indeed the great apostle (*ho megas apostolos*), when he said the law was "spiritual" (Rom 7:14), and encompassed in the word "law" also the historical narratives (*ta historika diêgêmata*) . . . ,[5] *employed his exegesis in accordance with what suited him, with an eye to what would be beneficial* (*kechrêtai men tê exêgêsei kata to areskon autô pros to ôphelimon blepôn*). But he was not concerned with the name (*onoma*) by which he necessarily had to dub the form of interpretation [he used]. Rather, in one instance (*nun men*) he said he "altered his voice"[6] (Gal 4:20), when he was going to translate the narrative into a proof (*metagein tên historian eis endeixin*) of the divine plan about the covenants. But then, after mentioning the two children of Abraham – those born from the slave girl and from the free – he named the *theôria* reading about them an "allegory" (*allêgoria*) (Gal 4:24).

The route to early Christian defense of non-literal reading (by whatever name), it seems, goes straight through the *corpus Paulinum*.[7] What the "great apostle" exemplifies for Gregory[8] is strategic hermeneutical and terminological adaptability, as focused always on a single purpose: the utility for the hearer. If Paul forms the centerpiece of the defense of interpretive adaptability, it is the continuation of the above passage that points to where the center of Paul's own hermeneutical circulatory system is to be found:

> But on still another occasion (*palin de*), after Paul narrated some events of a story, he said, "these things happened to them *typikôs* ('by way of example'[9]), but were written for our admonition" (1 Cor 10:11). And again, after saying that the plowing ox should not be muzzled (Deut 25:4, quoted in 1 Cor 9:9), he added to it, "God does not care about the oxen," but that "for our sakes entirely this was written" (1 Cor 9:9–10).[10] And in another place he calls less distinct perception (*amydrotera katanoêsis*) and knowledge that is partial (*ek merous gnôsis*) a mirrored reflection and enigma (*esoptron . . . kai ainigma*) (1 Cor 13:12). And still again he calls the process of shifting away from material matters and toward spiritual matters a "turning to the Lord" and "taking away of a veil" (paraphrase of 2 Cor 3:16, citing Exod 34:34). In all these different tropes (*tropoi*) and terms for the *theôria*-meaning (*hê kata ton noun theôria*),[11] Paul instructs us in a single form of teaching (*hen didaskalias eidos*): it is not necessary always to remain in the letter (*paramenein tô*

grammati), on the grounds that the immediately apparent meaning of the things said (*tês procheirou tôn legomenôn emphaseôs*) in many instances causes us harm in the pursuit of the life of virtue. But (in that case) it is necessary to pass over to the incorporeal and spiritually intelligible reading with insight (*hê aülos te kai noêtê theôria*), with the result that the more corporeal meanings (*sômatikôterai ennoiai*) are converted to an intellectual sense and meaning (*nous kai dianoia*), in the same way that the dust of the more fleshly significance[12] (*sarkôdestera emphasis*) of what is said is "shaken off" (Matt 10:14). This is why Paul says, "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (*to gramma apokteinei, to de pneuma zôopoiei*) (2 Cor 3:6), since oftentimes with biblical narrative (*historia*), it will not provide us with examples (*hypodeigmata*) of a good life if we stop short at the simple events (*pragmata*).[13]

Gregory's invocation of Pauline example offers one *men* and five *de* examples,[14] thereby qualifying one phrase in Gal 4:24 with five passages from the Corinthian correspondence.[15] The infamous Galatians participle *allêgoroumena* is cited by Gregory as just one of many terms the apostle used for his readings, and indeed, he presents it as outweighed and, most importantly, *both interpreted and exemplified by the Corinthian passages.*[16] Obviously it is *allêgoria* that is the problematic word in his context, because of its association with "pagan," i.e. Stoic and Platonic, exegesis, and with Origen, whom Gregory will name explicitly only later, at the close of the Prologue. But it is also the question of license and authority. To paraphrase another New Testament query: "by what authority do you do these things?"[17] stands as the standard accusation against allegorical exegesis that Gregory attempts here to refute. This string of Pauline quotations, adduced as proof in his own *apologia* for *allêgoria*, gives Gregory strong ammunition for a tradition of early Christian figural reading in the example of the "great apostle" – not because he was a single-minded "allegorist,"[18] but because he was a tactically and pastorally variable interpreter. If benefit can be found in the apparent sense, then it is all right to rest there; but when that is not the case, the interpreter must use other methods, variously denominated, to turn the phrases over in his mind. The main proposition of Gregory's argument can be simply put: Paul engaged in argumentation with scripture that was rhetorical, i.e. geared toward proving the argument at hand with an eye to what was expedient in that context (*pros to ôphelimon blepôn*). And that is of course precisely what Gregory himself is doing here, as a rhetorical interpreter of a rhetorical apostle, both united in a common quest *to make use of the exegesis in accordance with what suits them as they look to what would be beneficial for the moment and for their audience.*

The core of this proof in defense of non-literal readings is a cascade of five passages in a row from the Corinthian letters. Ronald Heine, in

a fine article, has pointed out that in this argument Gregory is heavily dependent upon Origen, citing six of the eight passages that Origen also drew upon consistently, throughout his writings, to defend non-literal reading of scripture: Rom 7:14; 1 Cor 2:10; 2:16 and 12; 9:9–10; 10:11; 2 Cor 3:6; 3:15–16; and Gal 4:24.[19] What he does not note or seek to explain is the striking fact that *six of the eight passages come from Paul's Corinthian correspondence.*

Why, I wish to ask, would the road to early Christian hermeneutics run through Corinth? Why, to switch metaphors, is the hermeneutical heart of the literary corpus of the early church's "great apostle" in this particular set of letters? Having taken our start from about 340 years out (a kind of Google Earth, or perhaps Google ecclesiastical, view), let us go back and tell the story from the other direction, forward from the very beginning...

The greatest wordsmith in the first Christian generation probably approached the city of Corinth from the east, from Cenchreae on a day sometime in the final years of the reign of Claudius, early in the 50s. This Roman-rebuilt city on the isthmus between the Saronic and Corinthian gulfs was famous for its *diolkos*. As Strabo tells it: "Corinth is said to be wealthy on account of commerce, since the city is situated on the isthmus, and is master of two harbors – one being near to Asia, and the other to Italy... and it makes exchanges of cargo from one direction to the other easy for partners who stand so far apart."[20] Corinth was the conduit between east and west; here cargo of all sorts (human, animal, organic and manufactured, commercial and cultural) was dragged on a worn pathway, the *diolkos*, allowing transit from the Aegean to the Adriatic, from Asia to Italy. What a perfect place for the Christian Hermes (as Luke will later name him in a telling jest[21]) to set up shop.

Later our wordsmith would recast his initial visit using the customary rhetor's *topos*: no real wizard with words, indeed (like Demosthenes) trembling in his sandals, and out of his natural element, he delivered a message that stood not on logical or rhetorical proof, but on the demonstration of the spirit and of power (1 Cor 2:1–5). And yet, despite the anti-rhetorical rhetoric, it was inescapably a verbal proclamation, a *logos* and a *kêrygma*, that he brought, a one-man verbal, visual and biographical re-presentation of Jesus Christ crucified. The proximate result was apparently what he had hoped: some heard, put their trust in his account, and joined the self-styled apostle and his lord in baptism – enough to be called (if perhaps somewhat grandiosely) an *ekklêsia*, "assembly." The long-range result was even more astounding; as Averil Cameron put it in her masterful book, *Christianity*

and the Rhetoric of Empire: "Paul, who had never seen Jesus and whose writings are earlier than the first of the Gospels, *established the precedent that Christianity was to be a matter of articulation and interpretation.*"[22] This precedent, I believe, was most firmly established in the Corinthian correspondence.

Though he denies his power as wordsmith, Paul does later from a distance claim metaphorical distinction as a "wise master-builder" (*sophos architektôn*). Without the self-effacement he had used earlier, in ch. 3, when comparing himself with Apollos (and perhaps Cephas), Paul is adamant that he was their founder; he was the one who, like a wise master-builder, laid the foundation – the only foundation that could be laid: Jesus Christ crucified. And yet as the letter proceeds we learn that the foundation itself is set in words; it lies on a scriptural subfloor without which Jesus Christ crucified would be an unmarked grave under an undeveloped plot. Paul was the first Christian lexicographer, crafting a language for these Gentile Jesus-spirit-infused people around the Mediterranean basin of the first century. But he worked also to move those terms into sentences and paragraphs. He was the first Christian grammarian and rhetorician, as he styled himself, the teacher who moved children to adulthood (1 Cor 3:1–4); as master-builder he *crafted exegetical arguments* to support the astonishing narrative of how Jesus Christ was crucified and raised according to the will of God. The diction gravitates between longhand and shorthand, the rhetoric between appeals of dazzling clarity and tantalizing obscurity. In uncommonly long, personal, semi-public letters to the assemblies he founded Paul expounded and re-expounded the gospel and the story of its reception, a history being created in the very moment of its telling; at other times – indeed, near the end of the tortured interchanges with Corinth – Paul would compress the whole involved message into the smallest imaginable proportions – a three-letter, monosyllabic Greek word, *NAI*! Jesus, Paul said, as known through *his logos*, was God's cosmic "YES" (2 Cor 1:19–20). No more words are needed, Paul says, in hermeneutical fatigue, but a divine cosmic monosyllable, to which the fit human response (as Paul's libretto scores it) is equally concise: "Amen!"

But much lay in between the teeth-chattering timidity of the initial, putatively non-verbal gospel proclamation and its condensation into almost pre- (or post-)verbal grunts and nods perhaps two years later, *and all of it – and this is my key point – was occasioned and spurred on by conflict and misunderstanding.*[23]

The first extant letter, which we know as "1 Corinthians," is itself a response to a previous one by Paul that was in his view at least partly

misapprehended (5:9–10), as well as to a letter in turn from some of the Corinthians that contained questions and perhaps queries about what Paul's prior written instructions might mean (7:1). In reply, Paul wrote this very long epistle (1 Corinthians), for which there is no proportional precedent among the extant earlier letters.[24] Apparently Paul had learned from his experience with the Thessalonians[25] both that he could be effective in the epistolary medium, and, perhaps the hard way, that his letters could also generate confusion and even alienation (attested even in 1 Thess 3:1–10). This prior experience, in conjunction with the complexity of the situation at Corinth (of which he had learned from various parties), may explain the extraordinary length of what is today a 16-chapter letter that Paul sent from Ephesus either by the hand of Timothy or timed to coincide with his visit there (1 Cor 16:8–10). Perhaps Paul learned from the Thessalonians, for instance, that three long and tortured sentences on marriage and sex (1 Thess 4:3–8) could cause more problems than they would solve (hence his extended chs. 6 and 7 in 1 Corinthians, and his avoidance of the term *skeuos*!).[26] Length itself may be an overt bid at clarity, at comprehensiveness, though even this huge letter says there are things it will not cover for now (11:34: "as for the other matters, I shall give instructions when I come"). And the more one says, the more one risks even more ambiguity and obfuscation.[27] Words get in the way, but they were, after all, the stock in trade of the missionary with a message to communicate. Deficient and tricky instruments, but still as indispensable as the ropes tugging the cargo across the Corinthian *diolkos*.

The Corinthian correspondence is a kind of epistolary novel; packaged as a pair of canonical letters, it is consequently an epistolary puzzle that requires reconstruction of the plot line and component parts. Such contextualization is necessary for all epistolary analysis, but acutely so in the case of this archive that has come down to us. What is most remarkable of all is the number of references to Paul's own prior letters and prior visits – the evidence with which all scholars work. In my judgment 1 Corinthians is a single unified letter, but the second canonical epistle is made up of what were originally five separate letters. I would like to acknowledge at the outset that many readers may not accept this partition, or any partition, of 2 Corinthians, and that is fine, because my main point in this book holds nonetheless: that Paul is in this correspondence (even if it is only two extant letters) responding to *some* earlier letters, even if we no longer have them. I would argue that a benefit of my proposal is that it better replicates the *genuine dynamism* involved in this vivid and heated exchange of letters, face-to-face encounters and divergent memories, and appreciates

more fully the role the letters themselves played in the escalation of the conflict. But that is the case, or should be the case, I would insist, no matter what textual disposition (*hypothesis* or *oikonomia*[28]) one adopts for reading this correspondence.

As I reconstruct the exchange of letters (on both literary and historical grounds),[29] after Paul had sent and they received 1 Corinthians, and presumably after some reactions to it reached him while likely in Macedonia, Paul wrote a letter now contained in 2 Corinthians 8 which fanned the flames of suspicion and irritation about Paul's having pushed forward the collection effort he now calls a *diakonia*, and usurped their prerogative by himself selecting and attesting the envoys who would carry the precious funds out of their hands and to Jerusalem. Indeed, some apparently noted the problem: that Paul had sent an authorizing letter for Titus and the brother – Paul, who had no such letters for himself! The next letter (now contained in 2 Corinthians 2:14—7:4)[30] responds to this umbrage with an impassioned self-defense of his diakonal dignity, with a keenly attuned and rhetorically risky argument that he did not need a text to authorize him (i.e. an *epistolê systatikê*, "letter of recommendation"), for the Spirit did that, as well as his own deficient body, which serves as proof that he is an "apostle," since the one who sees him (apostle = envoy) sees the crucified Christ who sent him.

This letter went to Corinth while Paul himself journeyed from Macedonia toward Corinth; when he arrived he apparently received, at least at the hands of some, a humiliating reception, a disastrous and foreshortened visit which, in concert with the letter of self-defense for the maligned messenger, served to reinforce the incongruity between his "weighty" letters and "woefully weak" bodily presence (2 Cor 10:10). Apparently the Christian Hermes, unlike his pagan predecessor, was better on paper than in person. Since the body and living voice were unable to accomplish what the text also had not, Paul has no choice but to resort to language again, this time the self-styled "fighting words" in 2 Corinthians 10—13. Insisting that he had written the previous letter not in order to "tear them down" but rather to "build them up" (dressing himself once again in Jeremiah's words),[31] Paul crafts a bitter and intensely clever argument that is meant to provide proof that he is indeed an apostle, as attested by both the requisite signs and necessary witnesses. Paul would later recall that, while waiting for this letter to be delivered by his trusty envoy, Titus, he paced to and fro, fretting about what effect his words would have. When Titus did not arrive in that city on the northwestern coast of Asia Minor, Paul, in a state of lover's distress, could not contain his anxiety, and sailed across to

Macedonia (probably Thessaloniki, perhaps Neapolis) and there received both Titus and his report, a good news/bad news tale. On the one hand, Titus was able to tell Paul that his words to the Corinthians had had a very concrete result – repentance; on the other hand, the cost of that repentance was high – pain and grief that Paul had been so severe with those he was supposed to love (7:5–16), indeed, those whom he had himself called to be united in love in his second letter (the canonical 1 Corinthians). The remedy of harsh words had an additional sting yet again of disingenuousness and self-contradiction.

Now it was up to Paul to pick up the stylus one more time – the instrument that he had wielded as a weapon earlier was the only tool he had to assuage the grief he had caused. Only this time he writes a letter (now contained in 2 Cor 1:1—2:13; 7:5–16; 13:11–13) to confirm the restoration of the relationship, and offer an author's grief commensurate to that of his readers – as proof that he did not willingly cause them harm. The very last piece of the correspondence is preserved in what is now 2 Corinthians 9, a final request to the Corinthians and indeed the whole Roman province of Achaia to seal their bond with him and with the Macedonians (whose example Paul had invoked to their anger and regional jealousy back in the early stages [2 Corinthians 8]) by joining in the collection effort for the saints in Jerusalem. Deliriously happy at this hard-fought outcome, Paul wraps up the whole correspondence with a benediction that can sit as a suitable caption under the whole for him: "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift" (*anekdiêgêtos dôrea*). Now words completely fail to describe both the gift from the Corinthians (of money and of loyalty) and the gift from the deity of a joyous outcome. A communicative series that purportedly began with Paul tongue-tied perhaps suitably ends the same way – in oxymoronic apophatic expressionism.[32] Back and forth over these six (surviving) letters, in the course of his sometimes tortured correspondence with the Corinthians, Paul negotiated and renegotiated the meanings of his prior utterances. As he did so, Paul was, as it turns out, not only honing arguments for later use in Galatians and Romans and beyond,[33] but was in effect fashioning the building blocks of Christian hermeneutics.

And yet he himself was working with existing materials. Paul's message of Christ crucified (the *logos tou staurou*, "word of the cross") was a claim that came with proof – scriptural proof. The four-episode version of Paul's gospel narrative twice includes the refrain *kata tas graphas*, "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3–4). The great wordsmith, therefore, was not only a writer but also a reader, an interpreter, of the scriptures of Israel.

He reminds the Corinthians of that in this letter, doing so in shorthand fashion,[34] such that we can only speculate which passages in the Septuagint he called down as proof for the fact that "Christ died on behalf of our sins" or that "he has been raised on the third day" (1 Cor 15:3–4). Although the scriptural proofs that confirm the *euangelion* remain occluded behind his shorthand, Paul was not reticent, throughout the long argument that is 1 Corinthians or the series of shorter letters in 2 Corinthians, to draw continually on the scriptural record for justification of other arguments he sought to make, whether by inspiration, for ornamentation or for exemplification:[35] Isaiah's dark warning against the wisdom of the wise (29:14, quoted in 1 Cor 1:19); Jeremiah's counsel that boasting should be "in the Lord" (1 Cor 1:31, to reappear in 2 Cor 10:17); instructions for feeding oxen turned to the question of apostolic life-support (Deut 25:4; 1 Cor 9:9–10); the wilderness generation of Exodus and Numbers, who, baptized into Moses, grumbled and perished and presented, as Paul tells it, an admonitory allegory (*typoi*) for the Corinthians (Numbers 11, 16; 1 Cor 10:1–13); the argument that Christ is a new Adam, the heavenly man to match the earthly, by appeal to Gen 2:7 (1 Cor 15:45); the precedent of manna from heaven (Exod 16:18) to justify the requirement of divine distributive justice that calls forth Corinthian contributions to the collection for the saints in Jerusalem in 2 Cor 8:14–15; the cryptic statement in Ps 115:1, "I believed, therefore I spoke," which supports Pauline spirit-propelled *parrêsia*[36] in 2 Cor 4:13; the judicial requirement for two or three witnesses to make an accusation stick, cited from Deut 19:15 in 2 Cor 13:1. The list goes on. These are just the tip of the iceberg of statements in 1 and 2 Corinthians where Paul interprets or invokes scripture that were to provide both exegetical terminology and exegetical precedent for early Christian biblical interpretation (of both "Old" and "New" Testaments) and set it on its own spiraling path of unending and complicated hermeneutical debates and disputes. The Corinthian correspondence is the *diolkos* carrying the cargo of hermeneutical tools from one end of the empire to another, from the first through the fourth centuries, and well beyond.

But Paul as we watch him at work in these letters was not only an interpreter of the sacred scriptures (*hai graphai*); indeed, many of his hermeneutical statements in the Corinthian correspondence, including perhaps the most famous ("the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" [*to gar gramma apoktennei, to de pneuma zôopoiei*], 2 Cor 3:6), have as their preliminary referent and purpose the defense of his own body, his gospel, and his *diakonia* against counter-statement, counter-evidence and willful or innocent misinterpretation. This was because for Paul both the scriptural text

and his own body and life were epiphanic media,[37] subject to both direct and correct, or occluded and misperceived interpretation. The hermeneutical potency and legacy of the Corinthian correspondence, I would like to insist, is due to disputes over Paul's own self-interpretation and self-claims. We can see, therefore, that the history of Pauline interpretation begins with Paul himself, though it could never end there, since he *did not* and *does not* have complete control over his words and their meanings. Given the changing and changeable rhetorical circumstances that developed between Paul and the Corinthians, no single interpretive method would suffice for the task.

The apostle was "all things to all people" (1 Cor 9:23), not only in adapting his arguments to particular audiences (his *synkatabasis* or *oikonomia*),[38] but also in his tactical employment of a range of hermeneutical justifications for the proofs and evidence he summoned in support of particular points he wished to make in this succession of missives. *Paul's correspondence course in interpretation with the Corinthians was not an indoctrination into any single interpretive method (allegory or any other), but amounted to a set of carefully crafted and strategically delivered arguments by which they volleyed back and forth the meaning of words, episodes and relationships.* The most remarkable thing about the Corinthian correspondence is that, because we have a series of exchanges, we can see Paul interpret his own letters (and glimpse other readings by his addressees, which he disputes). I have argued previously, in a 2003 article entitled "The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics," that modern scholars have been slow to accept what the Corinthian letters demonstrate: that Paul's letters do not and never did have a single, unambiguous meaning. Even in his own lifetime, Paul's letters – that most dynamic of genres – were disputed, his meaning contested and negotiated in the history of the ongoing relationship within which the letters were situated. In the process of negotiating his own meaning[39] – of prior letters, oral statements, idiosyncratic and potentially self-contradictory behaviors – Paul made recourse to rhetorical *topoi*[40] that justify the movement from text to sense, from the surface to the depths, from the visible to the invisible. This is why the Corinthian correspondence is in a real sense the birth of Pauline hermeneutics – because only here in the extant remains of Paul's letters can we see the process of writing, reading, rewriting, renegotiating words and reality unfold before our very eyes. It surely happened in other places, too, but only in Corinth[41] can we trace the process in greater, if not full, detail.[42] And, once these letters were enshrined in the *corpus Paulinum*, their hermeneutical proclivities were available for continual reappropriation.

Hermeneutics is born in misunderstanding. And hermeneutics is no hobby for those with too much time on their hands; it is directed to very specific persuasive purposes, carried out in agonized arm-wrestling with language and its wily, untamed nature and with other readers who are similarly and inconveniently ungovernable, and yet still – at least theoretically – within reach as a circle of possible persuasion. It was all about hermeneutics – understood as the most carefully calibrated attention to clarity and obscurity, which is the essential dilemma of both good poetics (in literary terms) and truthful testimony (in forensic ones). As a thinker with apocalyptic start-up software, Paul was inextricably caught between the poles of the clear and unclear, the revealed and concealed, the known and unknown. His hermeneutical claims in individual arguments (always very specific) gravitated to one pole or the other, depending upon the context, depending upon the audience, depending upon the stakes. But mostly they veered and hovered, like the famous veil in 2 Corinthians 3 that both reveals and conceals, and moves from one conversation partner to another, somewhere between the two, and even suspended over the text, making communication possible, but always contested, fraught and questioned, partial and subject to ongoing revision and revelation. After all, one who thought his own diseased body was in reality an emblem of Christ crucified was continually engaged in a hermeneutics that tensively tendered and extended the surface and depth meanings. His own molecular body was as real as real could be, and yet, its referent, he believed, went well beyond whatever physical epilepsy, headaches, sinusitis, eye disease, depression or other malady he suffered[43] – indeed it was what it meant to "carry around the dying process of Jesus" (2 Cor 4:10). In the face of misunderstanding Paul could with exasperation call on his readers to look at what was right before their eyes – in his text or in his body (2 Cor 10:7; 12:6); at other times he could urge them to disregard outward appearances and probe below the surface to the depths of meaning available only to mature, spiritual people, those in possession, after all, of the very *nous Christou* ("the mind or meaning of Christ") (2 Cor 10:7; 1 Cor 2:16).

The agonistic apostle was the inaugurator of an early Christian exegetical tradition that would embody and explicitly claim him as its exemplar for the *agônes* lying ahead. While towering figures like Origen and Gregory and Chrysostom and Augustine (as well as others) would find in Paul's letters (and especially the Corinthian letters) a rich store of materials for the development of Christian hermeneutics, his example, because it was rooted in tactical needs in shifting exigencies rather than in an abstract linguistic or interpretive theory, would always (and expeditiously) defy

complete systematization. Gregory says as much with his insistence on the need for interpretation to be measured by its utility ("with an eye to what would be beneficial", *pros to ôphelimon blepôn*).[44] Gregory did not claim Paul as unique in this respect because he knew Paul was not; he was attributing to Paul a commonplace about textual interpretation that was routinely taught in ancient secondary education. Cicero, for instance, in his treatment of the use of textual evidence in forensic cases, stipulates that one must invoke the deliberative topics in order to argue that one's interpretation of a text is to be favored because it is more honorable, useful and necessary (and that the opposite is true of the interpretation of one's opponents).[45] This is a principle on which Cicero, Paul and Gregory all agree. It is time to bring the rhetoric of the apostle and the rhetoric of his ancient interpreters together.[46]

A dynamic and rhetorically attuned approach to Pauline interpretation (in his lifetime and thereafter) requires us to refocus the inquiry by asking, not just how Origen or Diodore or Chrysostom or Theodoret *commented on the Pauline text*,[47] but how they *commented with the Pauline text*. Just as Paul's words did work for himself, so his words do work for them. Just as Paul's non-literal interpretations (by whatever term!) were anything but "arbitrary," so were theirs. Our opening with Gregory of Nyssa makes this point – the rhetorical expediency and goal involved in any scriptural interpretation must always require acute attention. Given the hermeneutical density of these letters (because so much was at stake and contested between Paul and the Corinthians, including the meaning and status of the letters themselves), they were naturally to furnish abundant interpretive axioms for later expounders, but we would miss that very point if we were to try only to see what they thought the text meant (in some abstract sense) rather than what they did with it. The Corinthian letters were not just received, but acted upon and with. They are not just the *subject* of hermeneutical inquiry, they are the *agent* of it, both in Paul's lifetime and in his afterlife in the literary corpus.

Setting Paul in relation to and in a continuing hermeneutical tradition with his patristic interpreters also allows us to consider why it is that we ask some questions of them that we do not ask of him (and vice versa). The traditional dichotomy between Alexandrine allegorists and Antiochene literalists has for most of modern scholarship (until recently[48]) set the terms of scholarly discussion of ancient exegetical work. And yet no one asks if Paul was an Alexandrine or Antiochene, of course, because the idea of two fixed and opposed schools of interpretation, according to the traditional narrative, does not emerge until the third century with Origen (or perhaps

earlier with Clement). But why does the question seem so odd if, after all, regionally discrete school traditions were in effect? Luke places Paul squarely in Antioch; Paul's own Galatians 2:11–14 situates him there for a time. And yet from the point of view of the historical Paul, one of the great unsolved mysteries is why he apparently never went to Alexandria (despite Rom 15:19, the "circle" [*kyklos*] from Jerusalem to Illyricum is a half moon, not a circle!). And it is likewise the case that the foundations of the Christian mission in Alexandria remain for us entirely in the fog.[49] Perhaps Luke was responding to that lacuna in having Alexandria in some sense come to Paul, in the person of Apollos. If so, where did Antioch and Alexandria therefore meet, for this first Christian historian? In Corinth![50] But of course in saying this we are speaking completely and intentionally anachronistically, for Luke knows of no such regional hermeneutical division, either. And indeed the title Luke gives to Apollos of Alexandria – *anêr logios* ("man with rhetorical skill") – fits equally the historical Paul and Luke's own depiction of Paul as a great orator (but not a letter writer – hence precisely reversing the evaluation of the Corinthian critic of 2 Cor 10:10). In a narrative sense Antioch and Alexandria meet in Corinth (in Acts), but, as has long been noted, the Corinthian conflicts and their white heat of hermeneutical contestation have been wiped clean from the later, harmonizing narrative record.

The remarkable documents that are Paul's letters show that a person, a thinker, like him could never be limited to or encompassed by the over-simplistic and rhetorically constructed binary of "literal" or "allegorical" interpretation, due to the fact that his combative arsenal required both, in a prudently adaptable alchemy, because one of his most audacious claims was that the two were for him inseparably fused in his own flesh. What mattered were the expedients of the gospel which, theoretically unveiled in both his *parrêsia* and his *parousia*,[51] Paul knew from experience were not read as such. Hermeneutical rules or justifications were required to explain both his gospel's interpretive successes and its apparent failures, at least until eschatologically resolved by divine disclosure. No single method could do that. The missionary message required clarity, and yet it claimed simultaneously the opacity that is the necessary cloak of any good mystery.[52] This genuine tension[53] in Pauline poetics is beautifully exemplified by later Christian scribes who, when copying 1 Cor 2:1, poised indecisively between *martyrion* and *mystêrion*, leaving both in their wake. Who could imagine antonyms would look so much alike, distinguished only by three medial letters easily lost in uncial or ligature? Did the man who arrived in Corinth on some sunny day in the early 50s offer "testimony" (patently, publicly

and verifiably true or false speech) or "mystery" (always somewhere on a sliding scale between the hidden and the revealed)? Surely either, or even both, depending on context. Timing was crucial. But can one move back and forth from hermeneutical models based on forensics to those based on apocalyptic epistemologies without occasioning suspicion? How can such speech be attested and evaluated? This question lies at the heart of the Corinthian correspondence, in both its inaugural hearings and subsequent re-enactments, which test and try these words.

One such trial is found in a fourth-century dialogue entitled "Concerning right faith in God" (in Greek: *Peri tês eis theon orthês pisteôs*; in Latin: *de recta in deum fide*).[54] The work is attributed to its main protagonist, "Adamantius," in antiquity taken to be Origen, due to Eusebius's reference to his bearing this sobriquet,[55] though modern scholars mostly reject this identification.[56] The literary text is a transcript of a purported hearing between a staunch defender of orthodoxy, Adamantius, and a series of "heretics," beginning with the Marcionite, Megethius,[57] in the presence of a supposedly impartial non-Christian judge (*dikastês*) named Eutropius. We shall pick up the trial in the first book, at ch. 22. Here, as one would expect, it is the authoritative status of the "Old Testament" scriptures that is the subject of debate, because it goes to the heart of what might be admissible evidence. Paul's Corinthian correspondence plays a major evidentiary role in this *agôn* ("trial") of interpretation. Adamantius has just quoted Romans 8:36, where Paul, he says, "used (*chrêsthai*) the same prophetic statement," Psalm 43:23: "on behalf of you we are being put to death the whole day." At this point the judge steps in:

EUTROPIUS (the judge): How then does the apostle use (*apokechrêtai*) the prophets? For if the prophets and he himself speak in the same fashion, then it is clear that he does not invalidate (*akyroi*),[58] but makes use of them as good and lawful (*kala kai nomima*).[59]

MEGETHIUS (the Marcionite): Paul uses literally (*apokechrêtai rhêtôs*) none of the ancients.[60] That's impossible! (*amêchanon*).

ADAMANTIUS: I will prove (*deiknymi*) that the apostle speaks in many places, ratifying and not rejecting (*epikyrounta kai ouk apoballonta*) [the words of the ancients]. For he says in the first letter to the Corinthians: "so that no flesh may boast before him. And from him (God) you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and justification and sanctification and redemption, so that, just as it is written, 'let the one who boasts boast in the Lord'" (Jer 9:22–23; 1 Cor 1:29–30). And he displays this more precisely (*akribesteron . . . emphainei*) in the same letter when he says: "who shepherds a flock and does not eat of its milk? Am I saying these things on human authority,[61] or does not the Law, too, say these things? For in the Law of

> Moses it is written: 'you shall not muzzle the ox when it is threshing' (Deut 25:4). Are the oxen of concern to God? Or is it for our sakes entirely that he says this? For indeed, for our sakes it was written that 'the one who plows should plow in hope'"[62] (1 Cor 9:8–10).
>
> MEGETHIUS: You recognize that he said "the Law of Moses," not "of God" (*Môseôs nomon eipen, ou tou theou*).
>
> EUTROPIUS (the judge): I recognize that he said "the Law of Moses," but he ratified it (*ekyrôsen*) by saying specifically, "Are the oxen of concern *to God*? Or is it for our sakes entirely that he says this? For indeed, for our sakes it was written." You see that Paul ratifies (*kyroi*) and uses (*kechrêtai*) it[63] as something inherently good. For no one uses (*kechrêtai*) an outdated[64] or inferior law (*sapros . . . ê phaulos nomos*) for proof (*pros apodeixin*) but rather one that is superior and currently authoritative (*kreittôn kai teleios*). *For just as you* (Megethius), *when you wish to establish* (*synistan*) *the things you are saying, use* (*kechrêtai*) *Paul as your witness* (*martys*), *so the things you are saying might be confirmed, thus also the apostle made use of* (*apechrêsato*) *the Law as his witness* (*martys*).[65]

This segment of debate, offered in an ostensibly – though clearly artificial – forensic setting, is itself lightly based upon a pun on the 1 Corinthians text, intertextually set in relation to 1 Tim 1:8 ("we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully"). In both passages, and in this reprise, what is at stake is the "use" and "abuse"[66] of religious authority. Paul's right to "use" the *exousia* of apostolic support in the historical inauguration of this argument becomes a precedent for Christian authors' right to "use" Old Testament scripture in the Marcionite–Catholic controversies. Pauline precedent, as phrased by the "judge" Eutropius, is in the form of witness; the *corpus Paulinum* is treated as a written deposition brought into court as a witness for one side or the other.[67] The two sides contest whether Paul works for their side (and against their opponents) or for their opponents (and against them). The judge not only renders a verdict about his present day, but states as a commonplace an historical judgment about Paul – that he used the Law as evidence in his proofs. The forensic criteria are carried further, as the judge invokes a commonplace of legal practice that the Law of Moses must be still "on the books," so to speak, since Paul – assumed to be an astute practitioner of legal reasoning – would not cite a law that was out of date or inferior, but would, of course, as all legal training insists, make his appeal based upon the superior and still-valid legislation which applies to the case at hand.[68] Hence here the judge pronounces on the forms of evidence that are admissible, and announces that Pauline precedent is to stand.

The intertextuality of legal precedent informs this argument, for Paul is the example of how scripture is to be summoned for arguments, and also

his own particular *exemplum* in this case is taken as upholding the body of evidence upon which he draws. This is meant to trap the Marcionite in a Catch-22, for in citing Paul as his witness elsewhere, he is – as Eutropius sees it – caught in a self-contradiction. What we also need to notice, however, is that both sides are treating the text (or rather, the texts) as witnesses, cross-examining them for their testimony on the case at hand (the validity of the Law).

Naturally this way of setting up the task of textual interpretation imposes an artificial dualism, black or white, with no grey meanings. Both speakers employ some of the same exegetical principles, such as giving close attention to the wording. For instance, the Marcionite rewords the text to emphasize what it does not say, "the law of God," to which the "catholic" responds with an appeal to the fuller context, in which Paul refers to what is of concern "to God," hence implying divine authorship of the Law. Adamantius avers that he could offer many examples, aggregating his witnesses, but offers two, both from 1 Corinthians; he sharpens the argument by proclaiming the second proof, from 1 Corinthians 9, "more precise" (*akribesteron*). And the judge Eutropius furthers Adamantius's case himself, both by drawing out the exegesis of 1 Cor 9:9–10 and by seeking to tangle Megethius in his own method: by using Paul as exegetical precedent, the judge scarcely impartially declares, Megethius is unwittingly enshrining the very legal principle that demonstrates the validity of the law for Paul, since he based his own arguments on it.[69]

This early Christian courtroom dialogue illustrates not only the logic of Pauline precedent, but one key aspect of Pauline interpretation (by him and of him) I term the "agonistic paradigm of interpretation," in which texts are treated as evidence for or against one's own case, and employed as witnesses. I wish to emphasize in this volume how crucially influential the Corinthian correspondence was in early Christian exegetical practice, and to argue that there is a relatively simple reason for this, grounded in the historical and epistolary contexts of this series of missives. From the point of view of the historical Paul and the succession of letters in the mid-50s, meaning was at stake in Corinth because misunderstanding and mistrust about Paul's *logos* abounded, and apologetics followed. This led Paul to seek, over and over again, new ways to clarify meaning – in the words of scripture, in his own, and in those of his correspondents. The Corinthian epistolary exchange, therefore, *was and is* a correspondence course in *practical, indeed tactical, hermeneutics*. As with all exegesis (ancient and modern) theory and practice are intricately combined, as part of good practice is the invocation of the right "theory" (or commonplace about

where meaning is to be found) at the right time. Tracking the history of effects of the Corinthian correspondence in the early church is like tracing the route of a perpetual cyclone, a whirlwind in which Pauline theory and practice whirl and swirl with those of his interpreters down through time. We shall enter the whirlwind next at the first extant recorded moment of Pauline self-interpretation to pass across the Corinthian *diolkos*.

CHAPTER 2

The agôn *of Pauline interpretation*

When Gregory of Nyssa offered his *apologia* for allegory in the Prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, with Paul as his opening and star witness, he did not disallow literal readings altogether. Gregory conceded, consistent with his general criterion that scriptural interpretation must furnish *ôpheleia* ("benefit"), that, "when the literal meaning (*lexis*), understood as it is written (*hôs eirêtai nooumenê*), offers some benefit, then we have at the ready what we need to make the object of our attention (*to spoudazomenon*)."[1] Though Gregory did not cite Paul as a precedent for this mode of reading, he could have done.

The first recorded act of Pauline interpretation is found in 1 Cor 5:9–11. In that passage it is Paul himself who gives an exegesis of a sentence in a prior letter of his own that had to do with association with sinners of various types. What he meant by what he wrote has apparently – in his eyes – been misconstrued. Now Paul writes to clarify his intention. Exegetes, ancient and modern, seek to apportion the blame for this act of hermeneutical failure; was it because Paul wrote obliquely, or the Corinthians read obtusely?[2] More often than not, even in modern, "objective" commentary it is the Corinthians on whom the blame rests. My exegesis proceeds from the assumption that it takes two to make hermeneutical confusion.

"I wrote to you (*egrapsa*) in the letter not to associate with *pornoi*[3] . . . But now I am writing (*egrapsa*) to you not to associate if anyone who bears the name of brother or sister is a *pornos* or defrauder or . . . " (1 Cor 5:9, 11). An exegetical issue all interpreters face is how to take the same word *egrapsa* in the two instances: as "I wrote" or "I write." I think the content and especially the *de nun* ("But now") in 5:11 indicates a temporal contrast, thus rendering the first a genuine past tense and the second an epistolary aorist. The grammar of the epistolary aorist is inherently of hermeneutical import; an author uses the past tense verb in the act of writing with a proleptic view to the missive's later reception.[4] It grants in essence the

hermeneutical problem: that the statement, once set down on papyrus, is temporally ambiguous, both a past and a present act and meaning. What is at stake in deciding about these two aorist verbs of writing is nothing less than whether Paul is regarded as having created and sought to correct confusion, or having written once and for all a perspicacious text that merely requires reiteration by its authoritative author.[5] In either case, Paul is seen as clarifying a misunderstood or ambiguous statement by appeal to authorial intent.

After quoting his earlier letter, Paul then addresses the apparent misreading by *quoting how he would have had to have written the text in order for it to mean what they took it to mean*: "not entirely with *pornoi* of this world, or greedy or rapacious people or idolators." The words he adds to this phrasing, which, Paul implies, would be required if their reading were right – *pantôs* ("entirely") and *tou kosmou toutou* ("of this world") – would make the sentence a general prohibition of association with any people in the world who fit these sin statuses. In particular, the problem appears to be the underdetermined term *pornoi* (a word, we might add, that still befuddles modern interpreters, particularly as the English term "fornicate" has wandered with difficulty among categories of sexual malfeasance in modern and post-modern industrial societies[6]). Paul's self-exegesis doesn't fully define all of what falls under this category (does it include adultery, prostitution, pre-marital or non-marital sex . . .?), which has disappointed many readers and ecclesiastics down to the present; but this is because his self-correction has only one key aspect in mind: the location of these forbidden *pornoi* – in the *ecclesia*, not outside of it.

The implication so far is of a reading close to the text of his own letter; look at the words, Paul implicitly pleads, even as he is in fact asking them to focus on *words that are not there*. It should have been clear to you! Paul assumes that his precise wording should have been a window into his exact intention, his precise meaning ("I did not say . . . "). Then he offers a second consideration: "for then you would have had to have gone out from the world." The compressed syllogistic logic is that I would not write what you could not possibly do, so if you read me as calling for what is impossible (i.e. "to go out from the world"), *you must be misreading me*, on the assumption that the plain sense of the text cannot be nonsensical.

But Paul is not satisfied with merely rereading the earlier text to reify and perhaps rectify his intent; he also rewrites it: "But now (*nun*)[7] I am writing (*egrapsa*) to you," thus setting in motion a process of "corrective composition"[8] that will extend throughout his letters to the Corinthians,

and onwards to Pauline pseudepigrapha from 2 Thessalonians and the Pastorals to the *Visio Pauli*, etc. It is also, I would maintain, an active goal of much Pauline interpretation, ancient and modern, as well as a common form of argumentation (Paul couldn't have meant *x*; he must have meant *y*). In the rewrite contained in 5:11 Paul is very careful not to invalidate or go beyond the letter of the original. It is noteworthy that he repeats the first two words: *mê synanamignysthai* ("not to associate with"); then he gives a paraphrase that clarifies that the sinner in each case should be one who bears the name "brother" (*ean tis adelphos onomazomenos ê pornos*). Immediately thereafter comes a fuller list of sin statuses that either add to the earlier list or demonstrate that the first quotation was a shorthand[9] that is now cast in longhand. It is also possible that, in addition to the important clarification that this refers to in-group sanctions, Paul has added here as a new injunction that they should not have commensality with such a person ("nor even to eat with such a person"). But this might have been part of the original statement,[10] because an interpretation of an earlier call not to eat with non-believing others (most appositely including idolators) might lie behind some of the food problems to be addressed shortly (chs. 8 and 10).

In this moment of scripted self-exegesis Paul presents hermeneutics as a simple matter. It is also, if we look ahead to 6:9–10, a grave matter, for there most of these same offenses are repeated in the severe warning that those who commit them will not inherit the kingdom of God. Ambiguity on matters of law and judgment is intolerable. There are right and wrong readings, and right and wrong behaviors which follow, and to adjudicate between them one needs to look carefully at the wording (it does not say *pantôs*) and at the consequences of a given interpretation. And there is, we note, an inherent tension in this passage: Paul issues both a rewrite of the earlier text *and* an interpretation of the earlier letter that accords with the new rewriting. He does not want to concede entirely that what he wrote before was unclear (though he writes because it apparently was). Consequently he leaves that text in place, now supplemented by an interpretation that is designed to invalidate some readings of it (as well as the actions that have apparently drawn on that reading for justification).

In invoking these two hermeneutical principles – appeals to the exact wording of the text and to its logical meaning and practical result – Paul was not breaking new ground. He was employing standard techniques very well known among ancient wordsmiths – that is, those with the rhetorical training that was the ABCs of education into literacy. In recent years, thanks to authors like Christoph Schäublin, Bernhard Neuschäfer[11] and Frances

Young,[12] as earlier Robert M. Grant,[13] the rootedness of early Christian exegesis in rhetorical training has been much more seriously appreciated. The consistent usage of rhetorical terminology and techniques in patristic exegesis – by Alexandrines and Antiochenes alike (and Carthaginians, Cappadocians and others) – has been abundantly documented, though more careful studies of individual works and authors that realize fully the implications of this literary-cultural milieu are still in demand, and will likely comprise a large place in the research agenda of the next generation.

As we move this research trajectory forward it is imperative to define even more closely where in ancient rhetorical education students were trained in textual hermeneutics. What has not been sufficiently recognized is that ancient secondary education not only instructed students to read texts through a series of steps involving *to methodikon* and *to historikon*, etc. as practiced on the great classics under the tutelage of the *grammatikos*,[14] but also that the rhetorical education with which this was combined invested particular attention in teaching the leaders of tomorrow *how to use texts*, that is, textual evidence (either laws or written depositions) in forensic cases. The "agonistics" of interpretation, built into rhetorical education and into the cultural world of which rhetoric was the medium, meant that it was fully recognized by all who could read that *texts could be taken in different ways*.[15] In the words of an elegant and important book by Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*,

> As practiced by the ancients and their humanist admirers, interpretation is by and large adversarial, an antagonistic affair. Because one of its most pressing arenas was the law courts, moreover, many of its most compelling strategies belong to forensic debate.[16]

Professor Eden has argued convincingly that it was this forensic paradigm of interpretation, *interpretatio scripti* – as exemplified in Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian – that formed the basis of patristic biblical exegesis, *interpretatio scripturae*[17] (and indeed of hermeneutics in the western tradition through Renaissance humanism and down to Gadamer).[18] In the legal traditions as in Christian exegesis formed on this "agonistic paradigm," as I call it, the hermeneutical problem is essentially the same[19]: how can an ancient, fixed and authoritative text deal equitably and flexibly with any or all possible later contexts?[20]

Cicero's youthful work, *De inventione*, is a most valuable witness for my point that students in antiquity were taught in secondary (rhetorical) education to be not "literalists" or "allegorists," but skilled users of a set

of commonplaces about textual meaning that could be employed on both sides. It is important to emphasize that this polarizing way of interpreting texts is itself the construction of the hermeneutical task required by the agonistic setting, in which there are only two sides, and therefore texts, as witnesses, must be deemed either for or against, true or untrue. This is the case even though both sides realize that *all texts are at least potentially ambiguous*, and hence must be pushed to support a claim of clarity for the present purpose. The agonistic paradigm of interpretation, I have argued in another context, is the fundamental operative principle *on both sides* of what has been considered the opening salvo of the literalism–allegorism, Antioch–Alexandria debate, in the treatise by Eustathius of Antioch against Origen's interpretation of the passage in 1 Kingdoms 28, where the *engastrimythos* ("belly-myther") at Endor is said to have raised Samuel from the dead.[21] The agonistic paradigm is also at work in Gregory's overt defense (*apologia*) of allegory in the Prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, which we considered in Chapter 1, for it is the source of his central appeal to the principle of utility (*ôpheleia*) in interpretation,[22] and of his invocation of Paul as exegetical *precedent*. And it is at work already in Paul.

In *De inventione* 2.40–48 Cicero treats *controversiae quae in scripto versantur*, "controversies which turn upon written documents" (*De inv.* 2.39.115). He says these result from five possible causes: ambiguity (*ex ambiguo*), from letter and intention (*ex scripto et sententia*), from conflicting laws (*ex contrariis legibus*), from reasoning by analogy (*ex ratiocinatione*) and from definition (*ex definitione*). Kathy Eden argues, and I agree, that Paul was responsible for Christianizing the second of these causes in 2 Cor 3:6, "for the letter (*gramma*) kills, but the spirit (*pneuma*) gives life":[23]

> This Christianization of rhetorical interpretation-theory, however, is Paul's doing, not Augustine's.[24] A Hellenized Jew with a good rhetorical education, Paul appropriates the opposition between *scriptum* and *voluntas* – in his Greek, *rhêton* and *dianoia*[25] . . . A skilled rhetorician, Paul chooses terms familiar to Jewish law, reformulating the opposition from *scriptum* versus *voluntas* to *gramma* versus *pneuma* . . . The opposition between literal and spiritual reading, in other words, transforms the first ground of controversy from the rhetorical tradition of interpretation.[26]

Rhetorical education also gave students a set of *topoi* (commonplaces) to use when presenting their interpretation of the textual evidence at hand. The person who defends a literal reading of the text in question (*qui scriptum defendet*) in a given case must deny that the text is ambiguous (*ambiguum*)

in favor of a reading he will declare to be clear (*apertum*). The clear, desired reading is upheld by such commonplaces (*loci communes*) as the following:

- Appeal to everyday speech (*in consuetudine sermonis*), in which we all know what words mean
- Appeal to the entire literary context (*ex omni*); any word is ambiguous (*ambiguum*) if separated from those preceding or following it which make it plain (*perspicuum*)
- Appeal to the life (*vita*), disposition (*animus*), character (*persona*) and other writings or actions (*ex ceteris eius scriptis et ex factis*) of the author/lawgiver
- Appeal to the consequences of the opponent's reading – impossible, inconvenient, dishonorable, unnecessary or inexpedient (*impossibilis, incommodus, inhonestus, haut necessarius, inutilis*)[27]
- Appeal to the slippery slope of consequences – if we do not follow the law, no rule for regulation is left but individual whim or fancy (*si ex suo quisque consilio et ex ea ratione quae in mentem aut in libidinem venerit*)
- Call to the judges to look at nothing beyond what is written (*nihil eos qui iudicent nisi id quod scriptum spectare oportere*)
- Rewrite the text to show how it would have been written if the opponent were right (*demonstrare, quemadmodum scripsisset, si id quod adversarius accipiat fieri aut intellegi voluisset*)[28]

On the other hand, if the textual evidence does not appear to work for one's case and one must deny the "literal" sense (*contra scriptum qui dicet*), one should allow ambiguity (*ambiguum*) on the surface of things, only to use that very ambiguity to fashion one's own alternate, clear reading (*apertum*). Such an interpretation makes use of a set of complementary commonplaces:

- Appeal to everyday speech: if we took all statements literally (*verba spectare*), without regard to the intent (*et non ad voluntatem*) of the speaker, we couldn't get through the day[29]
- Appeal to the author who, if he rose from the dead (*si exsistat*), would agree with one's own interpretation of what he wrote and its applicability to the case at hand
- Say the author didn't expect his readers just to recite it (as a child could do, *quod quivis puer facere posset*) but, knowing them to be of high quality, also to use their minds (*cogitatio*) and interpret his intent (*voluntatem interpretari*)
- Say that the text doesn't say everything, but states clear things (*perspicua*) in implied ways (*tacita*)

- Appeal to the consequences of one's opponent's reading – impossible, inconvenient, dishonorable, unnecessary or inexpedient, or to a greater degree than one's own (*impossibilis, incommodus, inhonestus, haut necessarius, inutilis*)
- Assert that the law does not consist in words, but in meanings (*ut ea videatur in sententiis, non in verbis consistere*)
- By attention to the word "convert something in the text to his own argument" (*ex ipsa scriptura aliquid ad suam causam convertere*)[30]

This (abbreviated) account of Cicero's hermeneutical advice for the youth in rhetorical training can help us to understand both Pauline and patristic exegesis as participating in an "agonistic paradigm of textual interpretation." To elucidate this pivotal claim of my six chapters, I would like to offer in turn six general contentions and conclusions about the "agonistic paradigm of exegesis" I am proposing was at work in much of early Christian exegesis (and beyond, down to the present).

First, let me emphasize the evidentiary value of Cicero's *De inventione* for this argument:[31] because it represents the notebooks of Cicero's youth, we know that this set of commonplaces is traditional and in no way idiosyncratic to Cicero.[32] An abbreviated and very similar set of instructions is given, for instance, in the handbook *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and both are generally recognized as standing on a continuum with Greek rhetorical traditions.[33] Indeed, that students in the late republican and early imperial period were taught such strategic variability is drily confirmed by the Greek author Sextus Empiricus, in his rhetorically clever proof that rhetoric does not and should not exist:

> That rhetoric is against the written laws is manifestly clear even in the things proposed in their mal-artful "arts of rhetoric" handbooks (*kakotechnoi technai*). For at one time they advise one to attend to the text (*rhêton*) and the statements (*phônai*) of the lawgiver – as clear (*saphes*) and in need of no interpretation (*mêdemia exêgêsis*) – and at another time they turn around (*anastrepsantes*) and advise one not to follow either the text or the statements, but the intention (*dianoia*) of the lawgiver . . . Sometimes they order us to read the written laws with parts excised (*kata apokopên*), and they compose (*syntithenai*) another meaning (*heteron noêma*) from what is left (*ek tôn leipomenôn*). Often they define as precise (*diastellein*)[34] expressions that are ambiguous (*amphiboloi lexeis*), and they confirm the meaning (*to sêmainomenon*) that is useful for themselves. And countless other things they do to overthrow (*pros anatropên*) the written laws.[35]

Furthermore, we know that the capacity to develop variant interpretations of the same text was one of the *progymnasmata* (exercises) that students were taught, one of which was "concerning letter and intent" (*peri rhêtou*

kai dianoias).[36] It is also built right into the system of all the others, such as *kataskeuê* (confirmation) and *anaskeuê* (refutation), in which students would alternately (and perhaps in successive days or weeks!) argue, for instance, that the Daphne/Apollo story was a *mythos* and that it was an *historia*,[37] or compose an encomium or vituperation on a given subject using the same textual evidence. The very structure of these school exercises involves the ability to operate on both sides of any question, adapting the evidence to fit the need or assignment. The presence of these topics within the *progymnasmata*, which span education under the grammarian and the rhetor,[38] ensures that it was not only those who had the specialized training of lawyers who were familiar with them.[39]

Second, it is important to note that *the same commonplaces are invoked on both sides* (e.g. appeal to authorial intention or *voluntas*, appeal to the result of the reading, appeal to everyday usage), but to different ends. Crucially important here is the shared *topos* that one should appeal to the wider context of a given text in justifying one's interpretation. An appeal to context as a clue to meaning always involves the central question of the relation of the whole to the part (*to holon*, *to meros*), and this can be variously defined to suit the case. Such appeals, as Kathy Eden argues, could be of two types, either to the literary (*oikonomia*) or to the historical context (*prepon*; Latin *decorum*).[40] Both literary principles will in Christian hands become also theological claims – of the *oikonomia* of scripture as embodying an overall *hypothesis* that governs the meaning of each part,[41] and *synkatabasis/oikonomia* ("accommodation") as divine *decorum*, godly speech being cast in language that is appropriate for the audience and situation being addressed. The agonistic paradigm of interpretation, therefore, is seamlessly woven into the emergent late antique Christian hermeneutics and its theology – a strand of its cultural DNA.

Third, because these are, after all, *commonplaces*, those who use them *always know that there is an obvious counter-argument that will come from the other side*. This means that the rhetorically constructed (and hence hardly uncontestable) nature of claims for a particular *hypothesis* that should govern interpretation (such as Irenaeus's famous attempt in *Adversus haereses* 1.9.4 to refute particular Gnostic interpretations he found unacceptable) was well recognized by ancient authors, and hence should not be reified into a one-sided principle by modern scholars. Consequently in scholarly analysis we cannot take at face value Irenaeus's claim (or that of Antiochenes like Eustathius or Diodore)[42] that they are the (only) ones who respect the *hypothesis* or *oikonomia* of scripture; instead, they just construct a different *hypothesis* or *oikonomia* than their interlocutors.[43] Mistaking this

commonplace for a description of divergent interpretive method or commitment leads also to the repetition of the false dichotomy it constructs for itself, between a reading that is ordered and suited to the context, on the one hand, and one that is chaotic and "incoherent" on the other. Taking seriously the rhetorical underpinnings of early exegesis leads us to recognize that the relationship between the whole and the part is always *fashioned* in some exegetical moment and for some attendant purpose.[44] There is no single context of interpretation (potential or actual), ever. Strategic choices are made to construct the most useful context (and this is true even when one invokes, for instance, the *regula fidei* or "canon of truth" [*kanôn tês alêtheias*], for the rule, as a plotline, does not in itself regulate which elements of the plot are most central to the interpretive case at hand).[45] A rhetorically attuned account of early Christian exegesis should term this an act of *heuresis/inventio* – the finding of the best means of proof for the case at hand – and not replicate the apologetic labels it is given by the practitioners, of either "discovery" (of an *oikonomia* that is *really* there)[46] or "invention" (of one that is not but is fashioned from thin air). The force of invention, even when there is a traditional appeal to a "rule" as an attendant principle, is still present in the need for strategic variety in application (otherwise all "orthodox" interpreters would always agree, which of course they do not).

Fourth, the task of interpretation, according to the agonistic paradigm, is defined, *ipso facto*, in antithetical, agonistic terms: the text works either for my case or against my case. This leads to exaggerations about one's own reading as completely "literal" (i.e. faithfully stating the original) and that of the opponent's as absolutely fanciful, and vice versa. When texts are put on trial as witnesses they can only say "yes" or "no." This means that if I am right, my opponent is not just someone who doesn't appreciate the text or who understands it incompletely; he is one who makes the text say the exact opposite of what it really states (the rhetoricians call this the heading of *to enantion* or *to machomenon*). The same is true of the poles of clarity and obscurity; often by finding in obscurity an opening, once the favored interpretation is proposed, that is in turn declared absolutely clear. No one admits that most interpretations are somewhere in the middle. The agonistic paradigm is inherently dualistic and combative.

Fifth, these commonplaces reflect the ancient sociology of education of elite men. Part of the competitive game involves shaming the opponent for offering an interpretation that (one wishes to declare) goes directly against the text, and gets it to say the opposite of what it actually says. In shaming the opponent (as Cicero recommends and many sources confirm), one

arguing a case is advised to say that his opponent is either poorly trained (because if he were a more adept reader he would never propose such a self-evidently faulty reading) or simply lying, because he must know better. These barbs, invocations of what I call "the urbanity *topos*," that educated men toss at one another across the aisle (or the years) reflect a kind of alumni-club sensibility about the school curriculum they all shared, and should all know how to practice.[47] Most interesting in this regard is the role of the child in these *topoi*; on the one hand the one championing an ostensibly "literal" interpretation should say that the text is so clear and easy to understand that even a child can see what it says (i.e. the text does not require any interpretation), whereas the advocate of a more than literal reading says that the author of this text did not write it for children, but for mature men who, he was quite sure, would know how to read for depth of meaning.

Lastly, and most importantly, these *topoi*, as stock arguments for strategic employment, are *not linguistic or hermeneutical theories that represent an absolute commitment or a systematic philosophical engagement with the relationship between text and meaning*; they are *fragments of linguistic theories* used to buttress a particular interpretation on well-known terms. Indeed, the commonplaces themselves tactically vary in the way they construct the key factor in textual meaning – sometimes focusing on the author, sometimes on the text itself, other times on the reader. The consequence is that hermeneutical theory and practice are never entirely separable. Part of interpretive tactics, as we can see in the Ciceronian outline given above, is the invocation of the right theoretical justification for a particular exegesis on offer. Thus, strategic variability in the use of textual evidence is built into ancient training in literacy.

Returning once more to Paul, who in Christian literary traditions started it all, his textual interpretation in 1 Cor 5:9–10 already draws upon these well-known commonplaces for a "literal" reading of a disputed text that were taught in rhetorical schools. In turn, then, his patristic commentators find him a congenial exegetical guide who has already embedded in sacred scripture (and therefore validated) some of these same commonplaces that formed their own education. In terms of 1 Corinthians 5, Paul maintains by implication that the letter he had written was not, in fact, ambiguous (in Cicero's words, *Primum, si fieri poterit, demonstrandum est non esse ambigue scriptum*).[48] One interesting feature of Paul's particular situation is that he cannot quite successfully take the next step Cicero recommends, to appeal to the way these words are used in everyday life, because as an apostolic wordsmith whose stock in trade was fashioning neologisms for the

socio-theological experiment of the *ecclesia* of Christ-believers, Paul's response is predicated on his having endowed the everyday word *adelphos* with a new sense; indeed, the new text Paul writes in 1 Cor 5:11 underscores this: "if anyone bears the name of brother (*adelphos onomazomenos*)." Instead, Paul employs another of the commonplaces Cicero recommends when defending the "literal interpretation": that one should emphasize not just how the text is written but how it would have had to have been written if the opposing (i.e., wrong) interpretation were right (*Permultum autem proficiet illud demonstrare, quaemadmodum scripsisset, si id quod adversarius accipiat fieri aut intellegi voluisset*[49]). This is precisely what Paul is doing with *ou pantôs* and *tou kosmou toutou*. More than three hundred years later John Chrysostom recognized this, stating with approval that Paul "made this correction (*epidiorthôsis*)[50] to the previous statement."[51] And further, Paul "adds the word 'entirely' (*to pantôs . . . titheis*) with a view to a meaning they could agree upon (*hôs epi hômologêmenou*)."[52]

Paul also appeals to the consequences of some Corinthians' faulty reading, as a means to show that, as the Ciceronian *topos* has it, "it was impossible or undesirable to comply with the written word" (*scripto non potuerit aut non oportuerit obtemperari*).[53] Again, John Chrysostom recognizes well (and approves of) Paul's use of this interpretive strategy of legal interpretation: "You see how Paul avoids laying down a burden, and everywhere has as his goal not only what is possible (*to dynaton*), but what is easy (*to eukolon*) in his legislation?"[54] We might add here that the awareness of Pauline legal hermeneutics is not confined to Antiochenes; Clement of Alexandria, for instance, described what Paul is doing in these verses as "bequeathing a legal injunction (*diatattetai*)."[55] The agonistics of interpretation, therefore, was built into scripture in its legal passages (and others that would be taken as such even if not generically such) and its interpreters (inner and extra-biblical).

Paul as legal hermeneut[56] appears also to have used one more of the *topoi* that are on Cicero's list, but in a keenly revised fashion. Since he is both *the author and interpreter* of this "sentence of holy law" (in the famous locution Ernst Käsemann applied, *inter alia*, to 5:3–5),[57] he does not have to imagine bringing the author back to life to interpret himself, but he takes that prerogative himself through an epistolary "return of the author," who is not in this case dead, but nonetheless absent. His appropriation of the resurrected lawgiver *topos* was signaled earlier in the chapter: "when you and my spirit are gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus with the power of our Lord Jesus" (5:4). This clever use of the *topos* fully authorizes the rereading as both true to the earlier text and reprised now

with a second, without (Paul hopes) allowing that the one who writes this letter could be misunderstood as he was previously. If the Corinthians sought (and received) clarifications of the meaning of Paul's letters with subsequent letters, then the meaning of these texts stands, already in the weeks and months after their sending, in a process of negotiation.[58]

1 Corinthians 5:9–11, unlike many other Corinthian passages we shall consider in this volume, was not very often invoked as a justification by early Christian authors for their own exegetical practices, because from rather early on they were preoccupied with another concern – what happened to the lost letter? We can see this, and receive confirmation for our reading of Paul as constructing a "defense of the letter" (i.e. a self-styled "literal" interpretation of his own text), in a text from Origen. In a fragment preserved in the *catenae*,[59] Origen's exegesis is focused, as is Paul's own, not just on what is in the text, but on what is not:

> Some suppose (*hypelabon*) from this statement (1 Cor 5:9–10) that another letter, one not now preserved, had been written by the apostle before the former one to the Corinthians. And he wrote to them "not to associate (*mê synanamignysthai*) with *pornoi*" as far as the exact wording[60] (*lexis*) goes. But after hearing that the Corinthians were perturbed because they thought they were being told "not to associate with *pornoi*," not even those of the world (*mêde tois tou kosmou*) – since it is impossible for someone in their daily life not to hold converse with heathen co-workers, business representatives and other such people – Paul makes clear (*saphênizôn*), they say, what earlier he had left out of the text (*to tote paraleleimmenon*).[61] "It is not *pornoi* of this world I am speaking about," he says, "but people who are called brothers but do not live chastely" (*ou peri pornôn legô . . . tou kosmou toutou, alla peri tôn onomazomenôn men adelphôn men ouk ontôn de semnôn*).[62]

This first group of interpreters, by close reading of what is and is not there, see in 1 Cor 5:9–11 Paul making clear the meaning of the earlier utterance by filling in the clarifying phrase "of this world" (*tou kosmou toutou*). Without stating his preference, Origen then offers the second possible reading, thereby giving unwitting witness that Paul's aim at disambiguated clarification was not destined for success:

> But others, who do not wish (*hoi mê boulomenoi*)[63] there to be another letter before this one (*epistolê hetera . . . pro tautês*), will say that this statement (*hautê he lexis*) has reference to (*anapheresthai*) this epistle (*hautê he epistolê*), because in *this* epistle (*en tautê tê epistolê*) "I am writing" that you not associate with fornicators, and I mean these types of *pornoi*, not the other. The apostle seems to say by this comparison of *pornoi* that the *pornoi* who are among us are far worse; for the *pornos* who comes from outside does not destroy the temple of God (3:17), nor, taking the members of Christ, does he make them members of a *porne* (6:15), nor

does he leaven the whole lump (5:6). The latter, when he wishes, repents and has forgiveness of sins, but the person among the faithful who has committed *porneia*, even if he might repent again later, does not have forgiveness of sins and instead is able to conceal the sin.[64]

On this second reading, Paul wrote 1 Cor 5:9 (taking the aorist *egrapsa* as epistolary: "I am writing") and then immediately corrected the meaning of his words. This reading stresses that even in the act of composition Paul is a self-interpreter. Origen in turn seeks to grasp Paul's intent by what he said, and by its implication (by comparison, and an accumulation of similar statements). Theodoret of Cyrrhus a century and a half later demonstrates an awareness of the same debate to which Origen testifies (one of many instances in which "Alexandria" and "Antioch" are closer than imagined); he favors the latter interpretation, and defends it by a very specific contextual argument:

"I wrote to you (*egrapsa*) in the letter not to associate with *pornoi*."

THEODORET: Not in another letter, but in this one (*ouk en allê, all' en tautê*). Since briefly before (*pro bracheôn*) he said, "Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (5:6), Paul then gives the explanation[65] about what he wrote (*eita didaskei peri hôn egrapse*).

"And not entirely (*ou pantôs*) with *pornoi* of this world (*tou kosmou toutou*), or greedy or rapacious people or idolators, since then you would have to go out from the world (*ek tou kosmou exelthein*)."

THEODORET: I am not legislating anything difficult for you (*ouden hymin nomothetô dyscheres*)[66] for I am not commanding that you be separated completely (*pantelôs*) from those outside of the faith. Since this is to send you to another world!

"But now I am writing (*egrapsa*) not to associate . . . "

THEODORET: This stands in place of (*anti tou*) "I am writing to you with this meaning" (*kata tauten egrapsa hymin tên dianoian*).[67]

Theodoret's exposition is based upon two ways of appealing to Pauline meaning. In the first, Theodoret identifies the subject of the first *egrapsa hymin* statement ("I wrote to you") as 5:6; on this reading Paul is implicitly presented as having first given an allegory (of leaven and lump), and then in 5:9 explaining what it really meant (similar to the fashion of Jesus' parables in the gospels). This image of Paul as a writer who was both allegorical and explicitly literal within the same segment of text allows Theodoret to avoid the possibility that we are now missing a Pauline letter. For

Theodoret the second *egrapsa hymin* does not decipher an earlier allegory, but reformulates Paul's own sentence with an *anti* formula – "this stands for that" or "this means that." In this instance, the phrase "Now I am writing to you" is what Paul chose to write instead of "I am writing to you with this meaning." Hence the act of restatement Paul had performed in making his argument is replicated in turn by his fifth-century exegete in explicating his text. Writing and reading converge in such interpretive practices.

This kind of exegetical grammar is found all over ancient exegesis of various kinds, and by Theodoret's time he is representing traditional exegetical options and well-known debates that go back before Origen,[68] as we have seen.[69] What is perhaps even more interesting, therefore, is where Theodoret invokes 1 Corinthians 5 when it is not the subject of his comments – that is, *when he is not commenting on it so much as commenting with it.* In his *Quaestiones in Octateuchum* Theodoret confronts the laws on leprosy in Leviticus 13—14, and asks the question of what they mean. He draws upon the language and the text of 1 Corinthians in seeking his answers:

Q. What does the law about leprosy mean (*Ti bouletai ho peri tês lepras nomos*)?

A. He[70] shows the illnesses of the soul by the maladies of the body (*dia tôn sômatikôn pathêmatôn tês psyches epideiknysi ta nosêmata*), and he accuses voluntary things by those that are involuntary (*dia tôn akousiôn tôn hekousiôn katêgorei*). Indeed if physical things (*ta physika*) seem at all unclean (*akatharta*), then how much more so those of the mind (*ta gnômika*)?

Q. Why is it that he calls (*onomazei*) the man who is completely leprous (*ho holos lepros genomenos*) "clean" (*katharos*) (Lev 13:13)?

A. Because this law, too, is full of clemency (*philanthrôpia*). For this is just like the case of the person who has died a natural death – if he fell into a reservoir, he calls him "unclean" (*akathartos*), but if into a well or cistern, he doesn't. In the same way he keeps the person with variegated skin coloration apart from the others, since he has hope for cleansing; but the person who is entirely white (*ho de hololeukos genomenos*) he commands to associate (*anamignysthai*) with the others, so that he might not spend his whole life separated (*kechôrismenos*) from other people.

And this is an allegory for spiritual people[71] (*kai touto de tôn pneumatikôn esti typos*). For the divine law (*ho theios nomos*) commands one not to eat with believers if they sin; but it does not prevent one from having commensality (*synesthiein*) with unbelievers who invite one to a meal. Thus says the divine apostle (*ho theios*

apostolos): "If one of the unbelievers invites you and you wish to go, eat everything that is set before you, scrutinizing nothing" (1 Cor 10:25), etc. And this is what Paul said about the believers who sin (*peri de tôn hamartanontôn pistôn*): "if one who bears the name of brother might be a *pornos* etc. . . . do not eat with such a person" (1 Cor 5:11), and again, "for you to avoid any brother who is behaving in disordered fashion" (2 Thess 3:6). Now indeed this (brother) is like the partial leper (*ho ek merous lepros*), but the unbeliever (*ho de apistos*) is like one whose entire physical complexion has been destroyed (*ho pasan tên physikên apolesas chroian*). With the latter we talk and live together; but with the former, not any more. And the divine apostle is *the witness of this* (*kai toutou martys ho theios apostolos*), "for," he said, "I wrote to you not to associate with *pornoi*," and "not completely with the *pornoi* of this world, or the defrauders" etc. Indeed Moses has called the man who has become completely white "clean," not because he has a healthy body (*ouch hôs hygies echôn to sôma*), but because according to the Law he no longer defiles those who approach (*hôs mêketi tous pelazontas kata ton nomon molunôn*).[72]

For Theodoret here "the divine apostle" is *both lawgiver and witness*. His instructions to the Corinthians about association with unbelievers are linked with laws in Torah about skin disease deemed as a *typos* ("example," "type," "allegory") of persons (or possibly realities) yet to come. In applying the term *typos* here (*kai touto de tôn pneumatikôn esti typos*), Theodoret is unmistakably drawing on the terminology of 1 Cor 10:6, 11, even as he also quotes from later in that chapter (10:25). The same is true of the term *pneumatika* or *pneumatikoi*, "spiritual things" or "spiritual people" (see 1 Cor 2:13; 12:1, etc.). He may also be guided by the linkages in Paul's own argument between the sexual and idolatrous sins mentioned in the vice catalogues of 1 Cor 5:10 and 11 (*porneia* and *eidolôlatreia*) and the wilderness generation that committed these same sins (10:7–8) even though they had participated in the pneumatic realities of the *pneumatikon brôma* and the *pneumatikon poma* ("spiritual food" and "spiritual drink" in 1 Cor 10:3–4). That extraordinary act of Pauline exegesis of a narrative portion of Torah (1 Cor 10:1–13), functioning as a classic negative example in a deliberative rhetorical proof (*paradeigma enantion*),[73] introduced what will become a *terminus technicus* of ancient Christian exegetical practice, *typos*, a name for an allegorical interpretation ("other-reading") that especially serves to unite the two testaments.[74] Paul's own "literal" reading of his earlier letter, that is, stands embedded in an argument that employs scriptural allegories of which Theodoret approves, ones that serve to safeguard by allegory the meaning of halachic commands about the unsavory topic of leprosy that cause Marcionites, Manichees, non-Christians and others to question the

sanctity of the *graphai*. Paul provides Theodoret with both terminology and precedent for the Ciceronian move from an appeal to the letter to an appeal to the deeper intent of the lawgiver.

1 Corinthians 5:9–11 is not the only place in the Corinthian correspondence where Paul employs literalism *topoi* from the rhetorical schools. One of the most obvious, of course, is the denial in 2 Cor 1:17–22 that he vacillates, changing the referents of his word, indeed prevaricating, such that his yes is no and his no is yes (or "I say 'yes, yes' but I mean 'no, no'").[75] We shall get to that anon,[76] but I would like to stay within 1 Corinthians for now, and turn to a key passage earlier in that letter, in 1 Cor 4:6: "I have given figured expression (*meteschêmatisa*) of these things to myself and Apollos for your sakes so that you might learn not to go beyond what is written." The appeal for the judge or reader "not to go beyond what is written" (*to mê hyper ha gegraptai*) is another one of the Ciceronian *topoi* for upholding the "literal" sense: an advocate who will defend the letter (*qui scriptum defendet*) will be able to use "a common topic that the judges should regard nothing except what is written."[77] 1 Corinthians 4:6 is of course a most contested verse (famously pronounced "unintelligible" by Conzelmann).[78] Our identification of the second part of it as evoking a literalism *topos* (that the good judge should not go beyond the letter of the statute)[79] may help, since the appeal to stick by what stands written is clear enough. But even agreement on that point does not immediately allow us to determine the referent in this case. And this is not because there are not lots of written words in the context, but because there are too many![80] I think that in the original context Paul is more likely referring back to the scriptural injunction of Jer. 9:22–23 quoted in 1 Cor 1:31 that proscribes boasting in anyone other than the Lord.

Yet what precedes *to mê hyper ha gegraptai* is an equally disputed phrase that is in a sense its hermeneutical inverse: *tauta . . . meteschêmatisa eis emauton kai Apollôn di hymas*, "I have related these things in cloaked fashion to myself and Apollos for your sakes." The clothed, disguised or figurative meaning is by definition one that is other than that of the actual words that are written.[81] It is well known that Chrysostom thought this meant that Paul developed the discussion of himself, Apollos and Cephas as an allegory for the actual Corinthian contenders.[82] Modern scholars tend to think it refers to the parabolic or metaphoric expression of himself and Apollos as planters and waterers in 1 Corinthians 3.[83] Either way, in its present context in 4:6 (contextual reading being a commonplace that can work for or against the "literal" sense) we have a marvelous hermeneutical

irony: Paul maintains that he has engaged in *figured or disguised speech* (*meteschêmatisa*) in order to protect *a literal interpretation* (in word and in deed) of another utterance – his own and Jeremiah's, formed now into a single double-barreled textual appeal[84] – "don't go beyond what is written" (i.e. don't boast, puffed up on behalf of one against another, in contravention of Jeremiah and of me). The veiled speech is a safeguard of the direct. The two go hand in hand. In a single verse Paul has tossed into the hermeneutical stream of the Christian tradition justifications for both figurative and literal interpretation.

The curious combination of metaphorical and literalist hermeneutics in 1 Cor 4:6 was destined to be reinstantiated in its patristic reappropriation. In his third oration *contra Arianos*, Athanasius wished to rebut an Arian interpretation of John 17:20–23, to the effect that the phrase *hina kai autoi en hêmin ôsin* ("so that they, too, might be in us") implies that the unity of the Father and the Son is the same kind of unity that human beings may have with God. This is of course part of Athanasius's larger argument insisting on the *unique* co-eternity of Son with Father.[85] John 17:21, taken at a glance, appears more conducive to the Arian reading, but Athanasius tackles it first with the declaration that (properly understood, of course) it has a correct sense (*orthê dianoia*). Then Athanasius focuses in on what he regards as the key phrase, *en hêmin* ("in us"), and adopts the "rewriting" *topos* to insist that if the verse did mean that it is possible for mortal unity with the divine to be the same as the Son's with the Father, then "*it would have had to have said* (*edei legein*), 'so that they, too, might be one in you, just as the Son is in the Father' (*hina kai autoi en soi hen ôsin, hôsper estin ho Huios en tô Patri*). But *in fact he has not said this* (*nun de touto men ouk eirêke*)." So far, Athanasius is making what appears to be a "literal" appeal to the precise wording, by specifying that "in saying this, Christ signified nothing different" (*touto de legôn, ouden heteron esêmanen*). But Athanasius realizes that this argument can just as easily be turned back against him, since the very difference and distinction (*diastasis kai diaphora*) he claims can be seen in the phrase *en hêmin* ("in us") is hard to sustain in the context, which lacks a reference to the particular union *physei kai alêtheia* ("by nature and truth") that he wants to secure for the Son–Father relationship alone. So Athanasius adds the counter-reading, to the effect that John 17:20–23 is actually about not ontological unity (as his opponents claim), but pedagogical intent: "But they would not otherwise be able to be one, if they had not learned unity 'in us'" (*allôs de ouk an genointo hen, ei mê 'en hêmin' mathôsi tên*

henotêta). In support of this reading Athanasius brings forward Paul as precedent:

> It is possible to hear Paul saying that "in us" (*en hêmin*) has this meaning: "And I have cast these things figuratively to myself and Apollos, so that 'in us' (*en hêmin*) you might learn to not be puffed up beyond what stands written." So then, the phrase "in us" does not mean "in the Father, as the Son is in him," but it is an example and image (*paradeigma kai eikôn*) that stands in place of saying (*anti tou eipein*) "Let them learn from us" (*ex hêmôn mathetôsan*). For as with Paul to the Corinthians, so the unity of the Son and the Father is for all an exemplum and teaching (*hypogrammos kai mathêsis*), according to which, by looking at the unity the Father and the Son have by nature, they are able to learn how they, too, should be one with one another in mind.[86]

Athanasius here joins the Johannine Farewell Discourse with 1 Corinthians in a common call to ecclesial unity,[87] with both employing the same phrase, *en hêmin*, which, Athanasius claims, demonstrates a figural, paradigmatic function to the "literal" words, which therefore mean something else than what they say (i.e. "let them learn from us"). Employing a range of forensic hermeneutical *topoi* in his use of 1 Cor 4:6, Athanasius has given a perfect example of Cicero's advice to "interpret the meaning of the word which seems to bear hard upon him, so as to support his own case, or develop from the written word something that is not expressed."[88]

Another most fascinating example of an inverted reuse of the second of these hermeneutical axioms – not "to go beyond what is written" – is by Origen, in the fourth book of his commentary on John. Origen is interpreting John 4:13–14, and the dialogue Jesus has with the Samaritan woman about the living water. He wishes to clarify the differentiation he sees in the text between two waters – that of Jacob's well and that which Jesus promises to give:

> And yet we shall attend to the question whether it is possible to show clearly (*dêlousthai*) the different sort of benefit (*ôpheleia*) that belongs to those who converse and cohabit with the truth itself, as compared to the benefit thought to come to us from the scriptures *even if they are accurately* (*akribôs*) *understood*.[89]

In setting up this comparison Origen assumes that the scriptures – even granting what seems impossible, their proper interpretation – do not contain some of "the more majestic and divine parts of the mysteries of God" (*ta kyriôtera kai theiotera tôn mystêriôn tou theou*).

It is here that Origen summons the Pauline phrase *to mê hyper ha gegraptai* to refer to the extra-scriptural, extra-textual knowledge of divine

things, which is the water of Jesus. In excerpting the phrase Origen has disregarded Paul's negative, *mê* (which turns it into an admonition against abrogating the textual boundary), and taken the preposition *hyper* to refer, not to transgressing, but to transcending scripture. It bears noting in this connection that Quintilian and other courtroom lawyers make a similar contrast between *contra scriptum* ("going against the letter") and *supra scriptum* ("going beyond the letter").[90] Thus reconstrued, in Origen's hands this Pauline version of the forensic literalism *topos* (not to go beyond what stands written) points to divine wisdom that lies outside scripture. It becomes a quintessential expression of the limits of the literal. Origen's *exempla* of this are the ending of John's gospel, John 21:25, that "the whole world could not contain the books required to record all the things Jesus did," John the seer of Revelation being forbidden to write about the seven thunders (Rev 10:4), and – yes – Paul himself, who in 2 Cor 12:1–5 described his own heavenly journey in which he heard "unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a human being to speak" (*arrêta rhêmata ha ouk exon anthrôpô lalêsai*). Carrying the Pauline intertextual reading forward, Origen cites 1 Cor 6:12: "all things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial" (*panta moi exestin, all' ou panta sympherei*) to explain God's revelatory motivation.[91] On these grounds Origen argues for a devaluation of the written text of scripture, as containing "the least elements and briefest of introductions to complete knowledge, that is, even if they are accurately understood (*noêthôsin akribôs*)." In this way, Origen allegorically defines "the water of Jesus" as "that which is beyond what stands written," an invitation to transcend the text. And yet it is just here that he issues a caution:

> It is not lawful *for all people* to search out "that which is beyond what stands written" (*ou pasin de exestin ereunan ta hyper ha gegraptai*), but someone must be like these things (*autois exomoiôthê*), lest he be rebuked (*epiplêssêtai*) when he hears "Don't seek out things that are too hard and don't search out things that are beyond your strength" (*chalepôtera sou mê zêtei, kai ischyrotera sou mê ereuna*) (Sir 3:21[92]). If we say that someone knows "that which is beyond what stands written" (*to hyper ha gegraptai*) (1 Cor 4:6), we are not saying that these things can be known by the many (*gnôsta tois pollois einai dynatai*)[93] . . . but the things which Paul learned, the "unspeakable words" (*arrêta rhêmata*) (2 Cor 12:4) "beyond what stands written" (*hyper ha gegraptai*) (1 Cor 4:6), if indeed human beings have spoken the things that stand written (*ei ge ta gegrammena anthrôpoi lelalêkasin*). And "what the eye has not seen" (*ha ophthalmos ouk eiden*) (1 Cor 2:9) is beyond what is written (*hyper ta gegrammena*), and "what the ear has not heard" (*ha ous ouk êkousen*) (1 Cor 2:9) is not able to be written (*graphênai ou dynatai*). And the things "that have not arisen in the heart of a human being" (*ta epi kardian de anthrôpou mê anabebêkota*) (1 Cor 2:9) are greater than the well of Jacob (*meizona estin tês tou*

Iakôb pêgês). This is because from the well of water springing up into eternal life they are made manifest to those who no longer have a human heart (*phaneroumena tois ouketi kardian anthrôpou echousin*), but who are able to say, "We possess the mind of Christ" (*hêmeis de noun Christou echomen*) (1 Cor 2:16) "so that we might know the things that have been given to us by God" (*hina eidômen ta hypo tou theou charisthenta hêmin*) (1 Cor 2:12) which we also speak, "not in teachings of human wisdom, but in teachings of the spirit" (*ha kai laloumen ouk en didaktois anthrôpinês sophias logois all' en didaktois pneumatos*) (1 Cor 2:13).[94]

Having transformed Paul's literalism *topos* into the justification for the ultimate allegory (the trans-textual meaning), Origen offers none other than Paul himself – in both 1 and 2 Corinthians – to exemplify a spiritual hermeneutics which issues a promise of deeper insight to *some* (but not all) people. The hermeneutical focus here shifts from the text (on which literalism and other-reading *topoi* are exerted) to the reader, or rather, *readers*, for Origen's point is that not all readers share the same acumen. He quotes the book of Sirach, which in context warns "the child" to avoid exegetical scrutiny for he "does not have need of hidden realities,"[95] and a cluster of six quotations, all from the Corinthian letters, in which Paul both claimed and embodied special powers for spiritual people. Origen's introductory formulation of this hermeneutical reserve is that one should avoid the allegorical water of Jesus "above what stands written," "unless one be like (*exomoiôthê*)" the very things that are above the scriptures.[96] With good reason Erwin Preuschen, in his contribution to the critical edition of *Origenes Werke*, includes a reference to Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics* 9.3, 1165b here, suggesting that Origen evokes alongside Paul the philosopher's dictum that "like is akin to like" (*to homoion tô homoiô philon* [9.3.3]). Seen in this way, hermeneutics is not just about literal words on a page, but about the readers who confront them. Has Origen just built this on top of the Pauline Corinthian foundation, or did he already find hints of it there? Are readers born or made? This is where we shall pick up in the next chapter, with Pauline anthropological hermeneutics in suspension between rhetoric and philosophy.

CHAPTER 3

Anthropological hermeneutics: between rhetoric and philosophy

In his "brief" for allegorical interpretation in the Prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, you will recall, Gregory summoned Pauline testimony on scriptural interpretation to the effect that if the literal sense is an obstacle to the moral life,

> it is necessary to pass over to the incorporeal and spiritually intelligible reading with insight (*he aülos te kai noêtê theôria*), with the result that the more corporeal meaning (*hai sômatikôterai ennoiai*) are converted to an intellectual sense and meaning (*pros noun kai dianoian*), in the same way that the dust of the more fleshly significance (*he sarkôdestera emphasis*) of what is said is "shaken off" (cf. Matt 10:14).[1]

The contrast between bodily and incorporeal, fleshly and spiritual textual meanings is for Gregory the essential template upon which allegorical interpretation is constructed and defended. He accedes to the request of Olympias to interpret the Song on the fundamental supposition that "the more fleshly statements of the Song (*tois sarkôdesterois*)[2] contain some guidance toward the spiritual and immaterial state of the soul (*pros tên pneumatikên te kai aülon tês psychês katastasin*), toward which this book leads."[3]

Although Gregory, via Origen and the neo-Platonist tradition, has accumulated a web of synonyms for this dualistic lexicon, Gregory has also received the hermeneutical dichotomy of flesh and spirit as a Pauline inheritance via the Corinthian *diolkos*. In the previous chapter, "The *agôn* of Pauline interpretation," we saw Paul admonishing the Corinthians to stick by the very letter of a text, either of scripture (the presumed referent of 1 Cor 4:6b) or of his own previous letter (1 Cor 5:9–10). Having begun our last chapter in chronological context at 1 Corinthians 5 (where Paul gives an exegesis of his prior letter to Corinth), with this third chapter we turn back to the literary opening of this first *extant* missive, 1 Corinthians, where this volley in the correspondence course in hermeneutics begins.

"I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all say the same thing (*to auto legête pantes*), and that there not be factions among you, but that you be reconciled in the same mind (*en tô autô nöi*) and the same opinion (*kai en tê autê gnôme*)" (1 Cor 1:10). In response to a flurry of oral and written verbal communication – the report of "Chloe's people," a letter from some Corinthians, the arrival in Ephesus of Stephanas and company – Paul sought to reduce cacophony to univocity. In this thesis statement to what will be a lengthy and complicated letter he gives a fourfold definition of what unity would look like. Tellingly, the first phrase is the idiomatic expression *to auto legein*, "to say the same thing." The Greek expression seems very clear, but is it? Does Paul mean this literally? Is it a binding rule?

In one sense, we can say no – that, like Polybius and others who use the expression, it is a figurative way of depicting societal harmony.[4] Hence "saying the same thing" does not have to mean saying the exact same words, but (as we might say) "being on the same page" in some more general or abstract way: "speaking the same language," perhaps, but not necessarily uttering the exact same syllables, words, sentences. One thinks here of an image Paul does not use, but must have known: the chorus, in which precisely what people do not do is "say (or sing) the same thing," but rather, through controlled variance, they produce in concert a harmonious composition none might attain individually. Did Paul imply this image, or in fact deliberately avoid it, in the search for a linguistic singularity, such as 12:2 suggests, with the confessional statement "Jesus as Lord" perhaps being the content of the literal "say the same thing"? But *legein* in Greek can also indicate, not just speaking, but "meaning,"[5] as Paul himself uses the term within seconds: *legô de touto*, "what I mean is this" (1 Cor 1:12). Are the Corinthian Christians to "say the same thing" or "mean the same thing," and, to what is the "same" referring (i.e. the same as each other, the same as Paul, both)?

And yet in 1:10 the allied phrases *en tô autô noï* and *en tê autê gnômê*, "in the same mind" and "in the same opinion," suggest that Paul has his sights, not just on a purported linguistic unison, but also on an internal, below-the-surface expression of noetic, mental, intellectual, even propositional unity.[6] From the very outset of Paul's first extant letter to the church at Corinth, therefore, the essential hermeneutical question comes to the fore: what is the relationship between saying and meaning, between words and senses, between physical and mental hermeneutical equipment? And it will be essential to his strategy for unification in what follows. The "name" of the Lord Jesus Christ is, he hopes, a word on which all can agree, as also

the "mind" of Christ (*nous Christou*) they are said to possess (2:16). Later Paul will argue that one cannot even say this name, Lord Jesus, *ei mê en pneumati hagiô*, "except in the Holy Spirit" (12:3). Exploring exactly who that might be is one of the main purposes of the opening chapters of this long letter.

Faced with what he considered to be overly worldly and petty disputatiousness among the Corinthian house-church members, Paul at the outset of the epistle articulates the issue as an apparent failure on their part to realize the full implications of the hermeneutical move from surface meaning to deeper meaning, from word to wisdom, that their acceptance of his *euangelion* ("gospel") implies.[7] The *logos tou staurou* ("word of the cross"), Paul claims, is a verbal utterance that divides the world into three groups, based on hermeneutical acumen: "Jews" (for whom it is scandalous), "Gentiles" (for whom it is foolishness), and "the very ones who are called" ("for whom it is the power of God and the wisdom of God"). Hermeneutical ability in this instance is determined – the called ones "get it" because they were elected to do so, the rest do not. The orientations to signs (*sêmeia*) and wisdom (*sophia*) are equally deficient if not combined with the special insight given to the called (*klêtoi*) about the standards and motivations governing divine communication. The antitheses – wisdom/foolishness, power/weakness – reflect an ostensibly allegorical hermeneutic, i.e. an interpretive stance that regards texts and realities as "saying what is other," i.e. looking like one thing and *really* being another. Paul's gospel and its reception are about "a wisdom hidden in a mystery" (*sophia en mystêriô hê apokekrymmenê*) now revealed to an undefined "us" by the Spirit which plumbs below the surface even to "the depths of God" (*ta bathê tou theou*). Although he does not use the term *hyponoia*,[8] the metaphor of divine depths implies an "under-sense" to the realities of this world, one which in effect flips them over. You say foolish but you mean wise; you see weakness but you really see power. At the heart of this is the paradox of the cross for Paul: not weakness or shame, but power and glory. Paul says it is God who is the fashioner of such allegorical reversals, as he emphasizes in the language of election (1 Cor 1:24, 27, 28) and the Isaiah 29:14 passage quoted in 1:19. The Corinthians as the "called" are united against Jews and Greeks, who cannot see what they see.

Having accepted the *logos tou staurou* ("the word of the cross"), Paul argues, the Corinthians should have left mundane counterparts, and the thought patterns they imply, behind. The intent is not so much to put the spotlight on himself as to turn the Corinthians into evidence against themselves; having begun from a position of foolishness and weakness,

by a "then and now" commonplace they need to remain aligned with the foolishness of the cross and its power. But Paul continues, castigating them by implication, "boasting" in men through their factionalized behavior has skewed them; they cannot be on God's side and the world's side at the same time. Having become allegorists they cannot be literalists. The "wisdom of the world" (1:20) that they ape by their petty rivalries sets them at odds with themselves, stranded and sawing off the hermeneutical limb on which they are seated. Further exemplifying God's foolish wisdom, Paul takes what will in the long view turn out to be a risky move – he conjures up his own weak-but-strong initial kerygmatic proclamation as exhibit B. They must stand over and against what Paul classifies as its opposite – "persuasive words of wisdom" (2:5; cf. 2:13: "didactic words of human wisdom," which Paul insinuates is the basis of the conflict). What is at stake is the warrants of proof (*apodeixis*) – human rhetoric and logic, or divine power and spirit. With rhetorical power Paul sets up a false dichotomy that he himself has already abrogated by the carefully crafted sentences already set forth. He wishes to align both himself and the Corinthians with the Spirit – the communicative glue that generated their conversion to the new *logos*, the *logos tou theou* ("word of God").

But the cracks in what at first appears to be a simple determinist hermeneutic in 1 Cor 1:22–24 soon become revealed: even among and within the called ones (*autoi hoi klêtoi*) there are degrees of comprehension, on a scale from the "mature" (*teleioi*) to babies (*nêpioi*). And when incomprehension takes place the blame hangs in the air between deliberate divine obfuscation ("God's wisdom which has been veiled in a mystery" [*theou sophian en mystêriô tên apokekrymmenên*]), and human obtuseness (of the *psychikoi*). This is the moment – trapped between rhetoric and philosophy, between apocalyptic and wisdom traditions,[9] between excoriation and exhortation – in which a tripartite anthropological hermeneutical scale is born that is destined to have a very long and fraught history in Christian exegesis and polemics.

In 2:6—3:4 Paul propounds by turns a threefold "taxonomy" of human beings according to the three elements of which they are composed:[10]

pneumatikoi – "spiritual people"
psychikoi – "psychical people"
sarkikoi – "fleshly people"

Paul's argument links the *pneumatikoi* with the *teleioi*, who are filled with the same Spirit that revealed the wisdom hidden in a mystery by God (2:7–10); these people are able, as Paul's pithy formulation puts it, *pneumatikois pneumatika synkrinontes* (2:13). The phrase is tantalizingly ambiguous, in

terms of both lexicography and grammar, because the verb *synkrinein* can mean either "compare" or "interpret,"[11] the adjective *pneumatikois* could be masculine or neuter (referring to people or to things), and the dative case here could mark either indirect object (those who receive them) or means (by which the action is carried out).[12] The phrase could be rendered in (at least) the following three different ways: "interpreting spiritual things by spiritual means," or "interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people," or "comparing spiritual things with spiritual things." Note that each translation in turn spins the hermeneutical triangle to a different apex: method (spiritual means), readerly expertise (spiritual readers), or status of what is being read (spiritual realities). The ambiguity Paul sowed here, whether intentional or not, will be appreciatively exploited in later Christian exegesis, which saw problems and possibilities in each.

The flow of the argument from 2:6–16 shows that Paul seeks to link the knower with the object of knowledge – the tripartite human elements with their external correlates of spirit, soul and fleshly realities. The spirit, as God's own, has the ability to delve into the very "depths of God" (*bathê tou theou*), and through the gifts of the Spirit to endow those who have received this Spirit with its gifts ("But we did not receive the spirit [*pneuma*] of the world, but the Spirit which is from God [*to pneuma to ek tou theou*], so that we might know the things given by God to us"). The depths of God are the quintessential "other meaning" from the surface, which is viewed as false. These same *hêmeis*, "we," are said to possess yet another anthropological category, the very *nous Christou* ("mind/meaning of Christ," 2:16). Here, too, with an assist from Isaiah (40:13), Paul has hurled a multivalent term into the stream of early Christian hermeneutics, for *nous* can suggestively mean either "mind," "meaning" or "sense."[13] Furthermore, the referent of this "we" who hold this interpretive coup is enigmatic. It is clearly inclusive of Paul, as one who speaks wisdom among the mature or perfect (*sophian de laloumen en tois teleiois*, 2:6), a wisdom that fits his own self-description in 2:1–5 of eschewing human educational methods and rhetoric.[14] But it is also theoretically open to anyone who has the Spirit that is from God, rather than the spirit of the world. Whether this is a select "we" or the whole "we" (at least in principle) is left unresolved. Nevertheless, what is certain is that Paul deliberately excludes the *psychikoi*, the "psychical people," who cannot receive the things of the Spirit; they reject them as foolishness (*môria*),[15] because they haven't been caught in the divine allegorical revolving door that requires one to interpret things *pneumatikôs* ("by spiritual means" or "in a spiritual way"). The issue remains whether this *psychikos* is essentially impaired, developmentally disabled, baptismally

excluded, or post-baptismally disqualified. Paul does not tarry to work this out in any systematic way here.[16]

These statements in 1 Cor 2:1–16 are highly occasional and situation-specific; in their original argumentative context they set up for the stern application to the Corinthian contenders which follows. In 3:1–4, which I take to be the crescendo of this argument, the developmental and the elemental intersect in a temporally conditioned argument: "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able. But still now you are not yet able, for still you are fleshly" (1 Cor 3:2–3). The rhetorical surprise is that, having established a dualism between *pneumatikoi* (people of the Spirit) and *psychikoi* (people of the soul), Paul lowers the floor to add a third, even more debased category in which to place the Corinthians – *sarkikoi* (people of the flesh). Having laid out the full curriculum of knowledge, Paul stingingly rebukes the Corinthians for ranking last *on either the age or the anthropological attribute scale*: they are *nêpioi* (still!) and *sarkikoi* when they engage in partisan politics.

The problem Paul bequeathed to later exegetes is that he is actually not providing a hermeneutical map, but is offering a provocative diagnosis, meant to prod the Corinthians by an insulting label flung out to change their behavior.[17] Given that this is his rhetorical aim, Paul must certainly leave open the possibility for hermeneutical change and growth, even as in "systematic" terms there appears to be an ontological fixity. The lack of precise fit can be seen in the sheer mathematical difficulty with mapping the duality mature/childish onto the triad spiritual/psychical/fleshly. And the reasons Paul gives or implies for these statuses are at least theoretically different: one is spiritual by endowment ("but we received the Spirit which is from God"), but fleshly or psychical by nature, a condition subject to change either by spirit-infusion or by proper maturation. Furthermore, the literal-allegorical template is doubly confusing here, in terms of the reality Paul describes and the words he chooses to do it: are all three properly "real" states, or is the spiritual person no longer (allegorically? literally?) also a person of flesh? The logic of this deliberative argument of dissuasion (*apotropê*) requires that the remedy is within the Corinthians' grasp. By a better understanding of the proper relation of missionaries to one another and to them, one could presumably transcend one's fleshly self, one's baby self, and hence baby food. Hermeneutical triage offers two different explanations for failure: the vaccination (of the Spirit) has apparently and inexplicably failed, or the patient is (no matter what medicine is applied) too young for the cure. Paul's rebuke of Corinthian behavior as attachment to the wisdom of this world addresses hermeneutical failure and success

with a rhetorical purpose couched in language that is at once apocalyptic, sociological, philosophical and ecclesiological. Hermeneutical failure is a result of divine intent (for some), or insufficient development (for some) and a *logos/ergon* ("word"/"deed") problem for others. And, given that the commonplace that overrides the whole argument is a "then and now" appeal[18] that seeks to rebuke the Corinthians for not being consistent now with what they accepted then, the mismatch between blueprint and reality – whether essential or ethical, deeds or destiny – is built into the exposition.

These anthropological terms will reappear singly and in various combinations throughout the long argument of 1 Corinthians,[19] and indeed throughout the ensuing letters,[20] a well-noted characteristic of the correspondence.[21] In particular the language of spirit and flesh will appear in various arguments, sometimes in reference to a component of a human person, at other times to some other entity:

- The sexual malefactor of 1 Corinthians 5 is given a dualistic shock treatment – his flesh (*sarx*) is destroyed to save his spirit (*pneuma*) (5:5).[22]
- The cleaving with a *porne* into "one body" or "one flesh" (*hen sôma, sarx mia*) is contrasted with cleaving with the "one spirit" (*hen pneuma*) in the Lord (6:16–17).
- Debate on apostolic life-support contrasts "spiritual goods" (*ta pneumatika*) with "fleshly goods" (*ta sarkika*) (9:11).
- The bellies of the wilderness generation are said to have been filled with "spiritual food" (*pneumatikon brôma*) and "spiritual drink" (*pneumatikon poma*) (10:3–4).
- Christ is said to have been a "spiritual rock (*pneumatikê . . . petra*) that followed" them (10:4).
- An example about the temple cult in Jerusalem is introduced with the call to look at Israel "according to the flesh" (*kata sarka*) (10:18); stunningly, the phrase *kata sarka* appears another four times in the letters in 2 Corinthians (1:17; 5:16; 10:2; 11:18).
- The "spiritual people" (*pneumatikoi*) or perhaps "spiritual things" (*pneumatika*) are the subject of the entire argument from chs. 12—14, culminating in a warning to one who "thinks he or she is a 'spiritual person'" (*pneumatikos*) (14:37).
- The hermeneutics of the "spirit" (*pneuma*) versus the "flesh" (*sarx*) and the "letter" (*gramma*) is the extended subject of 2 Cor 3:1—4:18.[23]

But all three elements of the anthropological triad – soul, spirit and flesh[24] – will be used together only one more time: in 1 Cor 15:35–49, where the triad is reduced to a dyad – "ensouled body" (*sôma psychikon*)

versus "spiritual body" (*sôma pneumatikon*)[25] – a duality that, Paul prophetically promises, will only be resolved eschatologically. Paul also adds yet another term to the mix there, the neologism "person of clay" (*choïkos*).[26] Even the immediate use of the anthropological triad within this same letter is not systematically or ontologically consistent. And yet this is the insecure pivot that will be a major building block for the early Christian exegesis that awaits.

That Paul left anthropological hermeneutics tantalizingly unresolved is demonstrated by its very earliest reception. Aside from the authors of James and Jude, no early Paulinist author picks up the language of *psychikos*. In both those instances it may represent a reappropriation of 1 Corinthians, because both apply the term with the same rhetorical direction of Paul's argument, to excoriate new generations of factionalized Christians. In Jude this is clear because it is introduced as a teaching of the apostles, and the rebuke is strikingly like 1 Cor 2:11–16: "These are the men who create divisions, *psychikoi*, those who do not have the Spirit (*pneuma*)" (Jude 19). In James the adjective is applied not to hermeneutical classes of people but to the object of knowledge, which, tellingly, as in 1 Corinthians 1—2, is wisdom (*sophia*).[27] Indeed, none of the pseudepigraphers who wrote in Paul's name adopts the *pneumatikos/sarkikos* anthropological dichotomy (including the author of Ephesians,[28] who seems most of all to know and use 1 Corinthians).

No early Christian author of the first generations tries to systematize a *tripartite* anthropological hermeneutic of three separable and separate statuses – spiritual, psychical and fleshly people. Where a dualistic version does show up, and in interesting form, is in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, the devoted Paulinist.[29] That Ignatius knows 1 Corinthians is confirmed by the quotations of 1 Cor 6:9–10 in *Epheians* 16.1 and 1:19–20 in 18.1 (also 11:1 in *Philippians* 7.2).[30] This early Antiochene picks up from Paul the distinction between two types of people, the "spiritual" and the "fleshly" (*pneumatikos/sarkikos*), and two kinds of things with which they are aligned, "spiritual things" and "fleshly things" (*pneumatika/sarkika*), though for Ignatius these refer to deeds rather than to hermeneutical object perceptions. But still he sounds a recognizably Pauline note in the initial declaration, "The fleshly people (*sarkikoi*) are not able to do the spiritual things (*pneumatika*) nor the spiritual people (*pneumatikoi*) the fleshly things (*sarkika*)."[31] Ignatius then offers a different third term, *pistis*: "just as the faith is not able to do the things of unfaith nor is unfaith to do the things of faith."[32] This adds a measure of what Paul did not do (but might have implied) – diagnosing the problem of obtuseness

not anthropologically but missiologically (though the result is the same, because *pistis* and *pneuma* are logically linked for both). But Ignatius is no systematician, either; like Paul, he is embedded in the agonistic paradigm, seeking proofs for situation-specific arguments. Hence he confounds rather than clarifies the neat dualism by next saying that "the things which you do even according to the flesh (*kata sarka*) are spiritual things (*pneumatika*), for you do everything in Christ."[33] Ignatius must affirm that the Christians are both fleshly and spiritual people, since immediately before, in combating incipient Docetism, he has made the same claim for Christ, as both "fleshly and spiritual" (*sarkikos te kai pneumatikos*).[34]

As we see in Ignatius, the rhetorical possibilities of the invective implied in the Pauline passage can be exploited to emphasize both *inclusion* (what "we" spiritual people can do and have) and *exclusion* (what those others – either Jews, heretics or pagan non-believers – are unable to understand). Dragged across the Corinthian *diolkos* and into early Christian exegesis, 1 Cor 2:1—3:4, in various segmentations and reincorporations, was to have an incalculably large impact.[35] Tracking this history of effects we can see how a Pauline *pericope* which hovers between philosophical anthropology and exhortatory rhetoric has been appropriated on a spectrum between the two. Hence Valentinians, for example, seem to have turned the passage to the more philosophical side, and tried to systematize the three labels into three separate ontological statuses and origins. Thus there are three "races of people" (*genê anthrôpôn*) – "spiritual," "psychical,"[36] "clay" (*pneumatikon, psychikon, choïkon*) – each of which has its own generative principle. According to Irenaeus, Valentinus's followers argue that Jesus already *implicitly* taught this, on the basis of inventive scriptural allegories, such as the three responses to the invitation "follow me," or the three measures of flour in which the woman/Sophia hid the leaven, but it is Paul whom they claim as having said it *explicitly* (*diarrêdên*) in 1 Cor 15:48; 2:14 and 15:

> [The Valentinians] teach that Christ has thus designated three races of people (*tria genê anthrôpôn*) . . . And indeed Paul said expressly (*diarrêdên*) *choikoi, psychikoi, pneumatikoi*, at one time: "as the *choïkos* is, so also are the *choïkoi*" (1 Cor 15:48); and another time, "the *psychikos* man does not receive the things of the spirit" (1 Cor 2:14); and another, "a *pneumatikos* scrutinizes all things" (1 Cor 2:15).[37]

Irenaeus, who bristled at being called a *psychikos* by the Gnostics,[38] waited his turn, and in Book 4 of *Adversus haereses* crafted the true *pneumatikos* in his own image, and exhorted his presbyteral peers to be like him.[39] For Irenaeus, too, the *pneumatikos* has an ambiguous ontological status. On

the one hand he becomes such by having received "the Spirit of God which from the beginning was present in people in all the 'economies' of God" (hence, an essential identity) and, on the other, the *pneumatikos* is known and proven by his privileged activity: engaging in the *anakrisis*, the form of judicial "scrutiny," which the apostle had reserved for them, according to 2:15 (hence in some sense an achieved identity). Conveniently rephrasing Paul's "he scrutinizes all things (*panta*)," by the addition of a single letter, to "he scrutinizes all people" (*pantas*), Irenaeus finds in the same verses used against him a call to vigilant and constant heresiological judgment (*anakrisis*) against others (he names in turn Gentiles, Jews, Marcionites, Valentinians, Ebionites, Docetists, false prophets, "all those who are outside the truth of the church").[40] Indeed, this rhetorical turn serves as both accusation and defense in Irenaeus's proof, for, as Paul describes the *pneumatikos*, he both does the *anakrisis* of the outsiders which establishes them as *psychikoi*, and stands insulated against counter-argument: "he himself is scrutinized (*anakrinetai*) by no one."[41]

As useful as this dualistic demonizing is, Irenaeus in Book 5 will again walk the tightrope of this Pauline inheritance, because of its easy deployment by Marcionites and others to denigrate the flesh. Irenaeus insists that by the term *pneumatikos* Paul was not designating a *kind* of person, but a *part* of every person. He finds a way to systematize what Paul had not; the *teleios*, he avers, is not all spirit, but the *perfect mix* of the *psychê* that has received the divine spirit, and the body, which bears the *eikôn theou* ("image of God"). Having inherited the problem from Paul, Irenaeus looks to him for the solution:

> The "perfect" human being (*teleios anthrôpos*) is a mix and unity of a soul (*psychê*) which has received the Spirit of the Father (*to pneuma tou patros*) and been mixed with the flesh (*sarx*) which has been fashioned according to the image of God (*eikôn theou*). And it is for this reason that the apostle says . . . [citation of 1 Cor 2:6 follows] . . . whom the apostle also calls "*pneumatikoi*," because as sharing in the Spirit (*pneuma*) they are "spiritual" (*pneumatikoi*), but not because they lack or have cast off the flesh (*sarx*).

In defending this unified anthropology by a counter-reading of 1 Corinthians 2, Irenaeus invokes 1 Thess 5:23 (which pronounces an eschatological blessing on *pneuma*, *psychê* and *sôma*) as *a self-interpretive moment by Paul* that tells one how to read the varied Corinthian anthropological utterances: "for this reason this very apostle, *interpreting himself* (*exêgoumenos heauton*), clearly defined the 'perfect and spiritual man' as one who partakes of salvation."[42] Using Paul to clarify his own intent, Irenaeus invokes him as

proof of his thesis that it is "the mix and unity" of the three elements of soul, spirit (of the Father), and flesh (fashioned according to the image of God) that makes the "perfect human being."

Thus we can see that each side in these second-century debates systematizes according to particular constraints (broadly cosmological for the Valentinians, ethical and ecclesiological for Irenaeus) and for particular goals. And both of them find such categories valuable for their rhetoric of invective against opponents. The spectrum between philosophy and rhetoric is still at play on both sides (neither hugs only one pole to the exclusion of the other), as Paul's anthropological language could be – and was – rhetorically adapted to different purposes.

Unquestionably the most famous reinstantiation of Paul's anthropological hermeneutical musings in early Christian literature is found in Origen's *Peri archôn* (in Latin, *De principiis*), Book 4; since late antiquity this portion of the larger work has been taken as Origen's systematic exposition of his hermeneutical principles, which is presumably the reason it was preserved in the *Philocalia* by Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus. One representative recent commentator, John J. O'Keefe, has referred to this extended passage (*PA* 4.2) as "a large macrotheory of interpretation," only to have to concede just words later that "many scholars have been confused by the methodological discussions Origen advances in *First Principles* because Origen himself does not rigidly apply a tripartite system throughout his corpus."[43] This is of course one of the longest-standing debates in Origen scholarship down to the present. A recent monograph seeks once more to defend Origen's consistent employment of this scheme across his writings;[44] I tend toward the opposite view.

I suggest that Origen was not working out a completely consistent philosophical hermeneutics in Book 4 of *Peri archôn*, but he was, like his hermeneutical mentor, Paul, constructing a rhetorical argument that had several not entirely consistent *skopoi* (goals).[45] As with Paul – whose Corinthian correspondence, as I shall show, is a major building block for Origen's work – the anthropological hermeneutic is inescapably caught between rhetoric and philosophy. First, in this final book of his philosophical-theological handbook,[46] Origen wishes to defend his appeals to the scriptures as proof for his theological statements in the prior three books; this use of scripture *as evidence* for philosophical truths seems logically to require that any of his readers might be able to read and understand them, read and see in the scriptures clear demonstration of the truth claims of Origen's theology. Second, he attempts simultaneously to explain and condemn the hermeneutical failures of opponents (in his case, "Gnostics"

and "Jews") and of Christians whom he classifies as being of limited skills; the rhetorical and catechetical challenge is to repudiate the former while simultaneously offering hope and encouragement to the latter for a potential development in exegetical expertise. Third, like his guide, Paul, he is combining two uneasy paradigms of textual perspicuity: the agonistic paradigm (in which texts provide clear testimony to one side of a case) and the apocalyptic paradigm (in which the text deliberately hides, but also offers peeks at, divine truth).

Book 4 of the *Peri archôn* begins with a very clear statement of purpose, one that is fully coherent with the plan of the work laid out in the Prologue. Origen says that, since he has appealed to the scriptures as *martyria*, "testimonies," for his *apodeixis*, "proof" for the theological claims about God, Christ, and spirit and other topics in the first three books, it is now time that *logô te peirômetha kratynein hêmôn tên pistin*,[47] a rhetorically inflected double entendre which means "we shall attempt by reason (*logos*) to confirm the credibility (*pistis*) of our arguments" and/or "by the Logos (*logos*) to confirm our faith (*pistis*)."[48] When he comes to Book 4, Origen acknowledges the need to support these appeals to scripture as written evidence, as witnesses; hence he places himself overtly within the agonistic paradigm of interpretation. He does so by means of an opening defense of the reliability of the scriptural texts as divine, or divinely inspired (*theopneustos*) (4.1.1; cf. 2 Tim 3:16). Origen's proof for the divine origin of the scriptures is rooted first in his demonstration of the divinity of Christ, as foretold in the scriptures; this is very much like Paul's *euangelion*, which, he twice insists, is in accordance with the scriptures (*kata tas graphas*; 1 Cor 15:3–4), but, unlike Paul, Origen fills out the footnotes. The facts of history, Origen wishes to claim, demonstrate the divine authorship of scripture. Here already the distinction between readers comes out, since the "Old Testament" on this rendering contains texts that were manifestly not understood by their original audiences (nor by Origen's contemporary Jews, to whom he will turn later).[49] With a nod to 2 Cor 3:13–16 (a text to which we shall return in our next chapter), Origen accounts for the hiddenness of prophecies[50] of the coming of Jesus by recourse to the veil (*kalymmati enapokekrymmenon*[51]), a barrier removed at the advent of Christ, "when the veil was taken away" (*periairethentos tou kalymmatos*), that is, when what was only traced in a shadow (*skia*) of the letter (*to gramma*)[52] has become open knowledge (*gnôsis*).[53] The problem Origen faces here is that he wishes on the one hand to insist that the scriptures constitute publicly verifiable, and yet also divine, testimony to the truth of the Christian faith, while, on the other, this insistence upon forensic clarity

(as the "agonistic paradigm" requires) meets with the immediate obstacle that the text has not in fact, either in history or in the present, been read as clear, as unmistakable evidence that speaks in a single voice. And whose fault is that?

Origen at first flirts with the possibility of overwhelming any skeptic with every prophecy of every single future event, so that this person would merely have to accept their divine origin and thus open his soul freely to them. But, Origen says (invoking the "there is not enough time" *topos*), that would obviously be too much.[54] Yet it is not just the practical impossibility of filling the courtroom with too many witnesses that stops him here. There is a fundamental epistemological obstacle: unskilled readers (*hoi anepistêmones*) do not in fact encounter "the superhuman quality of the thoughts" (*to hyper anthrôpon noêmatôn*) "in every passage of scripture."[55] How can this be explained so that the scriptures can serve as a warrant for philosophical proof – i.e. a publicly verifiable testimony – if this is the case? Origen's initial reply is by analogy: nature is not rejected just because the divine providential ordering has it that some things are readily apparent (*enargestata*), whereas others are hidden (*apokekryptai*). Perhaps Origen has in mind here Heraclitus's famous axiom that "nature loves to hide herself" (*physis kryptesthai philei*).[56] If this is true of nature, the basic body of evidence for philosophical argumentation, so also with scripture, Origen maintains. Just because human weakness (*astheneia*) means that we are not able to perceive the hidden magnificence of the teachings that are to be found concealed in the poor and contemptible expression (or "style," *lexis*) of scripture, it does not diminish them. "We have these treasures in earthen vessels," Origen intones, with Paul in 2 Cor 4:7, "so that the superabundance of the power of God might shine forth," and might not be considered to come from us human beings.[57] Origen next zeroes in on the problem of proof within proof, intertwining Paul's particular appeal with his own current contingency:

> For if the hackneyed ways of proof (*hai katêmaxeumenai tôn apodeixeôn hodoi*) found in books by human authors have prevailed over human beings, then our "faith" would reasonably be suspected of resting in "the wisdom of human beings and not in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:5). But now, to one who has raised up his eyes, it is clear that the "*logos* and the *kêrygma*" (1 Cor 2:4) has had its power over the many "not in persuasive words of wisdom (*ouk en peithois sophias logois*), but in the proof of the spirit and of power (*all' en apodeixei pneumatos kai dynameôs*)" (1 Cor 2:4). Therefore, if a heavenly or even supra-heavenly power strikes us with amazement in order that we worship alone the one who created us, let us try, "leaving off the beginning instruction of Christ," that is, the elementary

instruction, "to be brought to perfection (*teleiotês*)" (Heb 6:1; cf. 1 Cor 3:1–4) so that "the wisdom spoken among the perfect" (paraphrase of 1 Cor 2:6) might be spoken to us, too. For the one (Paul) who has acquired this wisdom (*sophia*) promises to speak among the perfect (*teleioi*) another wisdom which is beyond the wisdom of this age and the wisdom of the rulers of this age, a wisdom which is passing away (1 Cor 2:6; cf. 13:10).[58]

We can see that Origen has applied to all of scripture the designations Paul gave to his gospel (there is much of interest we could analyze here if we had more time).[59] The argument of this opening section closes, not with systematic explanation of the two wisdoms and their adherents and proclaimers (nor a return to the logical problem that non-Christian readers of his proof should be all the less able to be convinced, for the "wisdom spoken among the perfect" is by definition not accessible to them), but in a doxology formed by the intertexts of Rom 16:25–27 and 2 Tim 1:10. Despite present appearances, this wisdom "will be imprinted on us clearly" (*entypôthêsetai tranôs*); the believer, who has now become the site of deposition of the clear text, finds cause for glorification of the divine author. The incomprehensible is hymned in a declaration of its supreme clarity.

The second proposition of Book 4 of *Peri archôn* is Origen's demonstration of "the method for reading and understanding (*ho tropos tês anagnôseôs kai noêseôs*) the divine scriptures."[60] Here too he relies heavily on Corinthian precedent. The proof begins – like 1 Cor 1:18–24 – with two examples of interpretive failure; in this case Origen invokes Jews and those among the heresies (4.2.1). The common cause of their "falsely considered, impious and uneducated teachings about God" is one and the same: "the scripture not being understood *according to spiritual realities*" (*hê graphê kata ta pneumatika mê nenoêmenê*), the opposite of which is interpreting it "by looking only at the bare letter" (*to psilon gramma*).[61] Here Origen (like Paul before him) wishes to place his readers on the inside of the hermeneutical family, self-demarcated against those outside who, because they do not read scripture "in accordance with spiritual realities" (*kata ta pneumatika*), show that they are not themselves "spiritual people" (*pneumatikoi*) (like us). Using a rhetorical appeal I call the "urbanity *topos*," Origen avers that "even the most simple readers" recognize that there are *oikonomiai mystikai* ("mysterious arrangements") in the scriptures, but it takes wise and unconceited ones to acknowledge that it is not easy to tell which these are, and of which biblical passages one should just say "these are mysteries that are not understood by us" (*mysteria . . . hyph' hêmôn mê nooumena*).[62] Errors regarding these have a different diagnosis than with

Jews and heretics: mistakes can arise because people are not well trained or because of rashness (*propeteia*). And yet, Origen allows, even when skill and patience *are* in place, "the sense of all these things is not entirely made clear, because of the extreme difficulty for human beings of the task of discovering the true realities (*heuresis tôn pragmatôn*) to which scripture points."[63] So it seems that even spiritual people sometimes meet things that are not fully clear in the scriptural record.

But the next step in Origen's argument reveals yet another variable in place in the 3D chess game that is biblical hermeneutics: alongside the method of reading (attending to the letter, to the spirit) and the expertise and disposition of the reader, is the genre of the text. Thus far Origen has been speaking of Genesis and Exodus (hence, the Law). Now he says there is no need to speak of the prophets, because everyone knows that these are full of "enigmas and dark sayings" (*ainigmata*[64] *kai skoteinoi logoi*).[65] He does not complete the argument, but the syllogism is meant to lead to the inference that such writings are known to require spiritual exegesis. But when he turns to the gospels Origen offers as a hermeneutical guide to reading a pastiche of verses from 1 Corinthians 2:

> And if now we come to the gospels (*ta euangelia*), the accurate meaning (*akribês nous*) of them, too, in as much as they are "the meaning of Christ" (*nous Christou*, 1 Cor 2:16) requires the grace which was given[66] to the man who said, "And we possess the meaning of Christ (*nous Christou*), so that we might know the things given to us by God. That which we speak is not in didactic words of human wisdom (*ouk en didaktois anthrôpinês sophias*), but in didactic words of the Spirit (*all' en didaktois pneumatos*) (1 Cor 2:16, 12, 13).[67]

First off, it is clear that Origen regards Paul's statements not just as calling for a spiritual reading and justifying it (Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2 being taken as hermeneutical advice), but as Paul even *exemplifying in his very person* what a spirit-filled reading looks like.[68] Elsewhere Origen and other early Christian interpreters will find the most conspicuous instance of Paul's own spiritual proficiency in a later missive to Corinth (2 Corinthians 12). Here, you will notice, Origen has rearranged Paul's passage, citing first 1 Cor 2:16 (the "meaning [or mind] of Christ") and attaching to it the purpose clause of 2:12 ("so that we might know the things given to us by God") and the relative clause from 2:13 ("That which we speak is not in didactic words of human wisdom, but in didactic words of the Spirit"). The rearrangement identifies the "mind or meaning of Christ" with the gospels. Origen has transformed Paul's statement into a definitive appeal to the authorial intent of the words of Jesus in the gospels (as offering Christ's

very mind or meaning), while also casting Paul as their definitive spiritual interpreter.[69]

One reason I have walked us through so much of *Peri archôn* 4.1–2 is so that we can appreciate the extent to which Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 2 is already in play in Origen's argument once we come to what is perhaps the most famous passage in *Peri archôn* 4 (4.2.4), in which Origen lays out his threefold anthropological mapping of interpreters. The central passage he first cites is Prov 22:20 ("And you, too, inscribe these things threefold [*apograpsai . . . trissôs*] in intent and knowledge [*boulê kai gnôsis*]"), and then he proposes the scheme of the "threefold" levels of readers and of scripture:

ho haplouteros	*apo tês hoionei* sarkos *tês graphês*
"the more simple"	"from, as it were, the flesh[70] of scripture"
ho epi poson anabebêkôs	*apo tês hôsperei* psychês *autês*
"the one who has advanced somewhat"	"from, as if, the very soul of scripture"
ho teleios	*apo tou* pneumatikou *nomou skian periechontos tôn melontôn agathôn*
"the perfect"	"from the spiritual law containing a shadow of the good things to come"

That this schema is indebted to Paul's 1 Corinthians 2 is unmistakable because the *teleios* is overtly described by a direct quote: "the one who is perfect and like those spoken of (or to) by the apostle, 'But we speak a wisdom among the perfect, a wisdom not of this age nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away, but we speak God's wisdom hidden in a mystery, which God foreordained before the ages for our glory.'"[71] The language of 1 Corinthians 2 is here pressed into the service of hermeneutical theory in a slightly different way: flesh, soul and spirit are not three types of people, per se, but they are three elements of which scripture itself is composed. But Origen is also making an anthropological argument, for he in turn aligns these elements of scripture with different types of readers. These categories are not exactly ontologically assigned, and yet they are not bereft of such implication, either. The focus weaves in and out of a text-based hermeneutical diagnostics and a reader-based one.

From Paul Origen gets the unambiguous alignment of the *teleios* with the *pneuma*. He renames the "flesh" of the text according to his own exegetical vocabulary, not Paul's: "thus we are naming the interpretation that lies close at hand" (*hê procheiros ekdochê*), i.e. the "surface" sense, which contrasts nicely with Paul's "depths of God" which "the Spirit searches" (1 Cor 2:10). While Paul has given him a full definition of the *teleios*, and

suggested the threefold anthropological divisions, his exegetical mentor in 1 Corinthians 2 did not offer clear definitions of the other two. As in Paul's own argument, the *psychê/psychikos* is the odd man out; it is underdeveloped and under-theorized, of necessity in an argument that is gaining much of its force from the antithesis of flesh and spirit, as aligned with literal and spiritual.[72] The reason for this is that the agonistic paradigm, after all, is antithetical by nature, allowing of only two different sides, two different interpretations, and hence it sits awkwardly on any three-legged stool. When the antithetical rhetoric meets the philosophical arithmetic[73] there is overlap, but not complete correspondence.

Despite recent attempts to claim that Origen always consistently has a special place for the "soul/natural/psychical" sense (*psychikê*) across his extensive writings,[74] I do not believe one can even find it in the argument in Book 4 of *Peri archôn*, let alone consistently in Origen's *exegetica*. The first exemplum of the tripartite schema (of Grapte in the *Shepherd of Hermas*)[75] defies such categorization, as its exhortation maintains the binary Origen had offered earlier in his rebuke of Jews and heretics: between "the bare letter of the text" (*auto psilon . . . to gramma*) versus one who has "already stood apart from the letter (*gramma*)," who "no longer through letters (*grammata*), but through living words (*logoi zôntes*), teaches as a disciple of the spirit (*mathêtês tou pneumatos*)."[76] Here the dichotomizing Origen finds a better muse in the binary Paul of 2 Cor 3:6, who tossed the most conveniently clear and simple dichotomy between letter and spirit (*gramma* and *pneuma*) into the hermeneutical stream of the Christian tradition.

Juxtaposed chapters from later in 1 Corinthians provide Origen with *paradeigmata* (examples), vocabulary and justification for both *psychê-* and *pneuma*-related interpretations. 1 Corinthians 9:9–10, Paul's appeal to the threshing ox,[77] plays a quite important role in early Christian exegesis, where it is frequently cited as a precedent for non-literal interpretation:[78]

> The example (*paradeigma*) of an interpretation (*diêgêsis*) elevated (*anagomenê*), as it were, to the soul (*psychê*) is found in Paul's writings[79] in the first letter to the Corinthians: "for it is written," he says, "you shall not muzzle the ox when it is threshing" (1 Cor 9:9b). Then, interpreting (*diêgoumenos*) this law, Paul adds, "Are oxen of concern to God (1 Cor 9:9c)? Or does he say this entirely for our sakes (*di' hêmas*)? For it was for our sakes (*di' hêmas*) that it was written, 'the plowman should plow in hope, and the reaper in hope of partaking'" (1 Cor 9:10).[80]

In the original context of 1 Corinthians 9 Paul is drawing on this Deuteronomy passage (25:4) for a very particular purpose – as an allegory not just

for every person, but for the very specific case of apostles.[81] Consistent with the agonistic paradigm, the evidentiary exemplum used by Paul has now become the exemplum or precedent for the method.

And yet in his œuvre Origen does not consistently systematize this passage as an instance of a *psychikon* rather than *pneumatikon* sense.[82] For instance, 1 Cor 9:9–11 is the very first counter-example Origen offers to rebut Celsus's charge that the Christians' scriptures are not worthy of allegorical interpretation, on the grounds that some of the biblical writers themselves interpreted scripture allegorically.[83] Further, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians Origen can at first give a rhetorical and contextual exegesis of 1 Corinthians 9 showing that Paul has not lost the thread of his argument, but is employing rhetorical examples (*paradeigmata*), including himself, to show the Corinthians the proper use of authority. Then he can turn around and bring the two terms (soul and spirit) together in his inventive depiction of what Paul does here:

> Consequently, it is for our sakes (*di' hêmas*) – we who have received the New Testament – that these things have been said and written about people (rather than oxen, etc.), when the statement is understood spiritually (*pneumatikôs nooumenon*), as the divine apostle teaches (*kata ton theion apostolon*). And what is the meaning (*nous*) of the statement "that the one plowing should plow in hope, and the one reaping should reap in hope of partaking" (1 Cor 9:10)? Paul the farmer (*geôrgos*) plows the soul (*psychê*) of the one being instructed (*katêchoumenos*).[84]

One good allegory, it seems, deserves another! Origen here regards 1 Cor 9:9–10 as an interpretation that is *pneumatikôs* (not *psychikôs*), an easy move, because Paul himself in 1 Cor 9:11 had turned directly from his argument by appeal to the testimony of Deut 25:4 as referring to the case of apostolic support into an application of it that depends upon the dichotomy between "spiritual things" (*ta pneumatika*) and "fleshly things" (*ta sarkika*). Paul the allegorist becomes himself an allegory for the task of interpretation, which is directed at the soul of the believer, viewed as hard earth that requires tilling (the parable of the sower completes the picture nicely for Origen).

When Origen turns in *Peri archôn* 4.2.6 to the "spiritual interpretation" (*pneumatikê diêgêsis*), a quick nod at the "shadow" language of Heb 8:5 and Rom 8:5 prefaces a fuller quotation from 1 Cor 2:7–8, which Origen has transformed *from description to prescription*, terming it "the apostolic command" (*he apostolikê epangelia*). As a hermeneutical rule it reads that one "must seek" (*zêtêteon*) "the wisdom hidden in a mystery, which God foreordained before the ages for the glory [of the just], which none of the

rulers of this age has known." Another example from the Corinthian letters follows, setting up Paul as not only the exegetical commander but once again exemplar:

> The same apostle says elsewhere, employing some statements from the books of Exodus and Numbers, "These things happened to them as examples, but they were written for our sakes (*di' hêmas*), we upon whom the ends of the ages have come."[85]

Origen has here harmonized the *di' hêmas* ("for our sakes") of 1 Cor 9:9 and 10, which he has just cited, and "for our admonition" (*pros nouthesian hêmôn*) in 1 Cor 10:11. The mistake, if it is a mistake, is easy to make, because Origen does not really view what Paul is doing differently; what differs is the capacity of the reader/hearer in the two cases to capture the non-literal sense. As his invocations of these passages elsewhere in his œuvre demonstrate (including, as we have seen, the very significant role the Corinthian correspondence plays in Book 4 of *Peri archôn*), Origen's own appropriation of the strategic apostle's hermeneutical fragments is strategic, and poised to suit particular purposes. The tripartite anthropology is meant to endow Christian scriptures and interpretations of them with a philosophical pedigree and potency to back up the Christian philosophical synthesis that the full work has sought to provide. As a self-declared defense of Christian scripture as "witness" or "testimony" (*martyrion*) Origen's hermeneutical reflections here must deal with misunderstanding as much as with understanding. The agonistic paradigm knows what to do here: relegate such misreaders to the other side of the aisle. But it is less suited for explaining variability in interpretive acumen among those on "our side"; for that other tools, including exhortation and pedagogy, are required. As with Paul, Origen combines both concerns, and not in a completely systematic fashion. And yet the cycle will continue, as his *Peri archôn*, in turn, will be a major building block for a host of even more complex numerologically defined systems of senses in the medieval world of Christian exegesis,[86] each of which is designed to insulate interpretive variability against the charge of capriciousness by grounding it in scripture itself.

That scripture provides the rules and justification for its own interpretation is of course a commonplace of Christian interpretation (as it was of Homeric interpretation earlier – *Homêron ex Homêrou saphênizein*).[87] In Origen's rationale for this approach (in another marvelous passage in the *Philocalia*) the Corinthian Paul yet again has pride of position:

When about to begin our interpretation (*hermêneia*) of the Psalms, let us put forward first the gracious tradition handed over to us by the Hebrew that speaks in general terms about the entire divine scripture (*theia graphê*). For he declared that the whole "divinely inspired scripture" (*theopneustos graphê*), because of its lack of clarity (*asapheia*), is like many locked rooms (*oikoi kekleismenoi*) in a single house (*oikia*). But each room has a key (*kleis*) lying next to it (*parakeisthai*) that does not correspond to it. And the keys have been scattered around the rooms in such a way that none of them fits (*harmozein*) the room before which it lies. He says that the greatest task is to find (*heuriskein*) the keys and to fit them (*epharmozein*) to the rooms which they are able to open (*anoixai*); indeed, even the scriptures that are unclear (*asapheis*) are understood (*noeisthai*) when they receive their point of departure (*aphormai*)[88] for understanding from no other source than reciprocal engagement with other passages that have the exegetical principle (*to exêgêtikon*) sown into them. For indeed I think that the apostle Paul, too, suggested such an approach to the comprehension of the divine words of scripture when he said, "which things we speak not in teaching words of human wisdom, but in teaching words of the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things with spiritual things (*pneumatikois pneumatika synkrinontes*)."[89]

Origen fashions Paul as the inner-biblical exegete who justifies "the Hebrew's" lovely suggestion, which he approves, about the doors and keys of scripture. 1 Corinthians 2:6—3:4, and, indeed, the entire Corinthian correspondence, is an especially rich cabinet of keys (*kleis*) which can be selectively employed as exegetical principles or justifications for readings (*ta exêgetika*) that are required in given situations. The variable apostle has many keys on his ring, but so does the rest of scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. To Paul in 1 Corinthians 2 Origen gives the honor of providing the key to the keys: *pneumatikois pneumatika synkrinontes* ("interpreting spiritual things with spiritual things"),[90] thereby designating it one of the most influential pieces of hermeneutical cargo to pass across the Corinthian *diolkos*. And yet while this Origenic passage may draw upon the Corinthian inheritance to provide a tactical resolution to the problem of scriptural unclarity, it does not attempt to explain why it should be that scripture is unclear in the first place; instead, it treats that as a given. This is where we shall pick up the story of Christian biblical interpretation next – with an examination of the hermeneutics of occlusion in the Corinthian correspondence.

CHAPTER 4

The mirror and the veil: hermeneutics of occlusion

The opening address of Gregory of Nyssa's Prologue to the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* contains a *captatio benevolentiae*[1] of his addressee, the famous deaconess (and confidante of John Chrysostom), Olympias of Constantinople. Perhaps to forestall any objection about a woman writing to him requesting an interpretation of this most sensual of scriptures, Gregory commends Olympias for her "chaste life" (*semnos bios*) and "pure soul" (*kathara psychê*). He expresses full confidence that "the eye of her soul" (*ho tês psychês ophthalmos*)[2] is pure of all emotional or dirty thoughts, and, as a consequence, that she is able to look without interference[3] (*aparapodistôs blepein*) toward the undefiled grace that is mediated by the divine words in the Song. But in the opening sentences Gregory twice names the problem: the unoccluded eye of Olympias will meet in the book a wisdom (*sophia*) that stands hidden (*egkekrymmenê*).[4]

We rightly pick up an echo here of the text that was the focus of our last chapter, 1 Corinthians 2, and Paul's alignment of the "perfect" (*teleioi*) and the "spiritual people" (*pneumatikoi*) of 1 Corinthians 2 with the "wisdom of God hidden in a mystery (*theou sophia en mystêriô hê apokekrymmenê*) . . . which God has unveiled (*apekalypsen*) through the Spirit (*dia tou pneumatos*)" (1 Cor 2:6, 10). The tension between the hidden and the revealed, between clarity and obscurity – clear eye and obscure object, occluded eye and clear object – runs as a fault line down the Corinthian correspondence, and from it into the stream of Christian hermeneutics.[5] Of course, it is already present in 1 Thessalonians, which partakes of the customary apocalyptic peek-a-boo, of revealing and yet holding back.[6] But the Corinthian correspondence developed the theme further on an epistemological level, and gave it some supremely useful visual metaphors – the mirror and the veil – and terminology, such as *ainigma*, which was a part of ancient religious allegorical terminology[7] well before Paul,[8] and would be used as such by both Alexandrines and Antiochenes as a biblical-philosophical *terminus technicus*. Gregory himself had noted among Pauline

exempla of allegorical readings 1 Corinthians 13 and 2 Corinthians 3, which he takes as propounding Pauline strategies and vocabularies for what I term in the title of this chapter the hermeneutics of occlusion. When the text affords only "indistinct perception" (*amydrotera katanoêsis*) and knowledge that is "partial" (*ek merous*), Gregory noted, Paul terms this "mirror and enigma" (*esoptron kai ainigma*);[9] and when one must exchange somatic things (*sômatika*) for noetic ones (*noêta*) – i.e. uncoded signification – the apostle gave this the moniker "the turning toward the Lord" (*pros kyrion epistrophê*) and "veil removal" (*kalymmatos periairesis*). Paul's Corinthian correspondence is invoked by Gregory, we see, both to name the problem and to provide the solution – a hidden wisdom which requires allegorical interpretation; a lifting of the veil from a truth that stands concealed. Words that Paul originally wrote about his own speech and in defense of his own apostolate have become templates for the interpretation of the scriptures in which they are found. Paul becomes, simultaneously, the inaugurator (and defender) of a hermeneutics of clarity *and* obscurity, because this was true of himself – and nowhere more than in the Corinthian exchanges.

In these letters Paul at one time called himself the purveyor of God's hidden mystery (1 Cor 2:1–16), only later in the very same missive, in seeking to control Corinthian tongue-speaking, to emphasize the partiality of all human knowledge, including his own (1 Cor 13:8–12). In one later letter to the Achaean capital, however, he will claim that he has already surpassed that boundary, and traveled even to paradise (2 Cor 12:1–5). But in an intervening one he had to acknowledge that some regard his gospel as "veiled"; there he attributes it not to eschatological reserve, but to the blinding action of "the god of this age" (2 Cor 4:3–4), after invoking a biblical *exemplum* of Moses and his veil to which he sets himself in contrast. In the course of the Corinthian letters Paul employs what I like to call a "veil scale" of careful strategic calibration between the utterly clear and the utterly obscure, depending upon the *skopos* of a given argument. His patristic readers will return the favor, and use his words to do it.

The discourse on the mirror and the veil partakes of a larger biblical and philosophical complex that equates vision with knowing; it will quite easily become for patristic interpreters a discourse also about reading. Both the "mirror" and the "veil" are unique to the Corinthian correspondence among Paul's letters. In Paul, as in his interpreters, the two can be tactically employed to emphasize the partial access they afford or the occlusion they maintain. Paul summons the mirror image in two different letters to Corinth, with the noun *esoptron* in 1 Cor 13:12 and in 2 Cor 3:18 with

the verb *katoptrizesthai* ("look at as in a mirror, reflect as in a mirror"). Embodying this duality, in the first instance the mirror emphasizes partial vision, in the latter it seems to mean the opposite – directly gazing on the divine glory (though this is of course a famous *crux interpretum*).[10] Paul's own expression in 1 Cor 13:12, part of an argument to temper forms of spiritual expressionism he regards as damaging to community edification, sets up a higher hermeneutical standard by which all earthly knowing is to be measured: that of seeing "face to face."[11]

Origen, for example, will catch this sense, that for Paul in 1 Cor 13:8–13 allegory provides a partial glimpse now on earth at what in the eschaton will be the most literal and least allegorical of hermeneutics – communication *face to face* – i.e. without a veil. In his incorporation of this verse into his argument for martyrdom (*Exhortatio ad martyrium*), Origen completes the allusion Paul was making to Num 12:8. To suit his visual metaphor, you may recall, Paul rephrased "mouth to mouth" (*stoma kata stoma*) as "face to face" (*prosôpon pros prosôpon*)[12] but he retained the allusion to *ainigma* in the Septuagint of Numbers 12. Origen restores the fuller context, for it nicely suits his neo-Platonic reading, to the effect that beyond this life the soul, as a "friend of the heavenly Father," will no longer have need of communication *di' ainigmatôn* ("through allegories" or "through symbols"), but instead *en eidei* ("in sight," "in form"), i.e. "in a wisdom stripped of language (*phônai*), expressions (*lexeis*) symbols (*symbola*) and impressions (*typoi*)," by which one can "learn by direct encounter the nature of noetic realities and the beauty of the truth" (*manthanousin . . . prosballontes tê tôn noêtôn physei kai tô tês alêtheias kallei*).[13] The opposite of mirrored or refracted vision is the Platonic ideal of the direct gaze on the truth.[14] Origen's example for this is none other than Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, whose heavenly journey he regarded as especially successful because it brought *no verbal souvenir* (*arrêta rhêmata ha ouk exon anthrôpô lalêsai*).[15] Origen, drawing upon Paul as his model in word and deed, assumes that human life, which he sees in exegetical terms, is defined by veiled knowledge, and in this discourse urges Ambrosius and Protoctenus, masters of allegorical interpretation in the here and now, to contemplate and anticipate the interpretive stores of literal knowledge that lie beyond their deaths as martyrs.[16]

The application of 1 Corinthians 13 to the hermeneutics of reading is not limited to Alexandrines. John Chrysostom, for example, in explaining the category of *mystêrion*, draws amply on the Corinthian correspondence and Paul's various statements on the accessibility of divine knowledge. He begins by offering the example of children who gaze at books but do not understand the meaning of the letters and hence do not know what

they are looking at. This is true also of adults, he quickly notes, for some have experience with texts and others do not; to the latter an epistle is just parchment and ink (*chartê kai melan*), not a means by which the living voice of an absent friend is known (John gives nice expression to his epistolary commonplaces here).[17] This literacy example then is mapped somewhat unevenly onto the divine mysteries, with the help of 2 Cor 4:3, and the explanation that the faithful are those who by the Holy Spirit have the experience of what lies in store there, whereas to those without faith the gospel is veiled (*tois gar apollymenois, phêsin, esti kekalymmenon*). Employing further items from the Corinthian lexicon of occlusion, John names those who do not understand *psychikoi* ("soul people"), and connects their lack of understanding with the veil that blocks their vision: "but they have a veil over their heart (*kalymma epi tês kardias*) and they do not see" (*ou blepousin*). The reason this explanation (rather than a more determinist one) is required in this context is that John wants to position the mystery of the gospel between two poles – neither completely undisclosed nor fully disclosed, but at least theoretically available to all. The former is required for the castigation of the *psychikoi* to work, but the latter equally necessary to keep the flock from the dual extremes of despair and arrogance. Chrysostom moves the scale further toward the undisclosed side with the assistance of 1 Corinthians 13, which allows him to explain the fact that

> not even to us believers is absolute clarity (*pasa saphêneia*) and accuracy (*akribeia*) entrusted (*enecheiristhê*). Hence even Paul said, "We know in part and we prophesy in part. For we see now through a mirror as though in an enigma (*ainigma*), but then face to face" (1 Cor 13:12). That is why he said, "we speak a wisdom hidden in a mystery which God foreordained before the ages for our glory" (1 Cor 2:7).[18]

The intertextuality of statements on clarity and obscurity in the Corinthian letters will be drawn upon by Chrysostom again in one of his more philosophical works, "On the incomprehensibility of God," composed against the Anomoeans, c. 386–7 (early in his career). Here Chrysostom observes that the discussion of interpretive limits was addressed in a particular way by Paul when writing to the Corinthians:

> For Paul said to his own disciples, "I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people, but as fleshly people; as babies in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food. For you were not yet able." Now one could say that it is to the Corinthians alone (*Korinthiois . . . monon*) that he said this. But what if we could prove that he knew also some other things (*eidôs kai hetera tina*) that no human being had learned before, and he died as the only one of all humanity who knew these things (*monos*

auta tôn pantôn anthrôpôn eidôs)? And where can one find this? In the letter to the Corinthians (*En tê pros Korinthious epistolê*). For this is the man who says that "I heard (*êkousa*)[19] unspeakable words (*arrêta rhêmata*) which it is not lawful for a human being to speak (*ha ouk exon anthrôpô lalêsai*)."[20] But nevertheless even Paul himself, after he heard "unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a human being to speak," had a knowledge that was partial (*merikên echei gnôsin*) and greatly fell short of the future (*polu tês mellousês apodeousan*). For the very man who said the latter things also said, "For we know in part (*ek merous*) and in part we prophesy," and "when I was a child I used to talk like a child, I used to think like a child, I used to reason like a child," and "now I see (*blepô*)[21] through a mirror (*esoptron*) in an allegory (*ainigma*), but then face to face." So from these words of Paul's all the error [i.e. of Eunomius and followers] stands completely refuted (*dielêlegtai*) by us.[22]

As the last sentence of this excerpt shows, John's rhetorical purpose is different in this apologetic treatise – not to counsel the believers about their medial hermeneutical position (between the total obscurity of *psychikoi* and the complete knowledge that will only be available to the faithful after death) – but to convict theological opponents of thinking they know too much. The Corinthian letters provide him with the requisite resources both to emphasize Paul's own proficiency and to relativize the interpretive claims of all others. Chrysostom brings this Corinthian Paul as evidence in his own argument of refutation of the Anomoeans. Not only by citing Paul's words, but also by replicating his strategic and calibrated variability in the application of the clarity/obscurity dynamic, John the Antiochene shows himself true to the poetics Paul penned in his letters to the capital of Achaia in the mid-50s.

Paul's optical hermeneutics, as they unfold in the Corinthian correspondence, are defined according to two key issues, each of which appears along a spectrum: (1) *clarity and ambiguity*, and (2) *whole and part*. As with the mirror, these two become combined in the image of the veil, since a veil both focuses attention and blocks it, allows some glimpse and denies access to the whole. A veil can both allure and repel, promise and yet impede access. While the mirror was an image Paul used for divine realities, in the case of the veil in 2 Corinthians 3 it is Paul's own letters and self that are the object of hermeneutical reflection (as is clear especially in 4:3). As a visual metaphor for verbal realities, the veil embodies the dynamics of effective expression, on the one hand, and synecdoche or metonymy, on the other.

Kathy Eden's *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, a book to which I have referred in earlier chapters in constructing the "agonistic paradigm" of ancient interpretation, demonstrates that in rhetorical training students

were taught to support their interpretations of texts by setting part in relation to whole: either the full literary document or corpus of writings of the author (hence, the *oikonomia*) or the whole which is constituted by the historical context in which any text is written (*decorum*). She also draws attention to the significant fact that the topic of textual clarity and ambiguity is treated in two separate places in rhetorical education: under forensic proof (as the cause of *ambiguity* in textual evidence) and under style (in terms of the cardinal virtue of clarity and the well-catalogued list of *schêmata*, "figures" of style and diction that cloak meaning in various ways). "This deep and enduring division in the arts of rhetoric,"[23] Eden so cogently insists, "has far-reaching consequences for interpretation." This dynamic goes right to the heart of ancient rhetorical hermeneutics:

> The arts of rhetoric, in other words, characterize meaning differently in their different sections: under invention as intentionality – what moral and legal agents mean to do or say – and under elocution as signification – what words mean. In those parts of the manuals covering *interpretatio scripti*, these two concepts of meaning collide, engendering not only the overlap between the first and second grounds of controversy[24] but also the competing claims of *voluntas* and *scriptum*. The history of this collision, moreover, coincides with the history of rhetorical theory.[25]

For the Christian tradition, I seek to show, the Corinthian correspondence is a crucial episode in the history of this collision between words, intentionality and meaning. Why here? Paul as I see him in this progression of letters becomes caught between the agonistic and the apocalyptic paradigms, the first of which requires forensic clarity, while the second gains its power precisely from mystery that remains tantalizingly behind the curtain. The rhetor's highest virtue is said to be clarity, that of the poet or prophet, obscurity. Pauline poetics combines the two in strategic fashion; his successors will do the same – with tremendous consequences – with Paul's writings and all of scripture. We have already seen, for instance, in Chapter 3, how in the *Peri archôn* Origen drew upon Paul's letters to Corinth to defend his proposition that the meaning of all scripture is not invalidated, but indeed substantiated, by the fact that parts of it are "veiled" or otherwise obscure to some readers. Paul's "treasure in earthen vessels" of 2 Cor 4:7 becomes for Origen and other early interpreters a hermeneutical axiom that offers a concession on style (the crude style of scriptures being judged either so plain as to be uninteresting or so obscure as to cast doubt on their wisdom) while elevating the intention of the scriptures so that they contain not human fallibilities but the very powerful purpose of the divine.[26]

The veil is a permanent yet pliable inheritance moving across the Corinthian *diolkos* and into Christian hermeneutics, one that has its clearest expression as a charge against Paul to which he responds with a *synkrisis*, a rhetorical comparison with Moses and his veiled face in Exodus. And yet it may well be that the initial *Corinthian* veil is the one Paul freely tosses over himself, either literally or figuratively. As I noted in an earlier chapter, 1 Cor 4:6 represents a remarkable hermeneutical irony, as Paul there combines a literalism *topos* – "not to go beyond what is written" – with a self-disclosure that he has just "for their sakes" written about himself and Apollos in a "figured" or "disguised fashion": "I have related these things *in cloaked fashion* (*meteschêmatisa*) to myself and Apollos for your sakes." Could the Corinthians have worried that a man who once freely admitted in writing to using cloaked speech might do it again? Were they unsure if his words and meaning lined up? Or his words and intentions? We know for a fact that later generations of readers recorded this fear, and they did so in Paul's own language.

In the *Epistula Petri*, within the anti-Pauline Pseudo-Clementine literature, Peter is said to accuse Paul and his followers of subverting his (Peter's) meanings:

> For some people from the Gentiles have disqualified the lawful proclamation I [Peter] transmitted, and deemed fitting a lawless and foolish teaching of one who is an enemy. And in fact even while I was around some tried *by various interpretive techniques* (*tisin hermêneiais*) *to transform the meaning of my words by disguise* (*tous emous logous metaschêmatizein*) into a rationale for the destruction of the Law, as though I myself, too, held this opinion, but did not preach it openly (*mê ek parrêsias . . . kêryssontos*).[27]

The use of Pauline language for double-speak extends to the final line, where the opposite of disguised speaking is speaking "openly" "with full disclosure" (*ek parrêsias*), as Paul himself averred at a later stage of the Corinthian conflict in 2 Cor 3:12, where he contrasts Moses's "veil" (*kalymma*) with his own "openness" (*parrêsia*) and "unveiled face" (*anakekalymmenon prosôpon*). This language about literary style, perspicuity and truth was well discussed in ancient rhetorical theory.

The essential issue *schêmata* ("figures") raise is whether they clothe meaning or cloak it, express beautifully what an author thinks or disguise it. The rhetorical handbook attributed to Dionysius of Halicarnassus contains a lengthy section, *Peri eschêmatismenôn*, "On figured arguments," that may throw some light on how the Corinthians might have received Paul's disclosure of his masked meaning at 1 Cor 4:6, and other utterances in

1 Corinthians that suggest that Paul may not always say what he means and mean what he says, like the infamous boast that he "has been all things to all people" (*tois pasin gegona panta*) in 9:22, which is such an overt statement of rhetorical adaptability that later interpreters will exert much energy in defending Paul against the charge of deceit and opportunism.[28] The author of this treatise begins by acknowledging that some rhetoricians are opposed to the use of entirely figured arguments (*eschêmatismenoi*) in legal cases (*agônes*) for the obvious reason that "it is impossible for auditors who do not hear *clearly* (*saphôs*) to understand what the argument is about."[29] In Eden's terms, the *heuresis* (*inventio*) of the argument may suffer from overly clever or convoluted *lexis* (*lectio*). But the trickiest thing about *schêmata* is what they may indicate about the trustworthiness of the speaker:

> So, there are three forms of so-called *schêmata* (or "pretense"). One *schema* says what it means (*legon . . . ha bouletai*), but requires "fair appearance" (*euprepeia*), either because of the dignity of the persons (*axiôsis tôn prosôpôn*) to whom the speech is directed, or for the sake of safety (*asphaleia*) in the presence of the auditors . . . The second *schema* says one set of things obliquely (*plagiôs . . . legon*), but achieves others with those words (*ergazomenon en logois*). The third *schema* works it (*pragmateuomenon*) so that the opposite (*ta enantia*) of what it says (*legei*) is actually done (*prachthênai*).
>
> Now the method called by the many "coloration" (*chrôma*) is neither hidden (*apokekrymmenê*) nor harsh (*chalepê*). For the method that consists of words like these is an equity (*epieikeia*) being shown forth in words, the cloaking of public candor (*parrêsia*), and indeed the act of being ashamed to engage in pretense of being another (*prospoieisthai*) and not wishing boldly to make an admission (*homologein . . . tolmêrôs*), nor to speak in an unveiled manner (*apokekalymmenôs legein*) . . .
>
> But as for those who say one thing and mean another (*hetera men legontes, hetera de boulomenoi*), what method do they use? They propose certain benefits[30] to their auditors, but they are constructing proof for what they really wish to persuade them of at the same time by their proposal. By this means they are arguing two cases at once (*diploun agôna agônizontai*):[31] for in word (*logos*) they put forward the common good, but by craft (*technê*) they put forward their private need.[32]

The rhetorical teacher here is arguing, in essence, for a *schêma* without a scheme, a pretense that isn't a pretense, or that can be defended because of its ethical motivation. The worst culprit, obviously, is the last, saying one thing and really working for its opposite – this is the definition of deceit, of veiled meaning, veiled speaking. This lexicon of veiled speech (found in a textbook for literacy like those from which Paul's Corinthian literates would have been instructed) abounds in the apologetic argument of

2 Cor 2:14—7:4. Could Paul's own letters have engendered the charge that he was a veiled communicator?

In the long letter of 1 Corinthians, by taking on the tropes of *homonoia* discourse (the appeal for concord) Paul, despite his disclaimer in 2:1–5, adopted the mantle of a rhetorician, a political leader urging a *clear, consistent and advantageous* course of action on his readers. No convoluted speech here, just an overt and unself-interested appeal to *to sympheron* ("the common advantage"),[33] what is best for his audience. Yet the internal hermeneutical conflict is in places unavoidable, since Paul, as a wordsmith, was not just a politician, but a poet and prophet,[34] a man who trafficked in mystery. A perfect illustration – indeed, a metonymy – of the clash of clarity expectations is found in 1 Corinthians 14, where Paul confronts the war of words within the Corinthian liturgical assembly with the social metaphor of the body of Christ in ch. 12 and with the appeal to love as superior to tongues – because of its eschatological staying power – in ch. 13 still ringing in their ears. Paul tries hard here to align the speech of politicians with that of prophets, prizing not obscurity but utility, seeking the "greater gifts" of upbuilding – community construction – which comes with interpretation, with hermeneutical tradents who decode the lexicon of mystery into the language of clarity. "The one who prophesies speaks to me of upbuilding and comfort and consolation . . . the one who prophesies builds up the church" (1 Cor 14:3–4). But the marriage he seeks to forge between political clarity and prophetic speech is a rebound romance meant to isolate "tongues" as the genuinely unclear (*adêlon*) and "unbeneficial" speech: "if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you (*ti hymas ôphelêsô*) unless I speak either in a revelation or in knowledge or in prophecy or in teaching?" (1 Cor 14:6). Tongues (ecstatic speech), therefore, on those good political grounds, are to be rejected. The goal is speech that needs no interpretation (ostensibly) and hence can communicate as unambiguously as the discrete tones of musical instruments, most paradigmatically the unmistakable war trumpet. Paul here is constructing "literal speech" as easily understandable (*eusêmos logos*, 14:9), a spoken utterance (*to laloumenon*) that all can know. The literalism *topos* of the child re-emerges here, not first for Corinthian insiders, but as applied to *hoi idioi*, people untrained in the special arts of tongue-speaking, who are unable to "know what you are saying"[35] (*ti legeis ouk oiden*, 14:16). Such unskilled folks inside are like barbarians (*barbaroi*) outside, the hermeneutically handicapped. The farthest extremes of "allegory" – other-speaking – are presented as foils: "speaking in air" (*eis aera lalountes*) and "madness" (*mainesthe*) (1 Cor 14:9, 23).[36]

But the main complication is of course Paul himself. While the community organizer/politician calls for good order, Paul the prophet and poet is himself also a man famous for conspicuous non-literal, unclear speech, grounded in that same Spirit that is the very basis of his gospel. Hence he cannot repudiate "tongues" entirely without also forfeiting or appearing to forfeit one of the bases for his religious authority among them. Therefore he makes this, too, a ground for renunciation (invoking again an argument he had made earlier about his apostolic *exousia* in ch. 9). Tellingly, Paul encodes this argument itself in an ecstatic speech-form of praise that is meant to double the point from a distance: "I give thanks to God that more than all of you I speak in tongues; but in assembly I wish to speak five words in my right mind (*tô noï mou*) rather than countless words in a tongue (*tê glôssê*), so that I might instruct still others" (14:19).

The Paul who straddles the line here, wishing to claim both obscurantist proficiency and oratorical transparency, does so teasingly throughout the Corinthian correspondence. His variability in this regard may have been a major factor contributing to the misunderstandings that pervaded this fraught series of early Christian textual communications. Even in the rest of 1 Corinthians Paul does not stick to one mode of speech (the clear or the murky). Think, for instance, of the poetical "bends" the reader experiences in moving from 1 Cor 15:51 ("behold, I tell you a mystery!" about post-mortem survival, which is revealed via the indirection of analogy) to 1 Cor 16:1 ("Now, about the collection of money which is for the saints . . ."). Perhaps we could add to the "all things to all people" of 1 Corinthians 9 – that quintessential admission of strategic rhetorical variability – that Paul claimed to have been "mysterious" to those who sought mystery, and "clear" to those who sought clarity. Or indeed, despite this self-characterization, perhaps we can understand the Corinthian conflicts by the inverse: some read Paul as mysterious or opaque when they sought clarity (on finances for instance), and prizing clarity precisely when they championed the mysterious aura of ecstatic speech. Could that be what the Corinthians meant in saying that Paul's "gospel was veiled" (*kekalymmenon*) (2 Cor 4:3)?

The most famous Corinthian veil (leaving aside those Paul sought to secure on the heads of women prophets in 1 Cor 11:2–16) is the one Paul introduces[37] on the face of Moses in 2 Cor 3:13, by invocation of Exodus 34, in response to this charge against him. He is not like Moses, he declares in 2 Cor 3:12, but he speaks with full candor and public accountability (the *parrêsia* so prized of politicians). But the veil does not stay long on Moses's face, as Paul quickly lofts it onto the spectators, the children of Israel who looked to Moses and, by virtue of the comparison, onto Paul's

own Corinthians who just might be revealing themselves to be blinded to the truth that Paul has an unveiled face (3:13–15; cf. 4:1–4). Containing some of the most influential hermeneutical sentences in the Corinthian correspondence, this contorted passage continues to confound, and to inspire further recourse to the veil, as by Richard Hays:

> Unfortunately, 2 Corinthians 3, though squeezed and prodded by generations of interpreters, has remained one of the more inscrutable reflections of a man who had already gained the reputation *among his near-contemporaries* for writing letters that were "hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16). It is hard to escape the impression that, to this day, when 2 Corinthians 3 is read a veil lies over our minds.[38]

While it is striking to see a modern scholar replicate a common patristic ironic reuse of this verse, what Hays has not registered is that the place to go for the "near-contemporaries" who matter most here is not the late document, 2 Peter, but *exact contemporaries* – the Corinthians themselves – whose interpretive interaction and frustration with Paul's letters is on display throughout the correspondence.[39] The Pauline "reputation" of which he speaks was not just a later outcome of the Corinthian correspondence, but a major dynamic in it (cf. 2 Cor 10:10). In reading these letters we are watching this reputation in the making.[40]

Paul responds to the charge that his gospel was veiled (*estin kekalymmenon to euangelion*) (4:3) in the remarkable letter now contained in 2 Cor 2:14—7:4. The immediate context gives us quite specific clues[41] as to what occasioned this accusation:

1. financial impropriety (2:17: "peddling the word of God";[42] cf. 6:10: "as poor but enriching many, as having nothing but holding fast to everything");
2. dishonesty (4:2: "but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in guile nor falsifying the word of God, but in the open manifestation of the truth"; cf. 6:8: "as deceivers");
3. not having letters of recommendation (3:1);
4. recommending himself (3:1; 5:12; cf. 6:4).

All come together in a series of staccato denials in 7:2: "we have done no one an injustice, we have corrupted no one, we have defrauded no one." The means by which Paul is said to have defrauded the Corinthians is veiled, cunning speech, which conceals shameful intent (*ta krypta tês aischynês*) under language of glory and honor (*doxa*).[43] The connection among the four elements is hardly in doubt: in the eyes of some, Paul has been involved in questionable, even shameful financial dealings involving deceit, and somehow related to this is both his self-commendation and

his missing letters of recommendation. All of these considerations, and significant verbal parallels, especially in regard to *diakonia*, have led me to conclude that 2 Corinthians 8 was a separate letter sent sometime in the months after 1 Corinthians was received, which led the Corinthians to suspect Paul of the third kind of *schêma* Pseudo-Dionysius warned against: writing one thing and meaning another, an obscurity not for the sake of artistic beauty or prophetic disclosure but to hide his true authorial intent. The specific charge is that the collection effort (called in 2 Corinthians 8 a *diakonia*)[44] is meant to line his own pockets. His letter of recommendation for Titus and the brother has apparently been read as double-speak, if not outright self-contradiction, especially when read alongside his own statements in 1 Cor 16:1–4, which led to the charge of dishonesty and prevarication. We can understand why:

1. He took their prerogative and engaged in a *dokimazein* (authenticating testing) of the envoys (compare 1 Cor 16:3 with 2 Cor 8:22).
2. He wrote what is formally a *systatikê epistolê* for Titus and the brother, which, given the cultural logic of ancient recommendations,[45] raised the issue of whether he had the authority to do so, given that he had no such letters for himself.
3. He stayed in Macedonia instead of coming in person, which led both to regional rivalries (which Paul's letter meant to tap for the collection effort, a move which backfired, causing offense) and to suspicion that he was cloaking his real meaning and purpose in his letters.
4. After insisting so vehemently in 1 Corinthians 9 that he had no interest in their money, he is now asking for it in writing from a distance; it is quite understandable that the Corinthians might not have seen the difference between the two types of financial support, especially if Titus, who is leading the delegation, is Paul's trusted proxy.[46]

The letter that Paul writes in response to this situation (now preserved in 2 Cor 2:14—7:4) is framed entirely on the question of hermeneutics – that is, of surface and deep meanings.[47] Paul acknowledges outright that his full gospel performance, including his own bodily weakness, which must also have been used by some as an index of divine disfavor, could be read in two different ways – as the stink of death or the scent of resurrection (2 Cor 2:14–16). Here we can see the impact of the cumulative epistolary conversation, for Paul now allies each of the two interpretations of him and his gospel with the statuses he had invoked in 1 Cor 1:18 who are split on the "word about the cross" (*logos tou staurou*) – the perishing (*hoi apollymenoi*) and the saved (*hoi sôzomenoi*) (2 Cor 2:15; 4:3). But – and this is the key difference that allows us to infer a quite different state of

affairs in the relationship, at least from Paul's vantage point – it is not clear where the Corinthians now stand (whereas in 1 Corinthians 1 they must be among the "saved" and "called" [*klêtoi*]).[48]

While 2 Corinthians 3 has (as Gregory witnesses) gone down in Christian history as the Magna Carta of allegorical interpretation ("the letter kills but the spirit gives life"), in its inaugural voyage this was part of a very situation-specific argument of self-defense.[49] The immediate subject here is not Moses, or Jews (either Jesus-believing or other), but Paul. Paul is the problem – Paul's authenticity as an "envoy of Christ" (*diakonos Christou*).[50] He himself echoes the question some Corinthians were apparently asking: "who is competent" (*tis hikanos*) for such a ministry (2 Cor 2:16; 3:5–6)?

In response to the charge that he does not have proper letters of recommendation, Paul adopts a line of argument that is right out of the agonistic paradigm – he devalues *the letter of the text* (either his actual letters or the missing ones) in order to insist that the authentication of his ministry does not rely on textual evidence.[51] This is crisply, if hyperbolically, stated in the maxim in 2 Cor 3:6: "for the letter (*gramma*) kills, but the spirit (*pneuma*) gives life." This utterance, which was to have a central place in early Christian hermeneutics (and down to the present), was originally not meant to be a comprehensive field theory of scriptural interpretation, but was part of a very situational argument. Whereas Paul could insist on "the letter" of his own previous letter (as we have seen, in 1 Cor 5:9–11), here, where he does not have a letter (pun intended!), he invokes one of the opposing commonplaces from the agonistic paradigm, *ex scripto et sententia*, "from the letter and intent."[52] Indeed, Kathy Eden in her study on *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition* astutely perceives already in 2 Cor 3:6 the "Christianization of rhetorical interpretation theory" at the hands of Paul:

> A Hellenized Jew with a good rhetorical education, Paul appropriates the opposition between *scriptum* and *voluntas* – in his Greek, *rhêton* and *dianoia* – but changes the terms . . . A skilled rhetorician, Paul chooses terms familiar to Jewish law, reformulating the opposition from *scriptum* versus *voluntas* to *gramma* versus *pneuma*.[53] Augustine's Latin renders the Greek *gramma* versus *pneuma* as *littera* versus *spiritus*: letter versus spirit. The opposition between literal and spiritual reading, in other words, transforms the first ground of controversy[54] from the rhetorical tradition of interpretation. Like *voluntas*, its older, rhetorical counterpart, spiritual interpretation looks beyond the letter or words themselves to the intention and beyond the part to the whole, even preserving, as we shall see, its long-standing alliance with equity.[55]

Paul recasts the forensic *topos* in the dualistic language of Ezek. 11:19; 36:26, which gives him the contrast between flesh and spirit, and between

stone tablet and human heart, and the temporal contrast between old and new, which sets up for the Moses *a minore ad maius*[56] argument which follows. Paul adds to it the contrast between life and death that he had already introduced with the multivalent image of "being led in triumph" (*thriambeuein*), the ambiguous prisoner parade of Paul that some viewed only as signifying death, others as life (2 Cor 2:14–16). The recommendation to shift focus from the letter of the text (*gramma*) to the intent of the author is made, for example, by Cicero, our guide to the agonistic paradigm:

> [A common topic] against the letter of the law (*contra scriptum*): the value of law depends on the intention of the legislator (*consilium scriptoris*) and on the common weal (*utilitas communi*), not on words (*verba*): how unfair it is that justice and equity (*aequitas*), which it is the intention (*voluntas*) of the legislator to protect, should be hindered by words.[57]

Paul avers that divine intent trumps any text, and via the spirit invests both Paul with his competency for ministry (*hikanotês*) and the would-be good reader with hermeneutical insight. In the argument of 2 Cor 2:14—4:18 Paul rotates the hermeneutical triangle several times: first he plays on the angle of *the text*, saying the Corinthians are themselves the text they seek (2 Cor 3:2–3), then he devalues texts entirely, and focuses attention on the text of his own body – from veil to vessel – a text that, Paul claims, holds his co-crucified credentialing (esp. 2 Cor 4:5–18). Paul also plays on authorship here, hinting that he is the author of the Corinthian church-text (note the suggestive word order in *hê epistolê hêmôn hymeis este*: "*our* letter *you* are!"), but then immediately confers sole authorship rights "on the Spirit of the living God" (2 Cor 3:3). The *synkrisis* (argument by comparison) he sets up with Moses involves both similiarity and difference (including the well-noted *a minore ad maius* structure). What Moses and Paul have in common is that they are both *read*[58] and misunderstood by people who, thinking the author is veiled, are actually proven to be the ones wearing the veil. Here the hermeneutical triangle rests on the reader as the one ultimately responsible for hermeneutical failure.

Although in the history of reuse 2 Cor 3:6–18 was found a ready resource for anti-Jewish polemic, Paul's purpose here was not to expatiate upon "Jewish" hermeneutics, but, as in 1 Cor 1:18–19, to argue from the separation he presumed his mostly Gentile audience would feel from the sons of Israel in the present day, who do not read correctly. The invective implied here is meant to force a hermeneutical choice on the Corinthians: either they see Paul and his gospel correctly – as the proper vehicle of the very "illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (4:4) – or

they demonstrate that they have aligned themselves with "the perishing" (*hoi apollymenoi*) or "the unbelieving" (*hoi apistoi*), whose minds have been blinded by "the god of this age" (4:3–4; cf. 2:15–16) such that all they see (or smell) in Paul is shame, death and defeat (2 Cor 2:14–16; 4:8–12). Paul exploits the portability of the veil to make this argument; he grants that understanding has been occluded, but insists that the veil is not on *his* face (as with Moses) but on the faces or hearts of those Corinthians who cannot see him for who he truly is – the *diakonos Christou* ("envoy of Christ").

Lacking a letter of recommendation, Paul presents his own body as a text which, read correctly, is not a dying corpse of one being punished for impersonating an apostle, but is actually a cultic vessel that holds the iconic treasure of Christ crucified and risen.[59] Paul reads and writes his own body according to the hermeneutics of part and whole – "always carrying around the dying of Jesus in the body so that also the life of Jesus might be manifest in our body" (2 Cor 4:10).[60] His veil, he argues, is a ritual vessel, a clay pot – the properly occluded (but textually explained) vehicle of a mysterious divine secret on display. The poetics of synecdoche – part and whole, introduced in 1 Corinthians 13[61] – will also be at the heart of his self-defense;[62] by embodying the death of Christ, through his full gospel logic Paul is also a vessel that carries the light epiphany of "the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God." Such a light carries the impress of another text – Gen 1:3 as cited in 2 Cor 4:6, which, in this dense argument, becomes divine evidence for Paul's self-defense. The hermeneutical force of the argument is to insist upon the true, unveiled meaning of Paul's one-man multi-media parade of Jesus Christ crucified. This requires turning his own body into the textual recommendation he lacks, and interpreting his prior letters, which have generated the accusation that he fashions covert writings, in such a way as to emphasize that their speech is an example of "open proclamation" (*parrêsia*), not "veiled intent" (*kalymma*). If this is true, Paul argues, then, if there is occlusion in the reading (which he does concede to have been the case), it is the fault of the veiled readers, and not a veiled (schema-laden, incomprehensible, deceptive) author. In order to ensure benevolent authorial intent, Paul places the responsibility for hermeneutical failure squarely on his audience, his readers, and as far as possible from his text. Furthermore, he insists that textual evidence is not what really matters anyway. And yet the greatest irony of all is that he does this in a text, one that, since it is preserved in a corpus that grants Paul the authority for which he so urgently argues, will be endlessly reusable, hermeneutically reauthorizing.

Pauline auto-apologetics will be redeployed often for the purposes of Christian self-defense and definition. The reusable veil of 2 Corinthians 3 will be used abundantly by ancient Christian authors, strategically applied with a vengeance against Jews, against heretics, and as a warning and exhortation to fellow Christians. This is a cardinal example of a point I made in an earlier chapter: that in the study of the history of biblical interpretation in the early church we need to attend, not just to how ancient authors *commented on a text*, but to how they *commented with it*. For example, in one of his homilies on Genesis, John Chrysostom turns to Paul for counsel and example as he engages in vitriolic debate with Jews of his own day:

> Let's ask the Jew and let's see what he says about why it was said: "Let us make man in our image" (Gen 1:26). For the words belong to Moses, in whom they say they believe, but they do not, just as Christ said, "If you had believed in Moses you would believe in me" (John 5:46). The words may be with them[63] (*ta men grammata par' autois*), but the meanings are with us (*ta de noêmata par' hêmin*). So then, why was it said, "Let us make man," and to whom does the Lord offer this counsel? For he had no need of counsel and consideration. Hardly! For by this cloaking of words (*proschêma tôn rhêmatôn*) he wishes to display (*endeixasthai*) for us the abundant honor that he put on display (*epideiknyta*) concerning the human being he fashioned. Then what do "those who still have the veil lying on their hearts" (*houtoi hoi to kalymma echonetes eti epikeimenon en tais kardiais autôn*) (2 Cor 3:15) and do not wish to understand what lies in these words say? That God was speaking to an angel or an archangel. Oh what madness! Oh what depth of shame![64]

John's homily text shows how the Pauline inheritance enables the veil to float among the hermeneutical partners. The divine or divinely inspired author of scripture can be said to employ "cloaked speech," even as some readers meet that veil with a veil of their own, over their heart. The two veils serve to accentuate John's point, rather than (in his view) to render it inconsistent (the more hermeneutical failure the better, to accent his own point and his own superior reading). The idea that God is veiled is an old and biblical one (the famous divine backside epiphany to Moses, for instance).[65] Christian authors, such as Gregory of Nazianzus, in his rhetorically clever 32nd homily, on silence, use Paul's Moses example to explain the divinity: "God is light . . . but you see that God traversed our darkness and 'placed darkness as his hiding place' (Ps 17:12 LXX), positioning it between himself and us, just as Moses of old placed the veil between himself and the hardheartedness of Israel."[66]

We might easily multiply examples where late antique Christian authors use the veil in heresiology (Gregory of Nyssa, for instance, speaks of "the heretical veil")[67] and in invective against Jews and "pagans." Origen can deploy the veil in all of these ways,[68] but he also gives it a catechetical purpose for instructing and exhorting the faithful. In his fifth homily on Jeremiah, when encountering Jer 3:25 ("and our dishonor has covered [*epikalyptein*] us"), Origen first says to his congregation, "I have spoken often about the veil (*kalymma*) that lies over the face (*epikeimenon tô prosôpô*) of those who do not turn to the Lord," at which they presumably nodded their heads. But that does not stop him (or any other early Christian preacher) from bringing on the veil once more:

> Because of this veil "if Moses is read" the sinner does not understand (*noein*) him. For "a veil (*kalymma*) is placed on his heart." Because of this veil, if the old covenant is read, the hearer will not understand. Because of this veil also "the gospel is veiled to those who are being destroyed." Indeed we have said about the veil that the veil is shame (*he aischynê esti to kalymma*). For to the degree that we have works of shame it is clear that we have the veil, as it is spoken of in the forty-third Psalm: "The shame of my face has hidden me." I proposed that the one who does not have works of shame (*aischynês erga*) does not have a veil (*ouk echei kalymma*), such as Paul was when he said, "We all with unveiled face gaze as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). Therefore Paul had a face that was unveiled (*Paulos . . . anakekalymmenon echei to prosôpon*), for he did not have works of shame (*ou gar echei aischynês erga*) (cf. 2 Cor 4:2). But someone who is not like Paul (*ho mê hôs Paulos*) has a face that is veiled (*kekalymmenon echei to prosôpon*). As there in the forty-third Psalm it is said, "the shame of my face (*hê aischynê tou prosôpou*) has hidden (*kalyptein*) me," in the same way it is said here "Our dishonor (*atimia*) has hidden (*kalyptein*) us" (Jer 3:25). To the degree that we do works of dishonor, we have a veil lying over our heart (*kalymma echomen epi tên kardian hêmôn keimenon*).[69]

Origen recognizes in the Pauline argument the connection between the veil and shame, and, assuming that Paul was right, of course, he holds up Paul as the exemplar of all who are unashamed to reveal their true face in public. And yet, the veil's usefulness for exhortation to genuine insight and moral behavior is potentially compromised by the divine determinism that may surround it. Paul's own argument implicitly raises this question in 3:14 (who hardened their hearts?), and then answers it in 4:4 with the definitive visual metaphor, moving from veils to blinders: "the god of this age blinded the minds of unbelievers."[70] Here is how Origen deals with that difficulty in the context of this homily, which he delivered at Caesarea, c. 242:[71]

Therefore, having perceived the veil that lies on one (*to kalymma to epikeimenon*) from works of shame (*apo tôn tês aischynês ergôn*), from deeds of dishonor (*apo tôn tês atimias praxeôn*), let us take off the veil (*perielômetha to kalymma*)! It is in our power for the veil to be taken off (*periairethênai to kalymma*) – that power belongs to no one else. For "whenever Moses turned to the Lord, he used to take off the veil (*periaireitai to kalymma*)" (3:16). Do you see how Moses then is to be taken (*lambanetai*) also for the people? In so far as he was not turning to the Lord, being a symbol (*symbolon*) of the people who were not turning to the Lord, he had a veil lying over his face (*kalymma eichen epikeimenon autou tô prosôpô*). But when he would turn to the Lord, being a symbol (*symbolon*) of those who turned to the Lord, then "he used to take off the veil." And it wasn't as if God commanded him, "Put on the veil" (*perithou to kalymma*)! But Moses, seeing that the people were not able to see his glory, then used to place "the veil upon his face," and he did not wait for God to say, "Take off the veil" (*perielou to kalymma*) "whenever he turned to the Lord."[72]

Origen, like Paul but in a more fully developed fashion, cleverly renders Moses the symbol of both veiling and unveiling, and offers a narrative explanation for the voluntary nature of each. The veil offers both rhetorical possibilities. Depending on context, one can emphasize the durability or removability of the veil, as in the crescendo Origen fashions to a congregational exhortation:

Now then this is written so that you, too, having placed the veil (*kalymma*) over your face through works of dishonor and shame (*dia tôn tês atimias kai tôn tês aischynês ergôn*), might effect the removal of the veil. If you turn to the Lord, then you will take off the veil (*tote periaireis to kalymma*) and no longer will you say, "our dishonor has covered us." In as much as wrath against anyone lies over our soul (*epikeimenê tê psychê*) a veil lies over our face (*epikeitai kalymma hêmôn epi to prosôpon*). For this reason if we wish in praying to say, "Let the light of your face, O Lord, be marked upon us" (Ps 4:7), let us take off the veil (*periairômen to kalymma*) and let us act out that apostolic command, "I wish then that all men pray in every place with holy hands raised up without anger and disputes" (1 Tim 2:8). If we take off (*perielômen*) the anger, even all the passions, then we take off the veil (*perieilomen to kalymma*). To the degree that these things are in our mind (*nous*), in our reasoning (*logismos*), the veil (*kalymma*) and the dishonor (*atimia*) lie upon our inner face (*to endon prosôpon*), our inner governing faculty (*hêgemonikon*) in order that we not see (*blepein*) the glory of God (*doxa tou theou*) shining. It is not God (*ouk estin ho theos*) who has hidden his glory from us (*apokryptôn autou tên doxan aph' hêmôn*), but we (*all' hêmeis*) who from wickedness have placed the veil on the governing faculty of our mind (*to kalymma apo tês kakias epitithentes tô hêgemonikô*).[73]

Origen has transformed Paul's argument about visible, if metaphorical, veils onto the internal dynamic of the soul, veiled by the passions. In this

version the veil is presented as completely voluntary, so that the potential for its removal can be in the hands of each potential hearer and reader. Genuine insight is – theoretically speaking – available to all, even in this life.[74] But what is the role of the exegete in this process?

Like Paul, all early Christian interpreters (and their modern descendants) carefully calibrate the veil scale between the utter clarity and complete obscurity of the biblical text. A final example from John Chrysostom's work "On the obscurity of the prophets" provides a perfect illustration of the intercalation of the Pauline utterances (poised as they are between apologetics and *parainesis*) in early Christian oratory:

> But I wish to prove this to you in a still more clear fashion (*saphesteron*). For this reason things are stated unclearly (*asaphôs*) about Jews and us in the scriptures, lest Jews might understand what is said before the right time. And of this point I bring forward as my witness (*proagô martyra*) the noblest (*megalophônotaton*) of them all, Paul, the one who spoke from above, the heavenly trumpet, the vessel of election, the leader of the bride of Christ. "For I betrothed you," he says, "as a pure virgin to present you to one man, to Christ" (2 Cor 11:2). This is the man I bring forward as my witness, since he manifestly (*phanerôs*) says that it is for this reason that some of the things in the Old Testament, but not all, have been cast in a shadow (*syneskiastai*).[75] For if all of them were going to be unclear (*asaphê*), then it would have been superfluous for them to have been said to the people who lived back then . . .[76] That *not every prophecy was unclear* (*asaphês*), but only this part (*meros*)[77] had been cloaked, *listen to Paul as he clearly* (*saphôs*) *showed us* both these things: the fact that the Law had been cast in shadow, and that it is for this reason that (God showed) only the part (*meros*). For when writing to the Corinthians, he said in this way, "Therefore, having this hope, we employ great boldness, and not just as Moses used to place a veil upon his face, so that the children of Israel didn't gaze directly at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were hardened. For until this day the veil remains at the reading of the Old Testament, not unveiled, because[78] in Christ it is brought to naught" (2 Cor 3:13–15). *Perhaps what Paul said is unclear* (*asaphes*). Therefore *it is necessary to make it more clear* (*saphesteron*) by reminding you of the account (*historia*) . . . For when, having received the tablets on the mountain, Moses was about to descend . . .[79]

This marvelous passage by the late antique interpreter of Paul who boasted that he understood him so well because he loved him so much[80] is both an attempt to explain Paul's text and a reprise of Paul's own tensive play between perspicuity and obscurity. Chrysostom, adopting the agonistic paradigm, calls Paul as a witness to substantiate his claims about the scriptures of Israel and their prophetic meanings that were not known by Jews at the time or in John's own time. Paul is a valuable witness, John suggests, because he so beautifully makes the point John wishes to

make, about the shadowed and veiled character of the "Old Testament" witness. In this respect John twice characterizes the apostle as one who speaks with utter clarity (*phanerôs* and *saphôs*) – the clear witness to the unclear scripture! But while John has, with Paul's voice, consigned Jews to perpetual unclarity, he also wishes to communicate to his Christian audience why Paul's words indeed do make his point. So he runs back the other way and concedes that 2 Corinthians 3 is "perhaps unclear" (*tacha asaphes*) (and would we not agree?!), and takes as the task of his own *logos* to make even more clear (*auto poiêsai saphesteron*) Paul's own clarifying words about the unclear nature of scripture for those without the spirit. Here John turns, as *interpretatio scripti* counsels, to an appeal to context (in this case, the Exodus 32—34 narrative).[81] The real issue for John, as it was for Paul, is the way in which hermeneutics functions as a tool of diagnosis that can be turned in several different directions to handle hermeneutical success or failure, either diagnostically, exhortatively or vituperatively. The strategic placement of the variable veil is well on display here.

It was in the exchanges of letters with the Corinthians that Paul tossed the veil into early Christian biblical interpretation. In doing so he gave it as its inheritance, not just two types of reading – literal (clear) and allegorical (obscure) – but he named and modeled what is rather a spectrum or "veil scale" of carefully and strategically calibrated movement along a spectrum of the seen and unseen, the dark and the illumined. Dealing in this succession of letters with a range of interpreted phenomena – scripture, the gospel, Corinthian experience, Paul's own experience and self and, acutely, his own previous letters – *Paul continually and strategically adjusted the focus between clarity and obscurity* (*saphêneia*, *asapheia*) depending upon the hermeneutical, rhetorical and theological needs of the case at hand. Those who followed him and saw him as exegetical mentor would do the same.[82]

But the Corinthians' veil will not sit still. It has not made its last appearance. It will return in the next letter, the bitter *apologia* of 2 Corinthians 10—13, where Paul himself turns the charge around and tries to paint his opponents as the true masters of disguise: "For such men as these are false apostles, guileful workers, cloaking themselves (*metaschêmatizomenoi*) as apostles of Christ (*eis apostolous Christou*). And no wonder! For Satan himself cloaked himself as an angel of light (*metaschêmatizetai eis angelon phôtos*). So it is no big surprise if his envoys, too, cloak themselves (*metaschêmatizontai*) as envoys of righteousness (*diakonoi dikaiosynês*). Their end will be in accordance with their works" (2 Cor 11:13–15). In that later missive, in a direct about-face from 1 Cor 4:6, Paul gives veiled or

cloaked meaning a blunt forensic evaluation; disguised meaning denotes not poetic license, pastoral sensitivity, or prophetic depths, but perjury and plagiarism – identity theft. How can one establish a true identity without clear standards for apostolic passports and photos? By what interpretive criteria can one veiled figure be distinguished from another? This is where we shall pick up the story in our next chapter, with visible signs and multiple witnesses in the trial of apostolic authenticity.

CHAPTER 5

Visible signs, multiple witnesses: interpretive criteria in the agonistic paradigm

As we observed in Chapter 1, Gregory of Nyssa's argument in defense of allegory begins with multiple citations from Paul, which serve as plentiful testimony in favor of Gregory's plea for non-literal interpretation, in accordance with what is most useful to the readers in their context, particularly where the "literal" sense might cause harm. Having forefronted *Paul* as his star witness, later in the Prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* Gregory invokes Christ as *a corroborating witness to Paul*, to substantiate in turn the Pauline hermeneutical axiom, "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life."[1] Gregory interprets Paul's statement of 2 Cor 3:6 to mean that the letter of scripture kills because it contains examples of wicked deeds, like Hosea taking a harlot for a wife, or David's adultery and murder of Uriah, whereas the spirit gives life, by "transforming (*metatithêsi*) the unseemly and slanderous sense into more divine meanings."[2] As an example of how scripture does this, Gregory offers "the Logos himself," who, when in the likeness of a human being and form of flesh (cf. Phil 2:7), handed over the divine mysteries (*paredidou ta theia mystêria*), in such a way as to unveil for us (*anakalyptein hêmin*) "the meanings of the law" (*ta tou nomou noêmata*).[3] The first of four supporting examples which follow from the curriculum vitae of the Logos is what Gregory takes to be Christ's interpretation of Deut 19:15, a law stipulating that any matter must stand on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Gregory sees the true meaning (*noêma*) of the Deuteronomic legislation[4] to have been revealed by Christ in John 8:17–18 – the "two witnesses" (*duo martyres*) there prefigured are Christ and the Father, whose dual testimony secures the Johannine Jesus' self-proclamation that he is the light that has come into the world:[5] "In your law, too, it stands written that the testimony of two men is true; I am one who testifies on my behalf and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf." In the Johannine text this witness list is a direct response to the forensic commonplace uttered by the Pharisees – "you testify (*martyreis*) concerning yourself; your testimony (*martyria*) is not true." In the agonistic

cloaked meaning a blunt forensic evaluation; disguised meaning denotes not poetic license, pastoral sensitivity, or prophetic depths, but perjury and plagiarism – identity theft. How can one establish a true identity without clear standards for apostolic passports and photos? By what interpretive criteria can one veiled figure be distinguished from another? This is where we shall pick up the story in our next chapter, with visible signs and multiple witnesses in the trial of apostolic authenticity.

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context, self-testimony is inadmissible, and singular testimony insufficient for proof.

But John 8:17–18 is not the first time the witness decree of Deut 19:15 entered early Christian literature. It, too, passed across the Corinthian *diolkos*. This Torah passage was a cornerstone of the apologetic argument Paul framed in 2 Corinthians 10—13, in which he sought to defend his apostolate against the charge that he is not *dokimos*, not an "approved" or "legitimate" apostle of Christ. Although he does not actually quote it until the end of the argument, in 13:1 – "at the mouth of two and three witnesses any matter shall stand" – the logic of multiple witnesses and objectively verifiable criteria informs Paul's entire, most clever proof to the Corinthians in this letter that he truly is an apostle. His consistent rhetorical goal is to seek to demonstrate that he *does* have "the signs of the apostle" (*ta sêmeia tou apostolou*) – visible signs and multiple witnesses as required for forensic proof.

Before we see how Paul sought to solve this testimonial dilemma, let us first examine why Paul needs *any* witnesses (*martyres*) for the "authenticating test (*dokimê*) that the one speaking in him was Christ" (13:3). The simple answer is that Paul does not have teachers in the faith or apostolic colleagues who will write on his behalf. On an earlier occasion he had called on the Corinthians themselves as his *epistolê systatikê* ("letter of recommendation," 2 Cor 3:1–3; cf. 1 Cor 9:2), but that strategy has apparently failed to convince, as has also the prior letter (2 Cor 2:14—7:4), which was a kind of self-testimonial ("but in everything recommending ourselves[6] as envoys of God, in great endurance, in afflictions"),[7] to which Paul urged the Corinthians to open their heart (6:13). The Corinthians apparently objected to this as "boasting in his authority" – boasting in Greco-Roman literary and oratorical culture being equivalent to "praising oneself" (*periautologia*). Furthermore, making matters worse, Paul's promised visit (of 1 Cor 16:5–6, and called for in 7:2: "make room for us!") has apparently now taken place, as Paul mentions in 12:20–21, and it was a disaster. He was humiliated at Corinth, he says, *by God*, which may indicate that his bodily illness was somehow manifested publicly. At that time Paul evidently also had verbal skirmishes with some member or members of the Corinthian community, who tossed at him barbs such as the one preserved in 2 Cor 10:10, a crucial text for the thesis of this book on the internal interpretive dynamics of the Corinthian correspondence because it is *the first recorded moment of Pauline interpretation by someone other than Paul himself*. And it is a decidely mixed review: "his letters (*epistolai*) are weighty and strong (*bareiai kai ischyrai*), but the presence of his body (*parousia tou*

sômatos) is weak (*asthenês*), and his spoken word (*logos*) is contemptible (*exouthenêmenos*)." People such as this unnamed "*toioutos*"[8] may also, perhaps, have met his self-claim to *hikanotês*[9] with a rhyming riposte that Paul was actually *idiôtês*,[10] hardly "adept," just "inept." Most important for our theme of hermeneutics in the Corinthian correspondence, *the visit has changed or intensified the way the Corinthians read Paul's letters*,[11] both throwing their "weightiness" itself into relief, and calling their integrity and honesty of expression into question, since the authorial *parousia* is at such odds with the epistolary *parrêsia*.[12] This is a nice illustration of one of the central contentions of this book: that the meaning of Paul's letters (as with any written texts) did not and does not remain completely stable or fixed, but can be – indeed, is – altered by future events (in his lifetime, and beyond).

The letter fragment preserved in 2 Corinthians 10—13 is, in my view (and that of such scholars as Windisch, Bultmann, Bornkamm, Barrett, Betz, Furnish, Thrall, Roetzel and others),[13] virtually complete, save for an epistolary prescript and (probably) closing. I would add to those judgments confirmation on the grounds of literary and rhetorical analysis, which demonstrates an argumentative coherence in a single *skopos* (goal) – a focused apologetic argument of proof and rebuttal (*kataskeuê, anaskeuê*) against the charge that Paul is not an apostle, but is *adokimos*, "illegitimated" or "disapproved" (13:6). This is shown also in the *inclusio* between 10:1–11 and 13:5–10, containing fully four repeated elements framing the argument:

1. contrasts: present/absent (*parôn, apôn*) and letter/spoken word (*epistolê, logos*) (10:1–2, 10–11; 13:10);
2. claim: severity in letter is not inconsistent with my personal presence, but a substitute for it, to spare them in person (10:2; 13:10; but cf. 13:2!);
3. assertion: my authority (*exousia*) was given me by the Lord (10:8; 13:10);
4. insistence: my goal, like Jeremiah's, is "building up" (*oikodomê*), not "destruction" (*kathairesis*).

For those who think 2 Corinthians 10—13 is not a separate letter, this argumentative coherence of what they would likely still consider a sub-argument means that the analysis which follows should still be largely congenial also to that chosen framework of reading.[14]

In the course of his argument at this later juncture Paul will with great cleverness seek to prove his case *both on their terms* (the signs of power of the "super-duper apostles" which he names in 12:12: "the signs of the apostle – in signs and wonders and miracles"[15]) *and on his* (the signs of weakness of the one whom the Lord recommends). What is at stake here in this *apologia*, then, is the admissibility of evidence. For Paul this is a tricky business. The

problem is that on the one hand Paul *does not have or will not produce* evidence that fits the criteria as named in 12:12 – if one means by "signs, wonders and miracles" spectacular stories of feats that have been achieved, like Peter's jailbreak (Acts 12),[16] or an epiphanic experience *to which a third party could testify*. In his later telling, Luke wrestles with this phenomenon narratologically in his three accounts of Paul's call – probably because he wants the witnesses to have enough epiphanic evidence to cite (either voice or light, but not both),[17] but not enough to be on a par with Paul. Paul himself never invokes witnesses of his Christophanies.[18] This is of course the fundamental problem of religious authority and authorization: from where can attestation come? So, how can Paul manage to get multiple witnesses? His answer is as keen as can be, and it is what makes 2 Corinthians 10—13 one of the most extraordinary and inventive passages in early Christian literature.

In 2 Corinthians 10—13 Paul will seek through creative means to introduce objective proof – from those other than himself – that he is an apostle according to the Corinthians' criteria, which involve the customary rhetorical form of comparison (*synkrisis*)[19] with other apostles (*hoi hyperlian apostoloi*, "the super-duper apostles," as Paul sarcastically calls them in 11:5 and 12:11). It bears noting that on an earlier occasion with the Corinthians Paul had himself invoked this form of argument by the same comparison, when arguing that he in principle deserved the same rights and privileges (marriage, money) as "the rest of the apostles (*hoi loipoi apostoloi*) and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas" (1 Cor 9:5). Perhaps from several letters later, and looking back on the visit, this seemed a great or even preposterous presumption. His first section of proof, in 10:12–18, raises directly this issue of *synkrisis* as a form of proof. Turning the tables on his detractors, Paul avers that *they* are the ones who recommend themselves, rather than he. He does not recommend himself (i.e. does not engage in self-testimony) because he does not overreach or boast beyond his authority; instead *his* boast is a genuine and acceptable one because it corresponds to his divine authorization as one whom "the Lord recommends." In 10:18 Paul offers as a simple maxim what he ostensibly takes as the basis for his proof – "it is not the one who recommends himself (*ho heauton synistanôn*) who is *dokimos* ('approved,' 'legitimate,' 'test-worthy'), but the one whom the Lord recommends (*hon ho kyrios synistêsin*)." In the agonistic (courtroom) paradigm of textual interpretation, self-testimony is inadmissible. In the Christianized version of it that Paul seeks to refashion, the sole testimony which matters is that of the Lord. But how do you get the Lord's word into court?

Holding ourselves in suspense for a bit as to how Paul will manage to find two or three outside witnesses to substantiate this case, we shall first examine one of the rebound reuses of this passage in early Christian literature. Patristic authors, whose literary work is frequently and fervently apologetic (indeed, sometimes in actual courtrooms, at other times in fictional ones of their own devising), drew abundantly upon Paul among other scriptural resources for their proofs. They appreciated well the rhetorical bind in which Paul found himself, and the challenge he left for them to handle, as they had to defend him against the same charge of self-boasting made by their own contemporaries! For one such marvelous example we return once again to the debate transcript entitled *De recta in deum fide*, from the late third or early fourth century, between the "orthodox" Adamantius and his Marcionite interlocutors before the purportedly impartial but favorably inclined judge, Eutropius. The opposing sides here, as with Paul's Corinthian *apologia*, engage in debate on the *canôn* or standard, even as they employ the canon (their own and that of the other) as their storehouse of witnesses in the contest over what constitutes admissible evidence. The authority of Paul, and his own ingenious strategy of handling witnesses in 2 Corinthians 10—13, become the basis for a clever reversal once again. Although the authorizing shape of the *corpus Paulinum* generally pulled all ancient Christian readers to take Paul's side and grant him the authority he claimed for himself, there are still glimpses in early Christian exegesis that the vulnerability of Paul's position *vis-à-vis* apostolic others was recognized, and could itself paradoxically be exploited when and where necessary.

MARKUS (the Marcionite): We for our part do not accept the prophets and the law, for they do not belong to our God; but we accept the gospel (*euangelion*) and the apostle (*apostolos*).

ADAMANTIUS (the orthodox): Which apostle (*poion apostolon;*)? For Christ had many apostles.

MARKUS: Paul (*Paulon*).

ADAMANTIUS: From what source (*Pothen*) do you know that Paul is an apostle? For if you have his name written in the gospel (*en tô euangeliô to onoma autou gegrammenon*), show it as proof (*deixon*); but *if you have it written nowhere* (*oudamou*), *from what source* (*pothen*) *have you learned that he is an apostle?*

MARKUS: Paul himself (*Autos*) wrote on his own behalf (*hyper hautou*), saying, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ."[20]

ADAMANTIUS: No one who gives testimony (*martyrôn*) on his own behalf (*peri hautou*) is credible (*axiopistos*), for Paul himself (*autos*) says, "it is not the one who recommends himself who is judged approved" (2 Cor 10:18). Neither anyone else nor the gospel has given testimony for Paul (*autô emartyrêsen*). So from what source then (*pothen oun*) do you have it that he is an apostle?

MARKUS: What about you? From what source (*pothen*) do you know him as an apostle? For neither is it recorded in the gospels (*oute gar en tois euangeliois anagegraptai*).

ADAMANTIUS: Order the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles to be read, and *you will find him attested* (*kai heurêseis auton martyroumenon*), in one place acknowledged by Christ as "a vessel of election" (Acts 9:15), in another by the apostle Peter described in writing: "according to the wisdom," he says, "which was given to my brother Paul" (2 Pet 3:15).

EUTROPIUS (the judge): Markus, do you Marcionites accept the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles written by the disciples *as true, or not true* (*hôs alêthê ê ou;*)?[21]

MARKUS: We do not accept anything more than the gospel (*to euangelion*) and the apostle (*ho apostolos*).[22]

With this restatement by Markus of his original position, let's take a brief recess for analysis. The agonistic setting (contrived though it be) places the two opponents before a supposedly impartial judge to try their case about the number of gods and ruling principles in the world.[23] The problems of admissible evidence are acute, for the two sides (catholic and Marcionite) do not share the same canon of scripture, with Markus avowing that the only scripture he accepts is "the gospel and the apostle," i.e. the gospel of Luke and the collection of Paul's letters as edited by Marcion. And yet they do have some overlap among their scriptures, without which debate would be impossible. But each single point of debate raises anew *the question of the criteria by which proof may be offered*; this agonistic paradigm of interpretation is the same, then, as with Paul's proof for being an apostle, which must proceed on some common ground even as he tries to redefine the criteria of judgment and hence of admissible evidence.

What is surprising here is the tack that Adamantius takes. First echoing but not directly citing[24] the debate between Jesus and the Pharisees in John 5 and 8 about the lack of probity of self-testimony,[25] Adamantius turns *to the apostle whom they do share* to offer the forensic commonplace that self-recommendation is not credible. When Paul wrote this in 2 Cor 10:18, he was seeking to change the rules of debate with his missionary opponents, and tar them in turn with the accusation they were leveling at him – that he was engaging in self-recommendation. This was, as we noted earlier, the problem Paul faced in the previous letter – that he did not have letters of recommendation (2 Cor 3:1–3), and hence tried to compose a letter that would literally open doors at Corinth upon his return journey (6:11–13; 7:1). Adamantius forces the pendulum to swing yet again to the other side (from the charge of Paul's opponents to his counter-charge),

now ironically *to cite Paul as a witness against Pauline authority*! If Markus cannot prove from outside of the Pauline letters that Paul is an apostle – and here we can see that Adamantius recognizes that in these letters Paul engages in a good deal of self-testimony – then the "apostle" of his canon stands completely discredited. Now, for Adamantius the catholic the ultimate goal is hardly repudiation of Paul's apostolicity; rather, he wishes to argue that their shared estimation of Paul must actually depend upon the larger canon of catholic scripture, including the Acts of the Apostles and (some collection of) catholic epistles which the Marcionites disclaim.

It is at this point in the debate that the man on the bench, Eutropius, steps in to help determine what evidence will be allowed in his court. Now the tide will turn in Paul's favor.[26]

EUTROPIUS: To which apostles (*poiôn apostolôn*) do the Acts (*hai praxeis*) and the epistles (*hai epistolai*) belong? For I remember that in the gospel (*en tô euangeliô*) there are twelve and seventy-two.[27]

ADAMANTIUS: The Acts and the epistles and the gospels belong to those men inscribed in the gospel record (*tôn engegrammenôn en tô euangeliô ekeinôn*), and if you want I shall read how they, too, were sent to preach the gospel.

EUTROPIUS: Read.

ADAMANTIUS: I am reading from the gospel: "And having summoned the twelve he gave to them power and authority over all the demons and to heal illnesses, and he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal" (Luke 9:1–2). And going forward a little further it says, "and going out they were passing through city by city and village by village, preaching the good news and healing in every place" (Luke 9:6).

EUTROPIUS: So how is it, Markus, that you [Marcionites] do not accept (*dechesthe*) the men who were sent out by Christ to preach the good news and proclaim it, *but you do accept* (*dechesthe*) *this one* [Paul] *for whom you cite no corroborating proofs* (*apodeixeis*)? So you denigrate both Matthew and John, whose very names are recorded (*anagegraptai*) in the gospel, whom even Christ sent to proclaim and preach the gospel, but *Paul, this man for whom you have not the slightest shred of proof* (*oudemia apodeixis*), *you accept*? How is that not ridiculous? Just tell [us] this: did they proclaim and preach the gospel, or not (*ekêryxan kai euêngelisanto ê ou*)?

MARKUS: They did (*ekêryxan*).

EUTROPIUS: Was their proclaiming and preaching something *written or unwritten* (*engraphôs . . . ê agraphôs*)?

MARKUS: Unwritten (*agraphôs*).

EUTROPIUS: It is entirely foolish to declare that those who were sent to proclaim and preach the gospel proclaimed it "unwritten" (*agraphôs*), *while declaring that the one who was not sent, Paul, taught in "written fashion"* (*engraphôs*). Indeed, it is reasonable that in the past they were accustomed to proclaim

> salvation only to those who were listening, whereas they gave no thought about people who would come later. For things that are said but not written down (*ta . . . agraphôs legomena*) come to an end soon thereafter, since *they do not contain the means of proof* (*apodeixis*).[28]

Paul's apostolic witness and lasting authority are, the Marcionite insists, due to his having offered *written instruction* (*engraphôs dedidachenai*), whereas the other apostles are discredited because their *unwritten proclamation* (*agraphôs kêryxai*) has disappeared in the dust and hence is unable to produce any proof (*apodeixis*). What is delightful about this text (dated sometime between Origen and Constantine) is that it of course presumes *Pauline victory via the letter*, the ultimate reversal of the Corinthian conflict, in which Paul's letters were the subject of suspicion and doubt (see esp. 2 Cor 10:9–11), though still the only weapon Paul had for self-defense. Adamantius, naturally, does not himself really mean to undermine Pauline apostleship, for he shares that estimation, but he is willing in ironic fashion to employ the Pauline Achilles' heel to catch out his opponent in a self-contradiction. The historical Paul also used irony, and the distinction between written and unwritten proofs, in his ingenious self-defense, to which we now return.

In the argument found in 2 Corinthians 10—13 Paul is forced to prove via a new letter that he is an apostle, even as his own previous letters are part of the charge against him, and in any case yet another self-recommending letter would fail by the same forensic criterion against self-testimony. And yet Paul is truly stuck, as we have seen, with giving written testimony, since his oral word (*logos*) has been a subject of reproach (and he has left Corinth in humiliation and now must communicate from a distance). Even more problematic, if the point to be adjudicated is whether or not Paul has a *dokimê* ("proof" or "tell-tale test") that *Christ is speaking in him* (*epei dokimên zêteite tou en emoi lalountos Christou*), how can Paul do that except in his own voice, *which is that of Christ*?! Paul finds an answer, a very clever answer. Instead of bringing forth at the outset his main witness, indeed, the singular witness whose testimony counts – the Lord – Paul first multiplies his testimonial bench.

In 11:1 Paul introduces a witness on his own behalf who is ostensibly a third party: the fool (*aphrôn*) to whom Paul will cede the floor for the bulk of the argument (which stretches from 11:1 to 12:13, as marked by an *inclusio*).[29] It is an open secret that the fool is Paul, but the fool, as a kind of inverse *prosôpopoiia*,[30] can introduce self-testimony freely, because he is known to be a fool, and what fools do is boast – in their ancestry (*kata sarka*, 11:18) and exploits. Ancient Christian readers recognized well

the rhetorical forms in play, and the clever argument Paul was fashioning here: John Chrysostom, for instance, in explaining 12:11, "I have been a fool in boasting, but you compelled me," says, "Paul used many such self-corrective statements (*diorthôseis*). And one would not be mistaken in calling this epistle the encomium of Paul (*enkômion Paulou*)."[31] Chrysostom also sought to defend Paul against the charge of offensive self-praise (the topic to which Plutarch had devoted a famous treatise) on the grounds that he was compelled (*anankazein*/*anankê*; cf. 12:11, *hymeis me ênankasate*).[32] Because the Corinthians did not serve as Paul's own recommendation (see 12:11), Paul was put in the situation of having to summon others to testify on his behalf. This open fictional persona of the fool is Paul's witness number 1, who functions as a kind of non-proof proof, if you will (fools only rant, they don't argue). The fool can do things that Paul cannot do: boast without fear of reprobation (for that is, after all, what fools do), enumerate his *peristaseis*[33] instead of his noble *praxeis* as an auto-encomium would require ("trials and tribulations"), unmask others in disguise as not just fools, but false apostles and messengers of Satan (11:12–15) and, further, chide the Corinthians for making *him* act like a fool! The *Narrenrede* (fool's speech) of 2 Corinthians 11:1—12:13 is, therefore, oral testimony (in written form, of course), an ironic inverse encomium, from an alter ego who serves as Paul's first witness.

But as the speech continues, at 12:2 the fool introduces witness number 2: "a man I know" (*oida anthrôpon*). This figure, Paul avers, either with or without the contemptible body, had gone up into the third heaven, into paradise, in so doing having precisely the "signs of an apostle" some call for: *optasiai kai apokalypseis* ("visions and revelations," 12:1). Who is this person? Surely Paul himself. And why is he introduced in the mysterious third person? In order to avoid the opprobrium of self-testimony, Paul has introduced two medial personae – the fool, and the man about whom the fool boasts (see 11:5: "on behalf of such a man as this I shall boast, but on behalf of myself I shall not boast, except in weakness"). This is *truly foolish testimony*, which any human court would have to throw out, for it is hearsay ("I know a man") and what it lacks is any objective, verifiable documentation, since the heavenly journey included no souvenir: "unspeakable words (*arrêta rhêmata*) which it is not lawful for a human being to speak."[34] Paul's heavenly journey brought back no oral testimony, no written transcript (a failure both apocalyptic and forensic). And yet the fool had twice evoked the possibility of divine testimony ("God knows!" 12:2, 3) to point to the distance between his own knowledge and the true realities. It is just at this point that the mask slips.

Before we peek behind the mask, let's once again peer into the future and see how an ancient exegete can employ Paul's rhetorical example in another context (consistent with our general proposition that an adequate account of ancient biblical interpretation requires us to look, not just at how ancient readers commented *on* the Corinthian correspondence, but how they interpreted *with* it). The example I have chosen is from Athanasius's *Vita Antonii*, which contains a "fool's speech" of its own, inside Antony's speech to the monks to persuade them to hate demons and stay the course in the ascetic life.[35] Antony's fool's speech, like Paul's, has a clear beginning:

> I would wish to be silent and say nothing from myself (*mêden ex emautou legein*) and let these statements alone suffice. Yet, I am going to tell again the exploits (*epitêdeumata*) of the demons which I have seen (*ha eidon*), not so that you might think I am saying these things in some simple fashion (*haplôs*), but the reason why – even if I might be a fool (*ka'n hôs aphrôn genômai*) – is that you might believe that I am describing all these things from experience and truth (*apo peiras kai alêtheias*).[36]

Athanasius constructs the literary parallelism with 2 Corinthians 11—12 because he faces some of the same rhetorical problems. Like Paul, Antony (via Athanasius) adopts the persona of a fool to introduce evidence of his spiritual prowess (visions, etc.) without incurring the charge of boasting. Like Paul, he is said to do so for the sake of his hearers – their instruction in the arts of demonological diversion – not his own reputation or glory. Further, among the experiences of the supernatural that Antony recounts (in his foolish state) is one very familiar to readers of 2 Corinthians 11—12, who have already been awakened to the intertext by Antony's adoption of the "fool" persona. Evoking 2 Cor 11:14, Antony's demons come to him in the dark of night (*en skotia*) taking on an appearance of light (*phôtos . . . phantasia*) (39.4). Earlier in the speech the exact term, *metaschêmatizomenoi* ("in figured or disguised form"), was used, so this is a deliberate allusion to 2 Cor 11:13.[37] Near the end in Antony's fool's speech, as in Paul's, he recounts a dialogue in direct discourse with a supernatural figure about power and weakness. But here it is most interestingly inverted:

> And since I have been a fool (*gegona aphrôn*) in the telling, receive this now for your fearlessness (*pros aphobian*). Believe me (*pisteusate moi*), for I do not lie (*ou pseudomai gar*)! Once a demon knocked on my door in the monastery, and when I went out I saw one appearing far off and high up. Then when I asked, "Who are you?" it said, "I am Satan." Then when I said, "Then what are you doing here?" he

said, "Why do the monks and all the other Christians cast blame on me without reason? Why do they curse me every hour on the hour?" When I said, "Well, why do you torment them?" he said, "It is not I, but they agitate themselves. For I have become weak (*egô gar asthenês gegona*) . . . "[38]

Via a cluster of echoes with the Corinthian correspondence,[39] Antony casts his own revelatory retrospective in a decidedly Pauline mode. Adopting his persona of the fool who boasts of spiritual prowess gets Antony off the hook of self-praise, and allows him to give self-testimony of the experiences of the monk (*monachos*, "solitary man") that stand, by definition, without any other human witness.

It is at this point that we must return to Paul, and the moment where, as I said, the mask of the fool slips down off his *prosôpon*. In 12:6–7 Paul pauses between his own voice and that of his "fool" persona, because, he avers, "if *I* wish to boast, *I* will not be a fool (*ouk esomai aphrôn*), for *I* will speak the truth." The "I" is the undisguised Paul who replaces his *prosôpeion* (mask) with *parrêsia* (open speech).[40] Then, to explain why he has drawn back from boasting in his own name directly (i.e. giving self-testimony), Paul at last introduces *the visible sign* – his "thorn in the flesh" (*skolops tê sarki*).[41] Here Paul seeks to turn the counter-evidence being brought against him – his bodily weakness (*astheneia*) – into *the objective visible proof* that he is truly the apostle of Christ, the crucified one who in his impalement on a cross[42] was the definitive locus of divine *dynamis*, the miraculous "proof of power" that the "signs of the apostle" of 12:12 require. In order to provide the hermeneutical key to this visible defect that *they* are terming weakness, Paul first renames it as a "thorn in the flesh," and then, instead of giving his own explanation of the meaning of this *sêmeion*, Paul recounts a dialogue he had with the Lord, who will put the interpretive caption on the impaled *corpus Paulinum*. This is how Paul introduces the all-important, decisive witness number 3: "Three times I begged the Lord about this, that he might take it from me. And he has said to me, 'My grace is enough for you, for power is perfected in weakness' " (2 Cor 12:8–9). The Lord's testimony[43] – the one whose recommendation alone can ensure the *dokimê* – has in this manner been introduced by Paul into the trial proceedings. The Lord at last speaks, giving for Paul both the crucial evidence he lacks and the supporting testimony for the shift in criteria of evidence which means that all of the weaknesses and ignominious behaviors of which witness number 1 (the fool) had spoken are now reckoned as real evidence, indeed the best possible evidence, of apostolic identity. Hence Paul can aver as his summary statement: "The signs of the apostle have been worked out among you in full steadfastness – in signs and marvels and acts of power" (12:12).

It remains for Paul to address the financial issue in those terms. Paul now (12:13–14.) argues not for his own lack of inferiority, but for theirs, in that they are only less because Paul did not accept support from them when in Corinth. Certainly this is no "injustice" (*adikia*), he allows, but it is indeed part of his expression of greater love for them, like that of a parent for a child.[44] And he issues a promissory note for the future – not to burden them again or do anything by way of financial dealings that might hint at guile (*dolos*). This has in fact always been the case, he insists, both with himself and with Titus and the brother (12:17–18; cf. 8:6, 18, 23). In 12:19 Paul argues for an agonistic change of venue – i.e. we are making a self-defense (*apologoumetha*) not to you (*hymin*), but "in the presence of God in Christ" (*katenanti theou en Christô*), language that is distinctly reminiscent of Deut 19:15,[45] the key verse around which Paul had built his proof, which is soon to be cited (13:1). This claim that Paul's defense is offered as a hearing before God is meant to lift his apologia *from the earthly level to the heavenly court,*[46] even as he eyes nervously the prospect of a third visit at which the reception of his letter will become known in its concrete effects. Textual interpretation, after all, does not take place only in more texts, but also in actions. But, he solemnly intones with the Mosaic legal code, "at the mouth of two witnesses and three witnesses every matter will stand" (13:1, quoting Deut 19:15). Has Paul managed to meet that standard?

Early Christian exegetes recognized both the sheer cleverness of Paul's argument and the importance of the statement from Deut 19:15 in 2 Cor 13:1 to the structure of proof. For instance, John Chrysostom comprehends well the rhetorical dilemma facing Paul, and connects the numeric rule of witnesses not, as I have just done, with the fool, the anonymous heavenly journeyman and the Lord, but with the various media of Pauline presence, and an awareness we saw in the Adamantius dialogue of the difference between oral and written testimony. For John it is the temporal distinction that allows Paul to enter self-testimony – since issued on different occasions – more than once:

> And here: "This is the third time I am coming to you; at the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter will stand" (2 Cor 13:1). *Paul conjoins the unwritten and the written* (*agraphon engraphô synaptei*), something he also does elsewhere, when he said, "The one who cleaves to the *porne* is one body; 'for the two', scripture says, 'will become one flesh' " (1 Cor 5:16, citing Gen 2:24). Despite the fact that the statement was made about lawful marriage, *Paul has employed it advantageously* (*apechrêsato . . . sympherontôs*) *for this purpose*, so that he might inspire greater fear. This is what he does here, too: as *a substitute for testimonies* (*anti martyriôn*) he submits his *parousiai* and his *parangeliai* ("personal visits" and "instructional

commands"). What he means is this: "*I said it once* (*hapax*) *and twice* (*deuteron*) *when I was present* (*paregenomên*); *and I say it again now in writing* (*kai nun dia grammatôn*). And indeed, if you listen to me, then the outcome will be as I desired; but if you refuse to listen, it is necessary, then, to establish the things I have said and bring on the punishment." That is why he says, "I have said before and I say in advance as though present the second time, and absent now, to those who have sinned before and to all the rest, that if I come again, I shall not spare you" (2 Cor 13:2). For "if at the mouth of two and three witnesses any matter stands," "*I was present a second time* (*paregenomên deuteron*), *and I said this and I say it now again through the letter* (*dia tês epistolês*). Now don't think that the letters are any less than my presence (*elatton echein ta grammata tês parousias*)!"[47]

John may be right that the two and three witnesses line up with Paul's own voices on different occasions and in different media, even as in this letter itself, as we have seen, Paul tries ingeniously to avoid once again the invidium and unpersuasiveness of self-testimony. What Chrysostom especially points us to is the importance of the written word for the ultimate victory of a man who within a half century or so of this letter will not only be recognized as an apostle, but even as *the apostle*, and beyond – as Gregory has it, for instance, "*the great apostle.*" If 2 Corinthians 10—13 were not preserved, and were not published in a collection of authoritative letters, even the playful Adamantius would have a hard time upholding Paul's secure hold on the status to which he must so vehemently defend possession. Oral testimony, if it has not become a written deposition, is temporary, but the written word is permanent (at least in theory!). The thin papyrus of Paul's original writings will become as monumentally fixed as though in stone, an essential building block of the early Christian tradition.

Paul's appeal to Deut 19:15 in 2 Cor 13:1, and his use of it in his own remarkable self-defense in the courtroom of Corinthian opinion, defines hermeneutics within an agonistic paradigm; the truth of any matter or statement (*rhêma* means both those things) is adjudicated on the basis of witnesses. Words are subject to testing; such scrutiny can result in only one of two options: either true or false. This mindset is built into the lexicon of early Christian biblical interpretation: texts are to be subjected to careful examination (*exetazein, exetasis*), and even "scrutiny," "cross-examination under torture" (*basanizein, basanos*),[48] in order to get them to give up what they know. The interpretive act has as its goal a verdict, a simple yes-or-no (true-or-false) verdict on the case at hand.

Origen inventively recasts Deut 19:15 in his first homily on Jeremiah (a homily which treats Jeremiah 1:1–10) in the same way as Paul does – to define the parameters of textual proof and defend his interpretive

method. To set the context briefly, Origen is debating with an unnamed interlocutor about which of the statements in Jeremiah 1:1–10 can apply both to Jeremiah and to Jesus, and which are inappropriate to one or the other. For example, Jeremiah did not literally uproot nations and rebuild them, so in that case he serves as a *symbolon* of Christ (1.6), though one can read it of Jeremiah and yet allegorically (with an assist from Rom 6:12), in reference to the prophetic word's uprooting of sin from peoples' souls. But, on the other hand, Origen treats the objection that it would be unseemly to suppose that the Jeremianic statement "I do not know how to speak" could be said of Christ, the *monogenês*[49] (especially since the divine reply is the apparent rebuke, "don't say" it), by an extended argument for how this refers to the need for the Logos to "take up the human dialect" (*dialekton anthrôpinên analambanein*) (1.7–8) when previously he had known only the divine. It is in the midst of this argument that Origen states, "it is necessary to take the scriptures as witnesses" (*martyras dei labein tas graphas*). And the demonstration he produces for this is Deut 19:15: "at the mouth of two and three witnesses (*epi stomati duo kai tritôn martyrôn*) any matter will stand (*stathêsetai pan rhêma*)":[50]

> You see that the interpretation is constrained. We know that the Savior is Lord; we seek to "elevate" these statements onto the Savior in a manner worthy of the Logos and in accordance with the truth, [so] it is necessary to take the scriptures as witnesses (*martyras dei labein tas graphas*). *For without witnesses* (*amartyroi*) *our interpretations and exegeses* (*epibolai kai exêgêseis*) *are incredible* (*apistoi*). The statement "at the mouth of two and three witnesses any matter (*rhêma*)[51] will stand (*stathêsetai*)" *is better suited to textual explication* (*diêgêseis*) *than to persons* (*anthrôpoi*).[52] With that purpose I shall establish (*stêsô*) the words (*rhêmata*) of my interpretation (*hermêneia*) by taking two witnesses (*martyras duo*) – from the New (*kainê*) and from the Old Testament (*palaia diathêkê*) – [and] taking three witnesses (*martyras treis*) – from a gospel (*euangelion*), from a prophet (*prophêtês*) and from an apostle (*apostolos*). For thus "will any matter stand."[53]

Within this passage Origen gives as clear a statement as we could wish of the agonistic paradigm of interpretation: one needs to bring the scriptures as witnesses, "*For without witnesses our interpretations and exegeses are incredible*" (1.7). Origen goes one step further in transforming the legal dictum of Deut 19:15 into an interpretive axiom when he says that the call for two or three witnesses "is better suited (*harmozein*) to textual explication than to persons."[54] This becomes the justification he offers for the proofs that Christ could have said "I do not know how to speak." He proposes to establish (*hina stêsô*) the words of his interpretation (*ta rhêmata tês hermêneias*) by taking two witnesses – from the New and from the Old Testaments,

and three witnesses, from a gospel, a prophet, and an apostle.[55] Apportioning the arithmetic of multiple witnesses in a new, clever way, Origen offers a textual proof from elsewhere in the canon for his reading of the Jeremiah passage, by bringing in the corroborating testimony from each of the two testaments, and from each of three major biblical genres (gospel, prophecy, apostle). As with Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 10—13, this is an instance of the ancient use of the criterion of multiple attestation. It is of course a delicious and useful irony that Deut 19:15,[56] since it is also quoted by Paul, constitutes proof in both categories!

Origen makes this same inventive use of the multiple-witness rule from Deut 19:15 to defend the canon of scripture in his commentary on Matthew, where he is dealing with the passage about the scribe who is educated for the kingdom of heaven (13:52). Here also is an intertextual echo with 1 Cor 2:13 and 2 Cor 10:12–18 on comparability and plurality in proof.

> Since "every scribe who has become a disciple for the kingdom of the heavens is like a man, a householder, who brings forth from his treasury things new and old" (Matt 13:52), it is clear that, in accordance with what is called the "inversion of the proposition," everyone who does not bring forth from his treasury things new and old is not a scribe who has become a disciple for the kingdom of the heavens. Hence it is necessary to try in every way to gather in our heart, through attending to the reading, the consolation and the teaching (2 Tim 4:13), and "to meditate on the law of the Lord during the day and night" (Ps 1:2), not only the new sayings of the gospels and the apostles and the revelation, but also the old sayings of the Law, which contains "a shadow of the good things to come" (Heb 10:1), and the prophets who prophesied in succession to them. And these things will be gathered together when we might both read and understand and, remembering these things, we compare "spiritual things with spiritual things" (*pneumatika pneumatikois . . . synkrinômen*, 1 Cor 2:13) in an opportune manner, not comparing incomparable things (*asynkrita*) with one another (cf. 2 Cor 10:12), but things that are comparable (*synkrita*) and have a certain likeness (*homoiôtês*). This is when the wording (*lexis*) signifies the same thing in each case about both thoughts (*noêmata*) and teachings (*dogmata*), so that "at the mouth of two or three" or even more "witnesses" (*martyres*) from scripture we might establish and confirm "every word" (*pan rhêma*) of God. And through these witnesses we must convince[57] those who, to a great degree on their own authority, divide the divinity and bisect the old from the new, thus being far away from the likeness of the householder who brings forth from his treasury things new and old.[58]

From this same forensic Torah statement, as intertexually invoked by Paul, Origen constructs a principle of multiple attestation whereby the act of comparison in exegesis is meant to construct proof for the validity of readings. The numeric regularity of the Deut 19:15 text allows the interpreter

to insist that the parallels offered are not tangential or arbitrary, but somehow congenital, even expected. The issue here is of course the defense of the orthodox canon against Marcionites and others. Origen reuses the Deut 19:15 passage in coordination with Matt 13:52 to refer to the multiple witness of the two testaments, which can be the basis for confirmatory proof of "any statement of God." Comparing spiritual things with spiritual things (a hermeneutical principle taken up from earlier in the Corinthian correspondence)[59] thus becomes the rationale for the two testaments, and their relationship to one another as back-up proof.

2 Corinthians 10—13 is one of the most remarkable of early Christian texts – a very risky, even impossible argument for constructing visible signs and multiple witnesses for Paul's self, and, by extension, for his gospel, when such did not appear to be found according to any normal means. The Christian religion as it emerges in the late antique Mediterranean world was a text-based phenomenon; the path on which Paul had set it, as Averil Cameron has stated, was, on the basis of Pauline precedent, "to be a matter of articulation and interpretation."[60] Much of this self-articulation was overtly apologetic, in the form of arguments of defense. Early Christian authors carried out this task using a host of rhetorical strategies from the Greco-Roman *paideia*, and this begins with Paul himself. His followers will find in his letters examples of the most clever apologetic rhetoric and manipulations of conditions of proof, and will do the same in their debates with Jews, non-believing Gentiles, and those they deemed "heretics." Apologetics was the bread and butter of the developing early Christian literary culture, the essential requirement for Christian "culture" to forge a distinctive identity.

But what of Paul, who sent out the letter of 2 Corinthians 10—13 with trusty Titus? On any theory of reconstruction of the Corinthian correspondence this was either the third or (on my view) fifth letter, probably in a rapid succession of one and a half years. And in each letter Paul the author was forced to explain the previous letters and exchanges, what they meant and what they said about the trustworthiness both of him and of his gospel. Would there be no end to this Corinthian cycle of (re)interpretation?[61]

CHAPTER 6

Hermeneutical exhaustion and the end(s) of interpretation

In defending the need for figurative interpretation of scripture, Gregory of Nyssa offers the negative exempla of passages in scripture whose meaning is at best obscure, if not outright scandalous. He then generates his own metaphorical defense of biblical interpretation, *à la mode theôria* – the reading with contemplative insight.[1] This method of reading, Gregory argues, is especially appropriate for humans, who, as rational beings, require a certain kind of nourishment for the mind, a diet which is dependent upon proper preparation of the intellectual victuals. Gregory unfolds this image for scripture study as a culinary art in the following way:

> One could collect from the rest of the prophetic corpus countless examples in addition to these of the necessity of the *theôria*-reading that accords with the sense of the words. If the *theôria* is rejected, however, as pleases some people, the result is what seems to me to be the same as if someone might lay out unworked (*akatergasta*) grain on a table for human beings to eat (*pros anthrôpinê brôsin*), without peeling back the stalk, without separating the kernels from the husks by winnowing, without threshing the grain into flour, without preparing (*kataskeuazein*) bread in a way suitable for the baking arts (*sitopoiia*). Consequently, just as unworked (*akatergaston*) produce is food (*trophê*) for beasts and not for humans, thus one could say that the divinely inspired words of scripture (*ta theopneusta rhêmata*)[2] – not only of the Old Testament, but also many words of the gospel teaching – if they have not been worked over (*mê katergasthenta*) by the refinement of *theôria*, are food (*trophê*) for irrational (*aloga*) rather than rational beings (*logikoi*). These gospel words include the winnowing wand that clears the threshing floor, the chaff that is blown away, the grain that remains at the feet of the winnower, the unquenchable fire, the good storehouse (Matt 3:12), the tree that produces evil fruits, the threat of the axe that frighteningly shows its sharp blade to the tree (Matt 3:10), the stones that take the place of human nature (Matt 3:9).[3]

The play here is on the term *akatergastos* and cognates. Scripture that has not been "refined," "worked over" or "baked or kneaded thoroughly," is (from the point of view of reception) "indigestible" or "undigested."[4] According to this arresting image of Gregory's,[5] the whole point of interpretation is

preparing the text for ingestion, moving it from the hard, impenetrable entities animals feed on to supple, palatable food for human nourishment. Texts do not easily release their treasures, but must be worked over by intelligent readers who are ready for serious labor, and can anticipate the delicious feast that will follow. Later in the commentary Gregory will find in the depiction of the teeth of the bride in Song of Songs 4:2 an allegory for scriptural exegetes in the church, who chew over and, by their fine-grained analysis (*leptomerestera theôria*) in their own mouth, make palatable the coarse bread of the biblical text for the souls of others to receive. The chief masticator, for Gregory, was "the blessed Paul," who did just this in 1 Cor 9:9, Gal 4:22 and Rom 7:14, softening the Law for delectation. Once again, it is this apostle who is presented as exemplar of the proper mode of biblical interpretation:

> Now, what we have perceived in Paul's case – how he fulfilled the church's need for teeth by grinding finely the clarity of the teachings – is exactly what we are saying about every person who, in imitation of Paul (*kata mimêsin ekeinou*), clarifies the mysteries for us. Therefore, the teeth of the church are those who sift and chew the unworked grain (*akatergastos poa*) of the divine utterances.[6]

Whether by sharp teeth or a harvesting sickle, as the terms from Matt 3:9–12 that Gregory summons in our opening passage insist, wheat does not become bread without considerable violence, both on the threshing floor and in the judgment of the unquenchable fire and the axe that await the outcome. Transferred to texts, this metaphor insists, exegesis is a serious business, and life – both earthly and eschatological – depends upon it.

In the thesis statement of 2 Cor 1:12–14 Paul also sounds an eschatological note: "we are your boast (*kauchêma*) just as also you are ours on the day of our Lord Jesus" (1:14). The boast of the eschatological courtroom is linked for Paul to a present-moment "*testimony* (*martyrion*) of conscience (*syneidêsis*)" (1:12) that, as with Gregory, is about the nature of interpretation, textual interpretation. And it has to do as well with how Paul behaves in the world and especially to the Corinthians. The problematic behavior, it soon becomes clear (in the next verse), is textual, i.e. Pauline epistolary practice: "we do not write to you anything but what you read and understand." In the late fourth century another rhetorically attuned Pauline reader, John Chrysostom, describes the exigency of the problematic letter now under discussion in terms that fit strikingly the argument Paul made in 2 Corinthians 10—13:[7]

> For since Paul had uttered praises for himself (*megala ephthenxato hyper heautou*), and seemed to testify to himself (*heautô martyrein*) – which was an onerous thing – again *he brings them forward as witnesses* (*autous paragei martyras*) of what

he says. Now don't let anyone think that what we said is just some vaunting of our deeds. For we are making known to you (*dêloun*) the things that you yourselves know. *You above all people should witness* (*martyrein*) *to us that we are not lying* (*ou pseudesthai*)! For *when you read* (*anaginôskein*) *our letter you recognize* (*epiginôskein*) *that the things we are saying in the letters* (*en tois grammasi*) *are precisely what you know* (*syneidenai*) *to be true about us in our deeds* (*en tois ergois*). *Your own testimony* (*martyria*) is not contradicted (*enantiousthai*) by the letters (*hai epistolai*), but the knowledge you had of us before is in harmonious agreement (*synaidein*) with it.[8]

In 2 Cor 1:13, in hermeneutical exhaustion[9] from the fraught correspondence, Paul utters the most remarkable and, let's face it, empirically false words "we do not write (*graphein*) to you anything but (*ou gar alla*) what you read (*anaginôskein*) and understand (*epiginôskein*)."[10] The whole history of the Corinthian correspondence (to say nothing of Pauline interpretation down to the present day) seems to show the opposite – that the Pauline letters *were not an indisputable or transparent communicative medium*, but were variously and disputably interpreted by the Corinthians (who, it bears noting, probably did not read as a unified committee of the whole). Indeed, the very fact of *this* new letter demonstrates the need to clarify those that had come before. And once again, Paul must do so using the very same epistolary vehicle that had been occasioning the trouble, engendering the doubt about his *haplotês* and *eilikrineia* (as 1:12 phrases it). The two words are pregnant with meaning. The first denotes "simplicity, frankness, sincerity"[11] in reference to persons, and also to literary style; from the last probably stems the use of the adjective in later patristic exegesis, to refer to something spoken or taken "literally."[12] The second term, *eilikrineia*, means "purity" or "sincerity." The former denies figured meaning as well as florid style, the second authorial disingenuousness. In the two terms the poetic and the forensic evaluative paradigms are once again, as so often at Corinth, entwined.

The full rhetorical meaning of these two words in Paul's opening thesis statement to this letter was adeptly caught by Chrysostom in his own exegesis by paraphrase:

"Because in simplicity and sincerity" – that is, nothing guileful (*doleron*), neither pretence (*hypokrisis*) nor dissimulation (*eirôneia*) nor flattery (*kolakeia*) nor treachery and deception (*epiboulê kai apatê*), nor any other such thing, but in full freedom of expression (*eleutheria*), in simplicity (*haplotês*), in truth (*alêtheia*), in pure and nonmalevolent intent (*kathara kai aponêros gnômê*), in guileless meaning (*adolos dianoia*), having nothing shady (*syneskiasmenon*), nothing making a fair appearance on the surface (*hypoulon*[13]).[14]

While Paul no longer seems to face direct attacks upon his apostolic authority,[15] he is still defending himself against the charge that he has composed

letters that have double meanings, cloaked meanings, an underlying *intent* that differs from what is on the surface.[16] The previous letter has achieved its aim in one sense (according to 7:9, repentance), and yet left other problems in its wake: grief, distrust and lament.

The asseveration of epistolary perspicuity, here phrased, we note, in the present tense, applies to "all his correspondence with Corinth, including the present letter."[17] And it is, perhaps fittingly (certainly ironically), phrased *in a rhetorical figure*, paronomasia,[18] between *anaginôskein* and *epiginôskein*.[19] We shall go along with the majority of English translations and commentators who take the second verb to refer to "understanding" here, rather than its more usual "recognizing." But we should at least note that what lies in the balance in translating the term is the very nature of hermeneutics itself – does reading lead to *comprehension* through acquisition of new knowledge, *cognitive recognition* of what was previously known and now remembered, or a kind of *active acknowledgment* of what was already there and now deserves a nod?[20] How, after all, do human beings glean "understanding" from written texts? Paul does not engage these phenomenological or epistemological concerns here; his main point is to issue a firm statement of confidence in the epistolary medium, indeed, in his own command of the written medium (in 1:13), one that is surely unwarranted by the exchanges that have come before! He knows acutely that his words have not in fact been received with full understanding of what he says he wrote plainly enough. *He says it is so to try to make it so.* Can he do it?

The hermeneutical dilemma is as inescapable as a pair of handcuffs, however, for the very fact and substance of this follow-up letter belie the claim that *the Pauline text needs no "digestion"* (as Gregory would put it), but can be read right off the surface with full and complete comprehension. On the contrary, the whole history of epistolary exchanges between Paul and the Corinthians (no matter how we reconstruct it) has *threshed them over thoroughly*, parsing out word and intent, style and effect. And the threshing is not over yet, for Paul has taken up the stylus one more time to comment on his own previous letter and clarify its true meaning and intent *by appeal to both the letter and the spirit* (intent) of that earlier epistle.[21] But before he does so Paul sets this hermeneutical contest yet again in an eschatological frame, with language that appears deliberately to invoke the similar word play in 1 Cor 13:9–12 between *ginôskein* and *epiginôskein*.[22] The proper reading of his letters, Paul argues, must be set in relation to eschatological knowledge, of which the present is only a partial (*apo merous*) apprehension that awaits the final one (*heôs telous*). The clear and the unclear, the whole and part, the now and the then dance

a duet in this packed passage (1:12–14) which serves as the thesis statement to the Letter toward Reconciliation (as I term it) in 1:1—2:13; 7:5–16; 13:11–13.[23]

In my judgment the painful letter that Paul will reinterpret in this missive (especially at 2:3–9 and 7:8–13) was the letter now contained in 2 Corinthians 10—13, which was the subject of our previous chapter. Here I stand in company with, for instance, James H. Kennedy, Kirsopp Lake, Edgar J. Goodspeed, and, more recently, Francis Watson, who concludes that "2 Cor. x—xiii as a whole fits the description of the painful letter."[24] As evidence that chs. 10—13 is the letter being referred to here, these previous scholars have pointed to the fact that Paul in 1:23—2:3 offers the same motivation that the painful letter did (according to 13:2, 10): a harsh text to spare them an ugly and painful face-to-face encounter. I follow this line of thinking, and propose that the larger argument of this book, showing Paul's rootedness in the agonistic paradigm of competing use of textual evidence, allows us to strengthen that case. In 2:3–9 Paul provides a "literal" exegesis of the earlier letter that highlights three key terms,[25] *each of which figures prominently in the argument of 2 Corinthians 10—13*, as shown especially in their use in the *inclusio* (beginning and end) that we noted in Chapter 5 was a characteristic compositional principle of that letter. Hence, we can see that one prominent tactic Paul used in exegeting that prior letter of his own *was an appeal to its exact wording*. This should not surprise us, and indeed it receives further confirmation from the fact that Paul did the same at 1 Cor 5:9, as we have seen;[26] even prophetic and poetic authors whose goal is speaking words with deeper reference may at times wish to insist that what they say is what they mean and what they mean is what they say, no more and no less.[27] The three terms Paul highlights in his own previous letter – which he says he wrote in tears ("I wrote [*egrapsa*] for this reason") – are *hypakoê*, *dokimê* and *agapê* ("obedience," "testworthiness," "love"). Each of these terms does in fact appear, and in a prominent position in the argument, in 2 Corinthians 10—13, as these three pairings demonstrate:

2 Cor 2:9 And I wrote for this very reason . . . [to see] if you are *obedient* (*hypêkooi*) in everything
2 Cor 10:6 being ready to avenge every *disobedience* (*parakoê*), when your *obedience* (*hypakoê*) might be fulfilled

2 Cor 2:9 Since it is for this very reason that I wrote, that I might know the test (*dokimê*) of you.
2 Cor 13:5 Try yourselves to see if you are in the faith; *test* (*dokimazete*) yourselves. Or do you not recognize about yourselves that

> Christ Jesus is among you? That is, unless you have *failed the test* (*adokimoi*)![28]

> 2 Cor 2:4 I wrote to you through many tears, not so that you might be grieved, but so that you might know the *love* (*agapê*)[29] which I have all the more (*perissoterôs*) for you.
> 2 Cor 11:11 Why? Because I don't *love* (*agapô*) you? God knows I do!
> 2 Cor 12:15 If I *love* (*agapô*) you all the more (*perissoterôs*), *am I loved* (*agapômai*) all the less?!

If 2 Corinthians 10—13 is the letter mentioned here, then it is given a further exegesis in 7:8–13, which seeks to explain and justify a letter that caused grief. But Paul has to respond to more than one of his prior letters. When the accumulated letters are considered, this also includes the travel plans of 1 Cor 16:1–8, and 2 Corinthians 8 with the provisions given in both passages for the gathering and transit of the collection monies to Judea. The conflicts between Paul and the Corinthians have apparently stalled those plans, and although the letter of 2 Corinthians 10—13 promised a forthcoming visit (twice saying "for a third time [*triton*] I am coming to you" [12:14; 13:1]), in fact Paul has not come, and once again subsequent events have affected the way his letters are retrospectively read. What may have been accepted on a first reading as a plan offered in good faith is now viewed as prevarication, indeed (in forensic terms) perjury – saying yes when you mean no. That is why Paul offers the "testimony (*martyrion*) of his conscience" (1:12). But how can such testimony as that be publicly verified?

Paul's defense in 1:15–22 focuses on the status of his *logos* – both oral and epistolary – defended on the basis of several rapid claims. First, he reinstantiates his own authorial intent expressed earlier – "I *did* wish (*eboulomên*) to come!" – thus seeking to secure the integrity of his word and intent (letter and spirit). Chrysostom for his part (patristic authors often will try to strengthen Paul's arguments for him) tries to get Paul off the hook by appealing not to the author of the letters but to *the author of Paul's itinerary*, which trumped Paul's own intent. Paul had wanted to come, but the Holy Spirit, who managed his schedule, had other ideas![30] However, despite John's ingenuity, Paul's main appeal is not quite that, but rather, as Cicero recommends when one must discount the "letter," an appeal to the life, character and other writings of himself as author:

> In the next place, one ought to estimate what the writer meant from his other writings, acts, words, disposition and in fact his whole life (*Deinde, qua in sententia scriptor fuerit ex ceteris eius scriptis et ex factis, dictis, animo atque vita eius sumi oportebit*), and to examine the whole document which contains the ambiguity in

question in all its parts (*et eam ipsam scripturam, in qua inerit illud ambiguum de quo quaeretur totam omnibus ex partibus pertemptare*), to see if anything is apposite to our interpretation or opposed to the sense in which our opponent understands it (*si quid aut ad id appositum sit quod nos interpretemur, aut ei quod adversarius intellegat, adversetur*).[31]

Paul cannot be a yes–no man (despite his having told the Corinthians themselves in another context that he was "all things to all people"! [1 Cor 9:22]) because his *magnum opus* as an author – his evangelistic oral *logos* – is an unambiguous yes. Indeed, he claims, it is *not only his own yes, but God's cosmic yes* (1:19). Forensic language follows to complete the appeal: God has offered confirmatory proof for us (*bebaiôn hêmas*), Paul insists, recasting the thought into cultic metaphors of anointing (*chrisas*) and sealing (*sphragisamenos*), and even pledged bond money, the down payment of the Spirit (*ho arrabôn tou pneumatos*) in "our hearts" (1:21–22). Even more, with a solemn formula *God himself is summoned* to serve as Paul's witness: "I call upon (*epikaloumai*) God as witness (*martys*)!" This appeal is meant to move the eye of interpretation *behind the letter* of his earlier travel plans as spelled out in the epistles (we note that Paul does not dispute his promise to have come) to the underlying *intention* that governed his change in plans.

But if Paul's letters are to be evaluated by intent, can that be gauged in turn by the result? In 2:1–11 Paul offers several different arguments for why his earlier missive was not a "poison pen" letter meant to grieve the Corinthians, but a letter motivated by love, written by one who had only their interests at heart. In a certain sense, Paul and the Corinthians are debating the *genre* of the earlier letter, seen as the agent of Pauline intention. They, like modern scholars, when reading the Pauline epistolary, often find themselves face to face with "mixed genres."[32] To the degree that genre is a key to meaning and intent, the Corinthians seem by their reaction of grief (the *lypê* Paul continually denies having caused in 2:1–5) to have taken his letter as, to use the classifications of the later epistolary handbook attributed to Libanius: *apeilêtikê* ("threatening style"), *oneidistikê* ("rebuking style"), *antenklêmatikê* ("counter-accusing style"), *elentikê* ("reproving style"), *diablêtikê* ("maligning style"), *epitimêtikê* ("rebuking style"), or *skôptikê* ("mocking style").[33] And indeed they would have some exegetical grounds in the letter of 2 Corinthians 10—13 for each of these, would they not? But Paul insists, on the basis of both letter *and* intent, part and whole, that his was actually a love letter (*erôtikê*), a letter of shared grief (*lypêtikê*) between friends. Here he takes up the second part of Cicero's advice,[34] by selecting and quoting back the exact words of the earlier

letter (*agapê*, *dokimê*, *hypakoê*) that accent his loving rather than malevolent intent.

But the literal exegesis may be a relatively weak case, especially given the harsh tones at the beginning and end of 2 Corinthians 10—13, with their military language at one end (10:1–6) and judicial counter-accusation at the other (13:5–7). And notice that Paul leaves out of the retrospective any reference to the foolish discourse and the rebuke of the Corinthians for making him play the fool! In addition to selective appeal to wording (part to explain whole), Paul offers *the testimony of his conscience* to his authorial intention, defined by the love he holds in his heart for the Corinthians, that his single and consistent goal was not to cause them grief, but to show his love. This makes direct use of the Ciceronian *topos* about *scriptum* versus *sententia*, the letter versus intent:

> The one who bases his defense on the intent (*sententia*) will sometimes show that the intent of the writer always had the same end in view (*semper ad idem spectare*) and desired the same result (*idem velle*), at other times he will show that the writer's purpose has to be modified to the occasion (*ad tempus . . . accommodabitur*) as a result of some act or event (*ex facto aut ex eventu*) . . . To sum up, intent will be presented so as to show that the writer desired one definite thing, or to prove that he desired this in such circumstances and at such a time (*Quare aut ita sententia inducetur, ut unum quiddam voluisse scriptor demonstretur; aut sic, ut in eiusmodi re et tempore hoc voluisse doceatur*).[35]

But how can one verify motive? Given that Paul's heart is not an open book, or a visible or objective entity, Paul ensures his testimonial against this apparently misconstrued authorial intent by painting a retrospective self-portrait – of himself as letter writer, composing the controversial missive with tears streaming down his face ("I wrote to you through many tears"). 2 Corinthians 2:4 contains in miniature a verbal self-portrait (the rhetorical form of *ekphrasis*)[36] that is meant to torque the meaning of the prior words, to realign their meaning by juxtaposition with the disposition of the writer in the moment of composition.

Compare, for instance, two Pauline graphic portraits, one by Rembrandt (Figure 1),[37] and the other by Lovis Corinth (Figure 2).[38] Consider how the meaning of the words of the prior letter is altered, depending upon which image one envisions of the man who had held that pen and sent those words. 2 Corinthians 2:4 is indeed the definitive appeal by Paul to authorial intent behind the words themselves – I wrote this letter not to cause *lypê*, but as one with you in *lypê*, in tears of lament not rage. Paul wishes them to see Rembrandt's Pauline portrait, not something more like Lovis Corinth's, and read his earlier words, now sitting on

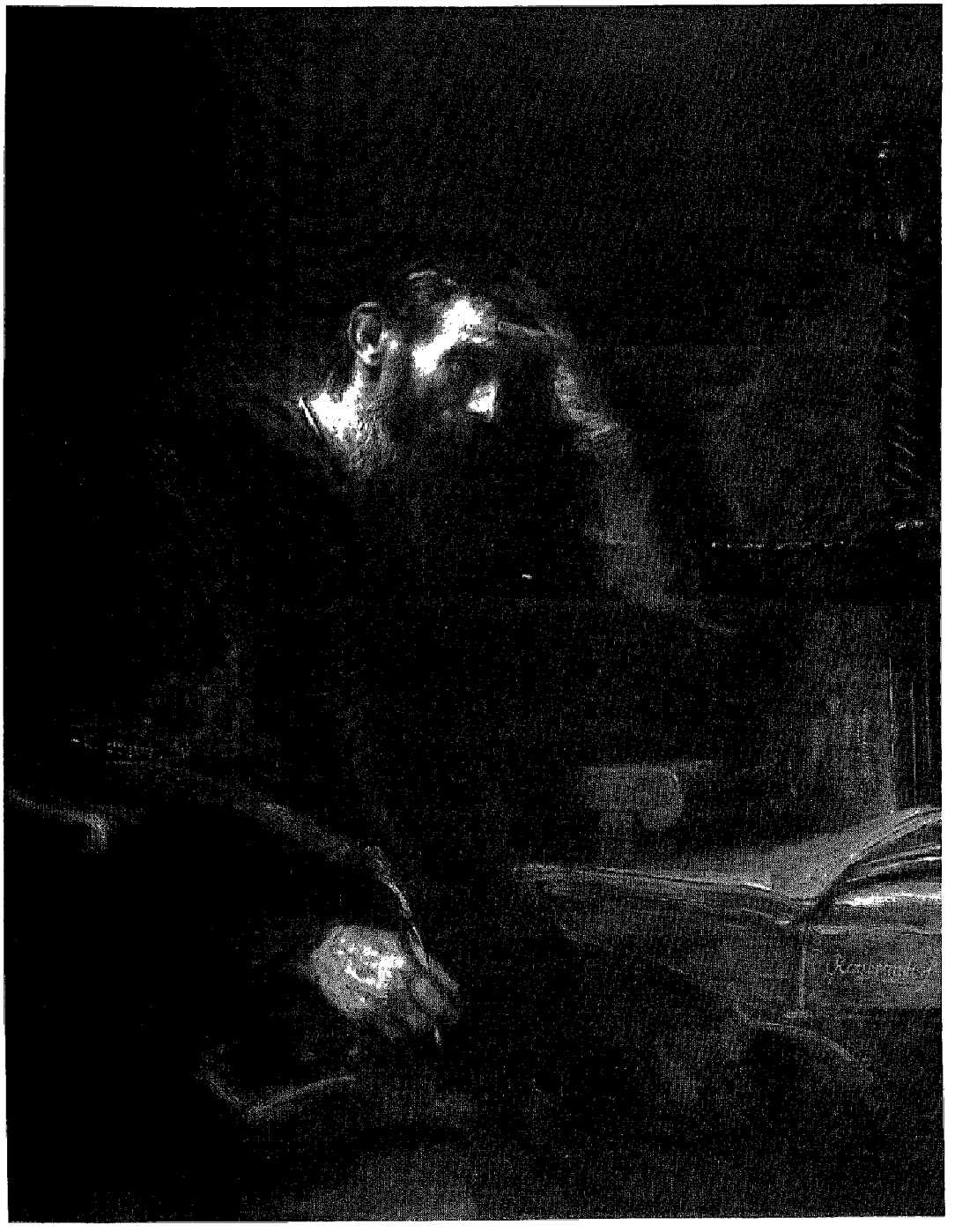

Figure 1 *The Apostle Paul*, by Rembrandt van Rijn

papyrus in Corinth, in light of that image so quickly etched in 2 Cor 2:4. This portrait is accentuated by its dynamic continuation once the letter leaves his salt-soaked fingers – fretfully pacing on two continents while the letter goes on its way (2:12–13; 7:5). Hardly careless of their feelings, Paul insists, his own behavior in the delivery interval (unknown to them

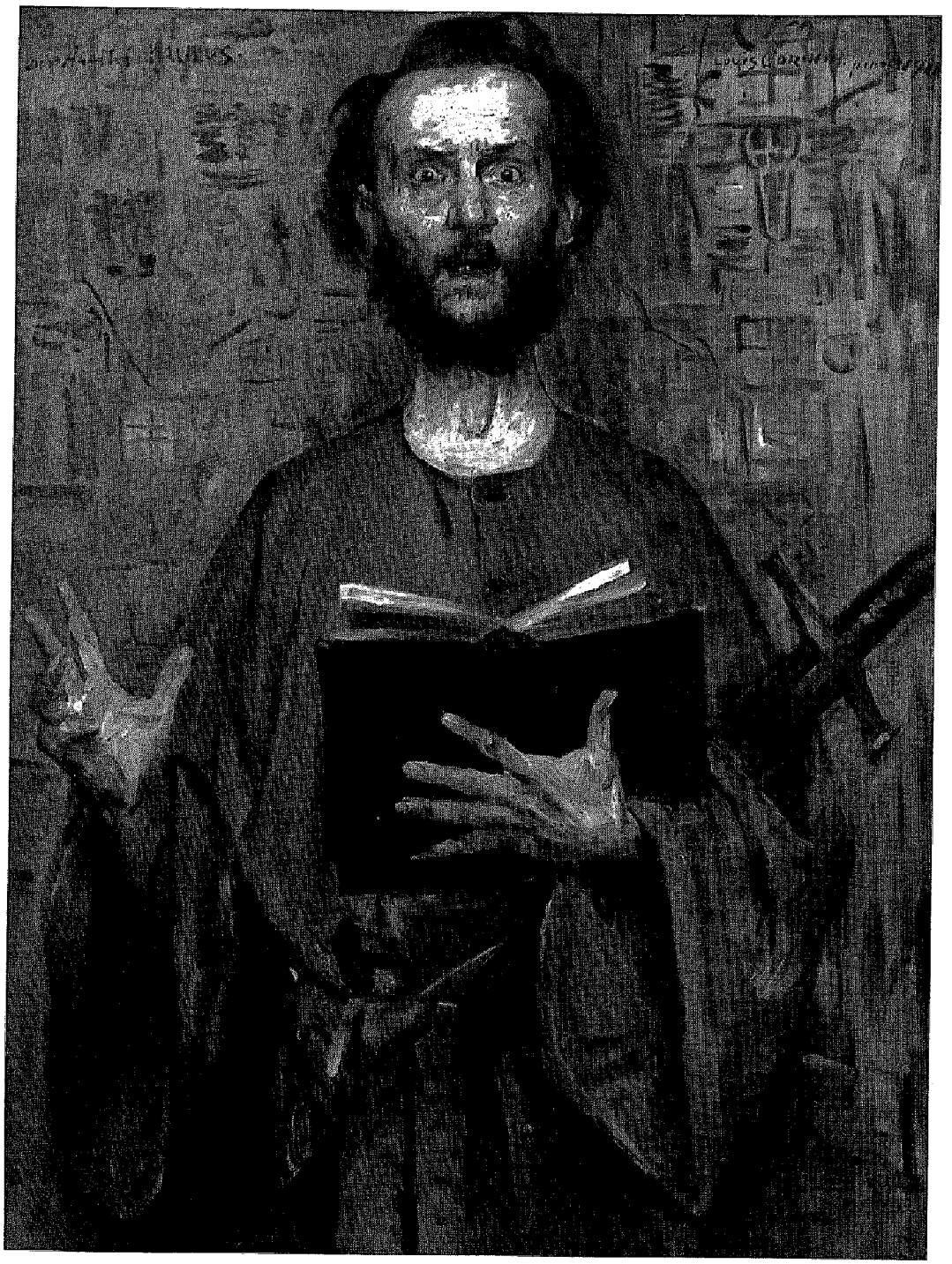

Figure 2 *The Apostle Paul,* by Lovis Corinth

except through his own self-description at this moment) also shapes the meaning of the letter retrospectively: waiting anxiously for Titus, and even voyaging from Troas to Macedonia, subsequent authorial behavior is meant to put a mark on the words penned, sealed and sent out of his control earlier.

The third major turn in the retrospective exegesis of the letter is found in 2:5–11 and 7:8–13 and focuses on yet another of the Ciceronian *topoi* for the interpretation of texts – by appeal not to wording but to outcome. As we have seen, this can be used as an index of malevolent intent. Paul will offer a counter-interpretation, not only of the words, but of the events they caused. What matters in textual interpretation is not words as mere significations, Paul insists, but actions. First, in 2:5–11 Paul focuses on the outcome of his letter in the punishment of the troublemaker, which Paul interprets as a sign of their obedience to his letter by confirmatory proof of their testworthiness. But he also makes it an opportunity for his own appeal for clemency on the same principle of shared grief and the need for forgiveness. In the convoluted concession of 7:8–9, Paul allows that his letter did cause grief, yet he does not repent (or retract) those words, but appeals instead to their effects: the Corinthians' repentance (*metanoia*) of their defection from Paul and their return to his side. Paul's rendition stresses that the interpretation which he makes "is honourable, expedient and necessary."[39] Because of this happy outcome, Paul now pronounces them the fastest of friends, according to the ancient definition that friends are united in grief (as Paul argued they were on both sides of the earlier epistle – the writer and the readers) and now united in common joy. This result, he insists, justifies the harshness of the letter, and mitigates even the grief that he cannot deny was its result. Of interest here is that the word *lypê* ("grief"), which he is at pains to interpret (as also in 2:1–2), was not in his own letter, but was in the Corinthian response to his letter, as brought by Titus (either orally or in writing). By a deft redefinition Cicero would have applauded[40] Paul seeks both to acknowledge their pain and reformulate it; crafting a new lexicon of *lypê*, of two types – "worldly grief" (*hê tou kosmou lupê*) and "godly grief" (*hê kata theon lypê*) (7:10–11) – he insists that theirs was of the latter type, and hence a desirable, and desired, outcome. The result now merges with authorial motivation. The proper goal of interpretation, Paul argues, has been met: repentance that will lead to "a salvation without regret" (*sôtêria ametamelêtos*).[41] This is for him – at least here – the true "end" of interpretation.

BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS: FINAL MOVEMENTS

Throughout these chapters we have been reading Paul forwards and backwards, backwards and forwards. But what might be the implications of Paul's correspondence course with the Corinthians, and its history of effects in ancient biblical interpretation, for the "ends" of biblical interpretation

today? Before reflecting on that question, a summary of our major conclusions is in order.

My first purpose has been to demonstrate that in the Corinthian correspondence we have a dynamic process of negotiated meaning between Paul and the Corinthians, through the series of letters interpreting and reinterpreting what is written, stated and visually presented. Paul inaugurated the Christian use of an "agonistic paradigm of interpretation," strategically arguing for the meaning of his letters (and his body, his spoken word and conduct, with which they were inextricably linked) that was most essential to his wider purposes and ongoing relationship with the Corinthians. This meant operating on a "veil scale," sometimes insisting upon the utter clarity of his utterances, and at other times urging his readers to move beyond the bare letter to the deeper sense held within. I am making here a claim both about Pauline interpretation as beginning in Paul's own lifetime and with Paul himself, and about the formative role of the Corinthian letters in the apostle's life and ministry, leading him both to trust and rely upon the epistolary medium and to realize the continual possibility of mis- or other-interpretation. Less developed here for reasons of space has been this latter line of inquiry, which would demonstrate both the distance from 1 Thessalonians (which has only glimpses of the hermeneutical fervor of the Corinthian letters) and, even more importantly, how the hermeneutical lessons of Corinth would bear fruit in Romans, which was written at Corinth after the storm had passed. I think that case can easily be made, and in fact parts of it have been made by others, who point to Romans 14—15, for instance, as a reworking of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10.[42] Most important for hermeneutical purposes will be the flesh/spirit and letter/spirit contrasts of 1 Corinthians 2:6—3:4 and 2 Cor 3:6–7 that reappear in Rom 2:28–29 and 7:14. These also stand on the other side of the Corinthian *diolkos*, affected by the apostle's epistolary sojourn on the isthmus.

We should also note here that the fact that Paul's letters were not plain, were not easily digested on the first reading, was not only cause for interpretive debate, but also a major *condition for their preservation*: after all, missives that have released their information and done their work can be discarded or the writing surface reused. The threshing Gregory described so well requires the safeguarding of the text for continual rereading.

My second purpose has been to demonstrate that once published the Corinthian correspondence was to provide patristic exegetes with a treasure house of equipment for their own agonistic tasks involving scriptural interpretation. The key to the keys of the meaning of scripture was very often found in the Corinthian letters because, due to the conflicts in these

months in the mid-50s, Paul more than elsewhere issues strategic hermeneutical justifications and clarifications that would be abundantly useful later. In these letters early exegetes found an articulation of key dynamics of interpretation – anthropological hermeneutics of body, soul, spirit; pedagogical hermeneutics of immaturity/maturity; optical and rhetorical hermeneutics of clarity/obscurity and whole and part; and abundant interpretive terminology that is both biblical[43] and at least potentially philosophical, and, once baptized by Paul, became part of an inner-biblical exegetical vocabulary (*typoi*, *typikôs*, *ainigma*, *gramma*, *pneuma*, etc.). Let me emphasize that I am not speaking of how often the Corinthian letters are quoted in early exegesis merely as a statistical phenomenon (though they are conspicuous in such catalogues as the Biblia Patristica[44]), but rather what I am emphasizing is *how often they are employed to provide hermeneutical terminology, justifications and precedents for later patristic interpretation* in turn.[45] In that, I argue, the Corinthian letters have a special pre-eminence in early exegesis.

My third purpose was to continue the work of complicating and redrawing the map of patristic exegesis, conspicuously forged by Frances Young and others (Averil Cameron, Elizabeth Clark), by demonstrating that exegetes at both Alexandria and Antioch employed this agonistic paradigm for strategic incorporation of textual evidence, and to show how they remarkably turn Pauline adaptability to their own interpretive ends. I have also sought to demonstrate that within rhetorical school education students were not schooled to become "literalists" or "allegorists," but rather to adapt evidence to the case at hand. This was as true at Alexandria as it was at Antioch (and Carthage, and Cappadocia, and Rome, etc.). Commonplaces that support a particular reading, by emphasizing one extreme of literal or figurative meaning, letter or intent, should not be taken too readily by modern scholars as though they were comprehensive linguistic theories, but must be seen as part of the rhetorical packaging of particular textual interpretations – which was meant to present a strictly dualistic picture of interpretive work.

However, I do not wish to be misconstrued on this (note my own wish for authorial control!). I am not saying that in the case of either Paul or his patristic fans there was complete capriciousness of interpretation, making any text mean anything according to the whim of the moment.[46] *The last thing either Paul or his patristic interpreters were was "arbitrary,"* as the charge against allegorical or figurative interpretation is so often phrased, both in antiquity and today. The whole point, indeed the "end" of interpretation, as Gregory of Nyssa put it in our first chapter, is the

interpretation that is useful or beneficial (*pros ôphelimon*). Paul and his ancient interpreters had in common strategic variability according to a recognized set of commonplaces for where meaning is to be found – in the letter or in the spirit. Here the agonistic paradigm offers us, as it did them, some tools for the task of adjudicating competing interpretations, in the list of tests of meaning as more useful, honorable or necessary.[47] Kathy Eden, in *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, finds in the concept of *aequitas* (for Aristotle, *epieikeia*, "equity") a valuable means of balancing the letter of the text and the needs of the present, for accommodating the fixed text to present exigencies, either envisioned by the ancient author or completely beyond his comprehension. Augustine's principle of *caritas*, Eden argues, "represents a Christianization of *aequitas*," a theological-ethical rule for reading measured by its capacity to foster love. Even this has an antecedent in Paul's own words to the Corinthians:[48] "everything, beloved, is for the sake of upbuilding you (*hyper tês hymôn oikodomês*)" (2 Cor 12:19).

On the basis of our analysis of the agonistic paradigm, I would articulate the task of biblical scholarship for the present[49] to be maintaining a carefully calibrated balance among three cardinal virtues of ancient textual interpretation: a close examination (with *akribeia*, "precision," "keen attention") of what the text says in whole and part, an awareness of the benefit for present readers (*ôpheleia*), and *epieikeia* or clemency, which seeks to keep the two in balance.[50] Eden notes that often *akribeia* is set in opposition to *epieikeia* on the grounds that textual "accuracy or rigorousness" is what must be tempered by "equity" or "clemency."[51] And yet in early Christian exegesis (as by Chrysostom) the term *akribeia* is not primarily a negative thing (an intransigent and unsympathetic clinging to the letter of the text no matter what) but the whole-hearted attention to what the text says, a rigorous application of the human mind and self to the task that Gregory calls threshing out the sense, preparing the text for human consumption and delectation.

The rhetorical hermeneutical traditions we have examined in these chapters continue to inform the paradigm of "historical-critical" reading, with its insistence upon authorial intent as determined by context, both literary and historical. They also apply to ecclesiastical hermeneutics in a classic sense, which fashions the dominant context for reading via chosen creeds or the *regula fidei* or overarching *hypothesis* of scripture. This was emphasized by Frances Young for the patristic authors,[52] as it was earlier and vigorously by Hans Frei, who argued that Christian ecclesial reading of any time is the literal sense,[53] for it is the reading that makes sense when the

full salvation-historical plot in which the church finds itself and which it finds in scripture is brought to bear on any part. Other aspects of the legal interpretive traditions will continue to hold force: the role of lexicography in discerning meaning, for instance, or, in what is often misleadingly cast as an alternative in present biblical studies, the attention to the history of effects of texts (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), which is already anticipated in the Ciceronian textual hermeneutics with their insistence that texts are meant to be employed as is necessary, useful or honorable in the present circumstance.

The adversarial nature of the agonistic paradigm also continues to pervade the discipline of academic biblical scholarship, in which the text, in whole and part, serves as a witness of a thesis on offer, and the readings of others are demonstrated to be deficient when the evidence is cross-examined. And yet the legal paradigm (long before de Saussure or Derrida!) was overt about the fact that texts do not just "mean things" but their meanings rely upon effort, of argument and evidence, to be adjudicated in some public court of appeal. Origen's telling phrase, "For *without witnesses our interpretations and exegeses are incredible*,"[54] is still as true in modern academic biblical scholarship as in his day (that is what footnotes, for one thing, are all about).

On the one hand this is absolutely right; all ideas need testing in the court of human opinion, and scholars and students carry out their civic duty as public readers by submitting their interpretations to judgment. On the other, the dualistic framework[55] can lead to the kinds of overstatements about different readings that the rhetorical handbooks recommend the young orator learn in order to press resolutely his own brief. This is particularly the case, it seems to me, in the fundamental rhetorical move to dichotomize letter and intent, or, as Paul recasts it, letter and spirit. I would like to suggest that what we learn from the ancient agonistic paradigm is that it is a commonplace to present the options as mutually exclusive, as either/or – one reads a text either literally or figuratively, with no gray area in the middle (after all, juries are pressed by both sides to tender a verdict in their favour). But that binary, *rhetorically constructed* in favor of one's own reading and against that of another, is hardly an accurate *analytical* tool for appraising most reading, which is somewhere between the letter of the text and its intent or deeper sense as discovered[56] later, as discerned by some but not others. Indeed, the "literal" sense itself is a construct, a rhetorical claim for textual, for biblical fidelity. But despite the commonplace, no texts stand "without interpretation," for even an appeal "to the letter" is an argument that depends upon focusing the eye of the reader on one or

another chosen detail of the many letters which make up a text (no one reads each letter with the same level of emphasis or attention, *akribeia*, all at once).

On the other hand, the "allegorical" sense also must use focusing mechanisms (it is never as off the text as its opponents claim) and it is not the only player at the table who is reading for a particular purpose. The so-called Antiochene reaction against allegory was not really so much a reaction to a method (which they used themselves, under new names)[57] but the results (ends), particularly by Origen and those who drew on him.[58] The ensuing reprises of this age-old and not strictly Christian debate over "allegory" by the Reformers or Enlightenment figures in turn will replay the same dynamic, using the same Ciceronian commonplaces (e.g. once one starts on figurative interpretation, where will it end?). Indeed, the rhetoric against allegory is still alive and well in contemporary biblical scholarship. One conspicuous example is the extent to which, in their attack on redaction criticism a decade ago, Richard Bauckham and Francis Watson tarred redaction critics with this sin (allegorizing) for the way they map gospel narratives onto gospel communities, assuming that this charge in itself would invalidate the enterprise.[59] More recently the heated discussion of Paul and empire has devolved into a kind of hot potato game with "allegory," as in the entertaining debate between John Barclay and N. T. Wright at the 2007 Society of Biblical Literature meeting,[60] with the former calling the latter a lofty Valentinian imagining things between the lines of the text and the latter chiding the former to get out more, and look beyond the strict letter of the text once in a while! Such invective makes for fine scholarly theatre and may help focus the issue, but cannot in itself suggest a way beyond the impasse.

Returning to the patristic authors, one way to appreciate the common ground among them is to take as our frame of analysis how they, at the intersection of the agonistic and apocalyptic paradigms of textual interpretation, deal methodologically and rhetorically with the relationship between textual ambiguity and textual clarity (the issue which, as we saw, was at the heart of Paul's epistolary adventures with the Corinthians). All ancient Christian interpreters, employing biblical witness for their arguments, sought to steer meaning in particular directions, either by declaring that the text is completely clear as it stands, or by exploiting an ambiguity that is to be found there (often declaring their resultant reading to be clear). This seems to me to be likewise a crucial element of the method and poetics of contemporary academic biblical scholarship, one that has,

serendipitously, been pushed onto the stage quite recently. And it has arrived, appropriately, in an agonistic fashion.

In the last year two giants of academic biblical scholarship have drawn our eye precisely to the theoretical issue of biblical perspicuity, and they have come out on opposite sides: John Barton, in his book *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, champions the "plain sense" of scripture, and Wayne A. Meeks in *Christ is the Question* says we should do away with the very idea of *claritas scripturae*. Since Professor Barton is in Germany, and Professor Meeks in Massachusetts, it may be safe to step between them. At least at first blush these look to be completely contradictory positions. I would like first to agree with each, and then to disagree with both, and pose a medial alternative that I regard as the only realistic possibility.

First, to Meeks I would say that he has a very important point, in seeking to combat statements that begin and end with "the Bible says," doing so with a kind of epistemological certainty that both silences and chastises naysayers and, Meeks would insist, is inimical to a post-modern, anti-foundationalist age:

> I think, on the whole, it is better to give up the notion of *claritas scripturae* altogether, to stop telling people that the Bible clearly teaches anything, to admit to them that for the Bible to teach you anything you must be willing to submit to a rigorous discipline that entails, among other things, learning to be comfortable with ambiguity and a willingness to admit that there are things we do not know.[61]

He might also say (or I might say for him) that the history of biblical interpretation to our own day has falsified again and again any simple notion that the meaning of the biblical texts can be confined, boxed in, or presumed to be crystal clear (note that his key chapter on this point takes its title from 1 Corinthians 13: "The Bible teaches . . . through a glass darkly"). He also astutely recognizes the extent to which "the struggle between clarity and confusion . . . can be glimpsed *in nuce* already in that master interpreter of the first generation, the apostle Paul,"[62] and hence his line of thinking is most congenial to the argument I have developed here. Meeks's argument, it is important to recognize, is a reaction to contemporary American politics and the use of the Bible in it, primarily by the "Christian Right." Sharing Meeks's concern about the public uses of *claritas scripturae* to push a single agenda, I might add that the media and popular opinion have basically accepted and continued to repeat the self-testimony of many self-styled "conservative" public biblicists to be interpreting the Bible "to the letter,"

or "literally."[63] Our study of the agonistic paradigm should lead us to be suspicious about reifying rhetorical claims into realities. But do biblical scholars want to give up entirely on the possibility of offering more, rather than less, clarity to the task of interpretation?

John Barton, for his part, has done more than any contemporary scholar valiantly to build bridges between the so-called new methods or ahistorical approaches and the traditional literary-critical paradigm that has gone under the (as Barton rightly argues) somewhat misleading name of "historical-critical" interpretation.[64] And there is much with which I agree in his book, particularly his insistence that "biblical criticism" does not begin in the Enlightenment, but goes back through the Reformation and the Renaissance to the patristic period. I would add to his argument that it is precisely the legal hermeneutical tradition that unites all four periods, as demonstrated by Kathy Eden's book, which traces the consistent and continuous usage of rhetorical traditions of textual interpretation from Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian through Paul, Basil, Augustine, Erasmus, Melanchthon and Matthias Flacius Illyricus.

But when we take seriously the source of this critical use of texts in the ancient rhetorical tradition, it becomes all the more difficult to accept at face value Barton's proposal that "Biblical criticism is concerned with the 'plain' sense of texts, but this is not the same as the 'original' sense if that is taken to signify what the text 'meant' in the past as opposed to what it 'means' now (Stendahl). This distinction misunderstands meaning as something that changes over time" (p. 7). Looking at this from the agonistic paradigm, this relabeling is, more than acknowledged perhaps, a rhetorical move, a claim both that biblical texts do have a "plain sense," and that biblical scholars are the ones to deliver it. There are at least two complications. One is that with many biblical texts – as we have seen with Paul's Corinthian correspondence – it is not the case that "The texts mean what they mean, what they have always meant" (102), because Paul himself was involved in reinterpretations of their meaning. What is interesting here is that Barton, in his defense of the "plain sense" (a kind of reverse of Gregory's defense of the allegorical!), accepts that there is allegorical composition in the Bible, but seeks to incorporate allegorical interpretations of real allegories as their "plain sense." But, I would argue, doing so eclipses the whole veil dynamic that an allegory is meant to enshrine. Trying to elide the rhetorical dichotomy by absorption, Barton insists that the "plain sense" has "depth and subtlety," and it is not "elementary," but has "layers of meaning well beyond the literal" (114, 116). It is able to provide, via Barton's lovely image of an exegete giving "guided tours of the text," a look at "many blooms

that are not part of its literal content." But there is a limit here: one must be able to distinguish these "from the weeds that come only from their own imaginations" (116). Despite Barton's own figural defense of the literal, however, I am not sure one can echo the language of the agonistic paradigm while in part coagulating its binary categories.

I would propose that instead of trying either to eliminate *claritas scripturae*,[65] or make it the center of biblical criticism, we focus our attention away from the rhetorically constructed poles and onto the spectrum between them, along what I term the "veil scale." Moreover, I am not sure, given the alignment of the "literal" with the "plain" sense in the agonistic paradigm, firmly in opposition to the allegorical or figurative, that it quite works in dealing with some texts (deciding which is of course a huge problem in any case!) to say that "where the text is an allegory and has always been one, the allegorical meaning is the plain meaning" (110). The whole point of an allegory is to fashion a hidden meaning, on a scale of visibility that is contingent on many factors (context, clues, level of readers' acumen). Just to relabel that cloaked sense a "plain sense," and then to allow that "plain" does not mean "obvious" (111), does not seem to me to tackle the real issue, which is that texts which matter, biblical texts in this case, are of interest *because of the tension they embody between the plain and the unplain*, the clear and the unclear. Biblical scholars are not just in charge of the "plain," but they themselves are continually recalibrating a kind of veil scale of disclosure of meanings hidden by authors, by linguistic distance, by historical recontextualization, by readerly deficiency, by authorial obscurity (and, in the eyes of some readers and most biblical authors, by divine obfuscation and apocalyptic reservation).

Like Paul ("master-rhetorician and advocate of accommodation," as Kathy Eden terms him[66]), academic biblical scholars are masters of a "veil scale." To adopt the old adage about prophets afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted, we routinely clarify the obscure and obscure the clear (often to make place for our clarification of what we have muddied!), depending upon our audiences, purposes and arguments on offer. This maps nicely onto the way we must continually tack between the whole and part of scripture (verse, chapter, book, canon, context). These visual metaphors embody what is for us a matter of method, of pedagogy and of the rhetorics of scholarly discourse. Our forms of writing employ it, too: sometimes starting with a known obscurity and seeking to clarify it, and at other times beginning by creating an obscurity or quandary so that we can offer a way by which it can be clarified. Despite our love for the dichotomies, we do not in fact deal with full disclosure or complete

blinders, but continue to work away, year by year, somewhere in the middle between the part and the whole, the known and the obscure, plotted on a moveable spectrum along the veil scale of clarified and hidden meanings.

THE END AND THE ENDS OF INTERPRETATION

Returning for a last time to Gregory of Nyssa, let's see how he brings his Prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* to a close:

> So, let these things stand as an argument of defense (*apologia*), from my words to your intelligence, Olympias, before those who decree that nothing more than the self-evident meaning of the text (*mêden pleon para tên procheiron tês lexeôs emphasin*) be sought from the divine words of scripture. For if, although Origen exerted himself on this book as a labor of love, we, too, were eager to hand on our labor in written form, let no one make that a reason for accusation (*enkaleitô*), especially in the face of the divine utterance of the apostle who said, "Each will receive his own reward according to his own labor" (1 Cor 3:14–15). Now my literary work has not been composed for show (*pros epideixin*), but, when some of our companions out of love of learning noted down in writing many of the things we said in church, I took from their hand the things their note-taking had recorded from following my speech, and, adding further things of my own (the addition of which was necessary), I have fashioned this composition in the form of homilies, bringing forward verbatim (*pros lexin*) in a continuous fashion the *theôria* (contemplative interpretation) of the words. I did this in so far as both time and other affairs granted me the leisure to do it, during the days of the fast [Lent]. Our discourse about this biblical book was eagerly offered in these days of the fast, for public hearing. If God, the dispenser of our life, grants enough time of life and peaceful opportunity (*eukairia*), perhaps we shall in due course take up also the rest. For now (*nun*) we have gotten through about half the book with our discussion (*logos*) and contemplative interpretation (*theôria*).[67]

Still within the agonistic paradigm, Gregory launches the ship of this book with the hope that it will not bring an accusation down on his head; like Paul in 2 Cor 1:12–14, Gregory plays between the earthly fault-finding he anticipates for his exegetical labors and the eschatological reward which his mentor Paul promised awaits anyone as their work is scrutinized and weighed. Gregory, who took up the genre of forensic rhetoric at the outset of this literary prologue, closes with the insistence that his work is not an epideictic showpiece (*pros epideixin*). Its point is not to demonstrate the acumen of the author, but to arm and equip the reader to carry forward the work of defense (*apologia*) in turn. The final word of the Prologue is, fittingly, *theôria*, the all-encompassing term for the deeper, the higher, the fullest sense of the text which he defends and fervently seeks. Gregory

offers us an inside glimpse into his pulpit and study, and how the work of both has gone into the text he passes on. He deliberately places himself in relation to his exegetical forebear, Origen, both to claim a place in his tradition and to qualify why more still needs to be said. Gregory also deflects a possible charge of self-aggrandizement by maintaining that the impetus for this publication was not his own. And yet he also claims that he has re-edited the stenographic notes, literally author-izing the production in literary form of what he originally produced as Lenten homilies in c. 394, public oratory. Despite all this industry, however, Gregory is publishing what he himself acknowledges is *an incomplete work*.[68] His exegetical pen is poised between the written texts of the Song of Songs and Origen of the past, and his own death. He never did finish this composition, though he expresses hope that he might. Indeed, he slips off the radar screen of history soon thereafter. The ends of interpretation are always on the horizon, but never fully in sight.

Notes

CHAPTER 1: THE CORINTHIAN *DIOLKOS*: PASSAGEWAY TO EARLY CHRISTIAN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

1 Translation of *lexis* according to LPGL, *s.v.* 9. One could also translate "wording" (the two combined naming precisely the hermeneutical problem).

2 To understand Gregory's point it is important to know that the Greek title of this biblical book, *Paroimiai*, means both "proverbs" and "parables."

3 Pierre Nautin rightly names attention to the divine intent for *ôphelein* the first of "deux principes [qui] commandent l'exégèse d'Origène, comme d'ailleurs celle des autres écrivains chrétiens de son époque" ("two principles which govern Origen's exegesis, as also that of other Christian writers of his time") (Origen, *Homélies sur Jérémie*, I, ed. Pierre Nautin, SC 232 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1976], 136).

4 Naturally, compositional and interpretive allegory are not entirely separable, nor are they two different "traditions" (as maintained by Jon Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987], 3–5), for they intersect at the point of authorial intention (either claimed or denied). Nonetheless, it is possible to focus one's attention primarily on one or the other. Gregory's argument shifts right here from authorial allegory to interpretive allegory.

5 The ellipsis marks a parenthetical statement about the inspired nature of scripture: "since 'all the God-inspired scripture' (2 Tim 3:16) is law to those who read it, because it instructs those who understand it attentively toward knowledge of the mysteries and a pure way of life, not only via the clearly stated commands, but also via the historical narratives."

6 Gregory here makes a neat play of his own, turning Paul's expressed wish to "alter his voice" (*allaxai tên phônên*) from harsh to soft, into Paul's "alternating his language" of terms for non-literal interpretation.

7 This was well seen by Ronald E. Heine, "Gregory of Nyssa's Apology for Allegory," *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984), 363: "[this] passage does demonstrate . . . the importance of Paul's example as an interpreter of the Old Testament for Gregory and the influence of Origen in his appeal to Paul to justify the allegorical approach." On the chief role of Paul for Origen's allegorical interpretations see e.g. Nautin, in Origen, *Homélies sur Jérémie*, I, 142: "Origène

la retrouvait dans le Pseudo-Barnabé, chez les apologistes, chez Irénée, ailleurs encore, mais c'est surtout de s. Paul qu'il se réclame. Outre qu'il a pour Paul une vénération hors pair, l'exemple d'un apôtre est pour lui la meilleure garantie de cette méthode exégétique" ("Origen found [allegorical interpretation] in the letter attributed to Barnabas, among the apologists, Irenaeus, and still others, but it is above all Saint Paul to whom he refers. Beyond the fact that he has an unequaled love for Paul, the example of an apostle is for him the best warrant for this exegetical method").

8 Later in the Prologue Gregory will bring forth examples from Jesus' public parables and self-interpretation when alone with the disciples, but it is striking that he begins his discourse with such close and sustained attention to the precedent established by "the great apostle."

9 Translation according to LSJ, *s.v.*

10 Gregory has rephrased Paul's rhetorical question as an indicative statement.

11 I.e. "the reading with insight."

12 Translation of *emphasis* with LSJ *s.v.* III; it can also mean "appearance."

13 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Prologue, ed. Hermann Langerbeck (GNO VI; Leiden: Brill, 1960), 4–7.

14 I am condensing the effect of the syntax in putting it this way. Within the *de* ("on the other hand") clauses of the contrast Gregory marks most of the new examples with *kai palin*, "and again."

15 Actually, Diodore himself (in the Preface to his Psalms commentary, ll. 123–62) does much the same. See Jean-Marie Olivier, *Diodori Tarsensis commentarii in psalmos I: Commentarii in psalmos I–L* (CCSG 6; Turnhout: Brepols/Louvain: University Press, 1980), 7–8; one can find an English translation in Karlfried Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 85–86.

16 While it is often thought that Gal 4:24 provided the predominant justification for allegory, especially for Origen (e.g. Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 180: "Origen had justified his practice [of allegorical interpretation] on the basis of a series of Pauline texts, most notoriously Galatians 4.24," and recently also Martin Meiser, *Galater* [Novum Testamentum Patristicum 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2007], 214–16), it should be noted that very often in Origen's writings this verse or even term is not cited alone, but in conjunction with other passages from the Corinthian correspondence, and Romans (also sometimes Hebrews). A quick glance at the *Biblia Patristica*, for instance, shows how few references to Gal 4:24 there are in general in patristic literature, especially when compared with key Corinthian passages which are repeatedly cited. And, while Origen has the most (18 are listed, though this is actually not a comprehensive list), *more than half of the citations by Origen of Gal 4:24 are accompanied by a citation from the Corinthian letters.* This observation may be behind Heine's conclusion that not Gal 4:24, but "1 Cor 2,10 was especially important to Origen's justification of allegorical exegesis" ("Gregory of Nyssa's Apology for Allegory," 362). This is a place where we need better

tools for the study of ancient exegesis. As valuable as the *Biblia Patristica* is, it atomizes the biblical text by listing citations of individual verses or pericopae; what is needed is a tool that allows us to see beyond the atoms to the molecules of early biblical exegesis – the constellations of passages that are repeatedly invoked together. This example of Pauline exegetical terminology is a perfect illustration of this more general need.

17 Mark 11:28 and pars.

18 Note the irony that the "single form of teaching" Paul gave is the need to be variable and adaptable in interpretation, with a view to utility.

19 Heine, "Gregory of Nyssa's Apology for Allegory," 361–62. The number eight is Heine's, with the semicolons marking what he treats as individual passages. Note that he cites 1 Cor 2:16 and 12 – "in that order." We shall treat Origen's attachment of 1 Cor 2:16 to 2:12 in Chapter 3.

20 Strabo, *Geographica* 8.6.20, in *Strabonis Geographica*, ed. A. Meineke (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907), II, 535.

21 In Acts 14:12 the Lycaonians (mistakenly!) called Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes, "Since he was the one with mastery of the word (*hêgoumenos tou logou*)." In Stoic allegory, such as Cornutus's exposition of Greek theology, Hermes is the *logos*: "Hermes is the one who is the word" (*tynchanei de ho Hermês ho logos ôn*) (Cornutus, *Cornuti theologiae Graecae compendium*, ed. C. Lang [Theologia Graeca 16; Leipzig: Teubner, 1881], p. 20, ll. 18–19). Luke intends ironic and metonymic truth here. Paul brought a *logos* and he was the master of it; Hermes the messenger = Paul the apostle.

22 Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Sather Classical Lectures 55; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 11–12 (emphasis added). See also p. 33 on Paul's "deep ambiguity" *vis-à-vis* rhetoric. Cameron eschews the task of analyzing New Testament rhetoric or its later interpretation for her study of early Christian literature (5, 7), but of course these cannot be separated out from the development of Christian discourse. Bringing the two together is a central goal of this book.

23 In modernity the rooting of hermeneutics in the quest to avoid misunderstanding is associated especially with Friedrich Schleiermacher (see Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle, tr. James Duke and Jack Forstman [American Academy of Religion: Texts and Translations Series 1; Missoule, MT: Scholars Press, 1977], 109–11; *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, ed. and tr. Andrew Bowie [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998]). See e.g. prop. 16: "The more strict practice [of hermeneutics] assumes that misunderstanding results as a matter of course and that understanding must be desired and sought at every point" (*Hermeneutics and Criticism*, p. 22). Schleiermacher's position in these lectures that he did not publish in his lifetime is well summarized by Jean Grondin ("Schleiermacher's Universalization of Misunderstanding," in *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, tr. Joel Weinsheimer [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994], 67–72): "Thus [Schleiermacher]

universalizes misunderstanding as the situation and occasion of interpretation . . . Henceforward it must take the universal primacy of misunderstanding as its starting point . . . In every attempt at understanding – even one that appears to have succeeded – the possibility of some lost vestige of misunderstanding cannot be ruled out" (70).

24 Among those that would follow, only the comprehensive Romans, written from Corinth (as Rom 16:23 shows), is comparable.

25 I presume, along with most Pauline scholars, that 1 Thessalonians is his oldest preserved letter.

26 This is a famous *crux interpretum*, and must have been already when the letter was read and reread at Thessaloniki in the 50s. In the passage in question, Paul says everyone should "possess his own own 'vessel' in sanctification and honor" (1 Thess 4:4). But does *skeuos* mean body? *membrum virile*? wife? Of course a euphemism by its very nature and purpose is always open to misunderstanding.

27 Such as the utterly opaque 1 Cor 7:36–37.

28 The two terms, originally from ancient literary theory, refer to the "plot-line" or "disposition" of a literary work viewed as a whole within which the parts are to be understood (for discussion, see Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* [The Early Church Fathers; London/New York: Routledge, 1997], 47–50; Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and Its Humanist Reception* [Yale Studies in Hermeneutics; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997], 27–31). *Hypothesis* is not a term New Testament scholars customarily use for their own literary-historical reconstructions, though it is prominent in patristic exegesis, where it becomes also a theological principle. I shall argue below that in both cases it represents a self-conscious construction of the most salient context for the interpretation of any passage. In my case the criteria for the construction are literary and historical.

29 I have assembled the arguments for my reconstruction in a series of articles: Margaret M. Mitchell, "Korintherbriefe," RGG, ed. Hans Dieter Betz *et al.*, IV (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 2002), 1688–94; "The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics," in *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; "Paul's Letters to Corinth: The Interpretive Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen (Harvard Theological Studies 53; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 307–38. On the unity of 1 Corinthians see my *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 28; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1991; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993).

30 I leave aside for present purposes 6:14—7:1, a contested passage thought by many scholars to be a non-Pauline interpolation.

31 As he had in 1 Cor 1:30 (Jer 9:22–23), a tendency found also in other letters (e.g. Gal 1:15).

32 While preparing the lectures for publication I saw that Martin Laird aptly uses the terms "apophatic" and "logophatic" to describe the dual role Gregory of Nyssa fashions for Paul as the bride of Christ in homily 3 of *In Canticum Canticorum*. Laird identifies three texts from 2 Corinthians as crucial to Gregory's portrayal (12:4; 13:3; 2:15) (*Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence* [Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], ch. 6, "Christ Speaking Himself: the Logophatic Discourse of Paul and the Bride" [pp. 154–73; on the role of 2 Corinthians, see p. 170]).

33 Like many New Testament scholars I regard Galatians as later than the Corinthian correspondence (see e.g. Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*, tr. E. M. Boring [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005], 270–71; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* [Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006], 313). On how Paul in Romans retools his treatment of topics dealt with in the Corinthian letters (e.g. 1 Corinthians 8—10 and Romans 14—15), see Wayne A. Meeks, "The Polyphonic Ethics of the Apostle Paul," in *In Search of the Early Christians: Selected Essays*, ed. Allen R. Hilton and H. Gregory Snyder (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 196–209: "The voices that spoke in Corinth echo also in Rome" (207).

34 On the mechanics of this poetic technique and its centrality to Paul's argumentation in his letters, see Margaret M. Mitchell, "Rhetorical Shorthand in Pauline Argumentation: The Functions of 'The Gospel' in the Corinthian Correspondence," in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans for Richard N. Longenecker*, ed. L. A. Jervis and P. Richardson (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 108; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 63–88. Partially repr. in Wayne A. Meeks and John T. Fitzgerald, eds., *The Writings of St. Paul*, 2nd edn. (Boston: W. W. Norton, 2007), 669–78.

35 John Paul Heil analyzes over 20 scriptural quotations in 1 Corinthians (*The Rhetorical Role of Scripture in 1 Corinthians* [Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 15; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005]).

36 A word which denotes public, outspoken and frank speech.

37 Fuller discussion in Margaret M. Mitchell, "Epiphanic Evolutions in Early Christianity," *Illinois Classical Studies* 29 (2004), 183–204.

38 On this problematic claim, and the way in which early Christian interpreters sought to deal with it, see Margaret M. Mitchell, "Pauline Accommodation and 'Condescension' (*synkatabasis*): 1 Cor 9:19–23 and the History of Influence," in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001), 197–214.

39 In an insightful and wide-ranging study Eve-Marie Becker has valuably drawn attention to what she terms the development of the "Briefhermeneutik des 2. Kor" (*Schreiben und Verstehen: Paulinische Briefhermeneutik im zweiten*

Korintherbrief [Neutestamentliche Entwürfe zur Theologie 4; Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 2002]; ET *Letter Hermeneutics in 2 Corinthians: Studies in Literarkritik and Communication Theory*, tr. Helen S. Heron [Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 279; New York: T&T Clark, 2004]). We have independently converged on the important conclusion that the letters redacted into the canonical 2 Corinthians demonstrate a conspicuous amount of reflection by Paul about the process of epistolary communication and meaning, and "daß sich der Briefe-Schreiber Paulus im 2 Kor als Brief-Hermeneut betätigt" ("that Paul the epistolary author acts in 2 Corinthians [also] as an epistolary interpreter") (2). This commonality exists despite significant differences in our approaches, in methodology (she utilizes text-linguistic theory and communication theory on forms of "Meta-Kommunikation," whereas I emphasize ancient rhetorical culture and education and reception history), scope (I include 1 Corinthians in this discussion of hermeneutics at Corinth, as well as the role of these statements in later patristic exegesis) and substance (we have quite different hypotheses about the literary composition of 2 Corinthians, which significantly affects the exegesis of each key portion).

40 This term in rhetorical theory refers to "commonplace arguments" that can be used in many contexts, and on either side.

41 This depends upon the following two assumptions: that 2 Thessalonians is deutero-Pauline, and most likely Philippians is a single letter (or even if composite, it lacks the explicit references to prior letters and their reception and misunderstanding).

42 What is obviously missing is any letters from the Corinthians, or some of the Corinthians, to Paul (such as is mentioned in 1 Cor 7:1). A later (second- to third-century?) Christian author sought to remedy that by composing a letter from the Corinthians to Paul (which depends upon the canonical epistles) and a fresh Pauline response (*3 Corinthians*). For the Greek text, see Michel Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer X–XII* (Geneva: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, 1959), 6–45; for English translation and introduction, see W. Schneemelcher and R. Kasser in Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, tr. R. McL. Wilson (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), II, 213–70, esp. 217 and ET of the text at 254–57; on critical issues and with further bibliography see Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 49–50, 67–68.

43 These are various interpretations which have been given to the famous "thorn in the flesh" of 2 Cor 12:7.

44 This hermeneutical rule is not only practiced by Paul, but also given explicit Pauline scriptural justification in the oft-quoted 2 Tim 3:16, which pronounces scripture "God-inspired and beneficial" (*theopneustos* and *ôphelimos*).

45 Cicero, *De inventione* 2.41.119, tr. H. M. Hubbell (LCL): "This can be brought about by saying that the interpretation which we make is honourable, expedient and necessary, and that of the opposition by no means of such a nature" (*Id fiet, si id quod nos demonstrabimus honestum aut utile aut necessarium*

demonstrabimus, et si id quod ab adversariis dicetur minime eiusmodi esse dicemus); see also the full context.

46 Compare Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 285–99, "Conclusion and Retrospect: Towards an Outline Historical Account," where the impression is given that it is not until Origen ("the pivot") that we really have a full impact of rhetoric on early Christian exegesis, whereas Paul is placed within Jewish interpretive traditions. This seems to me untenable, on the basis of more recent research into Pauline rhetoric, on the one hand, and, on the other, in terms of the wider salutary emphasis of Young's own book, which steadfastly resists the apologetic insistence in the past that the early Christian authors were somehow separate from wider "pagan" culture. One must, however, carry that line of argument also back to Paul, who, as a Hellenistic Jew and native Greek-speaker, was already using recognizable Greco-Roman rhetorical techniques in his arguments, including the way in which he interpreted scripture.

47 This is the structural principle upon which such works as the modern *catenae* volumes now being produced – the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, The Church's Bible, and the new series, Novum Testamentum Patristicum – are fashioned. As valuable as these works are for getting students into ancient exegesis, the format enshrines some hermeneutical problems (see my review of Meiser, *Galater*, in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 135 [2010], 121–129). First, the "commentarial" format gives the impression that each of the interpreters is "commenting" on the same text (which is linguistically and text-critically inaccurate, of course). Second, *catenae* are unable to demonstrate the proportionality of influence of any given passage or verse, or particular contexts in which they tend to be drawn in. And yet, neither the *catena* nor the commentary is a modern generic invention. There are, of course, ancient "commentaries" on the Corinthian letters – Origenic fragments; Chrysostom (the first complete set, but in homily form); Ambrosiaster; Pelagius – but they are often homiletic in form (and hence have their own rhetorical goals and purposes) and such commentarial works by no means exhaust the range of invocations of the Corinthian correspondence among ancient exegetes, which were extremely plentiful (as a glance at the many columns devoted to 1 and 2 Corinthians in every volume of the *Biblia Patristica* will confirm). Yet that tool is limited as well, because it does not allow us to see the clusters of passages which are often cited, not as isolated *lemmata*, but as networks of mutually interpreting words and sentences. As stated in the Preface (p. ix) this book tries to reformulate the investigation and representation of the study of the history of reception to enshrine the dynamic quality of textual reuse.

48 Important voices in reconceptualizing early Christian exegesis in recent scholarship include especially Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1992), and John David Dawson *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). I have argued in *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Hermeneutical Untersuchungen zur Theologie 40; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 2000; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001) that John Chrysostom's interpretations of Paul, which are both figurative and historical, defy this traditional dichotomy.

49 See Birger A. Pearson, "Egypt," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Vol. I: Origins to Constantine*, ed. Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 331–50, esp. 336: "On the origins of Christianity in Egypt our sources are silent until the early second century".

50 Acts 18:24–28.

51 That is, his "boldness of speech" and his "personal presence" (for the contrast, see especially 2 Cor 10:10–11).

52 Whitman, *Allegory*, 2: "Allegory . . . is outspokenly reticent, proclaiming that it has a secret, while other techniques tend to conceal the fact. From the beginning, the practitioners of allegory have claimed that it provides an initiation into a mystery."

53 Whitman, *Allegory*, 2, defining what he calls "The Allegorical Problem": "In these two conflicting demands – the divergence between the apparent and actual meanings, and yet the correspondence between them – it is possible to see both the birth and the death of allegorical writing. The more allegory exploits the divergence between corresponding levels of meaning, the less tenable the correspondence becomes. Alternatively, the more it closes ranks and emphasizes the correspondence, the less oblique, and thus the less allegorical, the divergence becomes. In this way, allegory tends to be at odds with itself, tending to undermine itself by the very process that sustains it." One could say exactly the same for the poetic challenge of the Pauline gospel.

54 Text in *Der Dialog des Adamantius Peri tês eis theon orthês pisteôs*, ed. W. H. van de Sande Bakhuyzen (GCS 4; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901). Unfortunately, so far as I am aware there is no English translation of this fascinating work.

55 Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.14.10, echoed by Jerome (*De viris illustribus* 54).

56 For the dating, see van de Sande Bakhuyzen, *Dialog*, pp. xii–xvi, who places it, with Theodor Zahn, between 280 and 300 (the references to a Christian emperor, as in 816e [p. 40], are regarded as later interpolations, because they are missing in Rufinus's Latin translation).

57 Rufinus calls him a Manichaean (for discussion see van de Sande Bakhuyzen, *Dialog*, pp. xvi–xviii).

58 Cf. the apostle's own use of *akyroi* in his legal analogy in Gal 3:17.

59 We should note that the "impartial judge" echoes 1 Tim 1:8!

60 Or "uses none of the ancients literally"? As is well known, Marcion was said to have insisted on maintaining a strictly literalistic hermeneutic, not allowing allegory as a way to explain away embarrassments in the "OT" scriptures.

61 In direct contrast to Gal 3:15, where Paul explicitly constructs an argument against a certain reading of the Torah by appealing to a human example of will-making (*kata anthrôpon*).

62 Sir 6:19, paraphrased.

63 I.e. the Law, or this statement in the Law.

64 Translation follows LSJ, *s.v.* II, to contrast with *teleios*.

65 Adamantius, *Peri tês eis theon orthês pisteôs* 1.22, in *Der Dialog des Adamantius*, 42 (text van de Sande Bakhuyzen, ed., GCS 4).

66 Puns on *chrêsthai* and cognates ("use" and "abuse") are the basis of both 1 Cor 9:12, 15 (*chrêsthai*), 18 (*katachrêsthai*) and *De recta in deum fide* 1.22, ll. 3, 6, 27 (*apochrêsthai*), ll. 5, 24, 26 (*chrêsthai*).

67 A quite graphic depiction of the presence of the Pauline letters in a courtroom is found in the earliest Latin martyr Acts, the martyrs of Scilli (*Passio Sanctorum Scillitanorum* 12).

68 So Cicero, *De inventione* 2.49.145: *deinde, utra lex posterius lata sit; nam postrema quaeque gravissima est* ("In the second place, he should consider which law was passed last, for the latest law is always the most important"; trans. Hubbell, LCL).

69 See the astute earlier comments of W. den Boer, "Hermeneutic Problems in Early Christian Literature," *Vigiliae Christianae* 1 (1947), 150–67: "The one party repeatedly applies the method which it refutes when used by the opponent and reversely. All theoretical judgments suffer from the same inconsistency. Either party is trying to find a way of formulating the method applied – although an elaborate terminology is lacking – in order to show the difference with its adversaries, to expose the opposing party, and to prove the correctness of its own hermeneutic procedure. No wonder the queerest contortions of ideas and changes of meaning should arise, leading to the greatest misunderstandings" (151–52).

CHAPTER 2: THE *AGÔN* OF PAULINE INTERPRETATION

1 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Prologue, ed. Hermann Langerbeck (GNO VI; Leiden: Brill, 1960), p. 4, ll. 17–18.

2 Johannes Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 9th edn. (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1910), 139: "weil der Einzelfall ihn nötigt, seine frühere Forderung in ihrem richtigen Sinne neu einzuschärfen" ("since this particular case compelled him to enforce anew his earlier command in its right meaning").

3 I shall explain below why I choose to transliterate, rather than translate, this term for sexual malfeasance.

4 See Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, revd. Gordon M. Messing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920, 1980), para. 1942: "The writer of

a letter or book, the dedicator of an offering, may put himself in the position of the reader or beholder who views the action as past."

5 Andreas Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 9/1; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 2000), 130, wishes to have it both ways: "seine frühere Aussage zu präzisieren (und damit gleichzeitig zu wiederholen!)" ("to render his own earlier statement more precise (and thereby at the same time to reiterate it!)").

6 LSJ, *s.v.* 1450 has three glosses: "*catamite*," "*sodomite*," and "in LXX and NT, *fornicator*"; BDAG, 855 has "one who practices sexual immorality, *fornicator*," followed by a curiously parenthetically qualified translation of 1 Cor 5:10 as "the (sexually) immoral persons in this world."

7 I doubt that *nun* is "logical" (as major commentators – like Hans Conzelmann [*1 Corinthians*, tr. J. W. Leitch (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 102] and Lindemann [*Der erste Korintherbrief*, 121] – take it, translating it "tatsächlich" ["actually"]); as argued above, it is temporal, indicating the shift which cannot be marked by the two morphologically identical verbs, the first of which is a preterite (past tense) and the second an epistolary aorist (present tense).

8 See Margaret M. Mitchell, "Corrective Composition, Corrective Exegesis: the Teaching on Prayer in 1 Tim 2:1–15," in *1 Timothy Reconsidered*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Louvain: Peeters, 2008) 41–62, drawing also on the valuable work of Annette Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus: Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe* (Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus 52; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004). Contrast Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 131: "läge Aorist des Briefstils vor . . . würde Paulus seine Aussage nicht interpretieren, sondern korrigieren" ("if it were an epistolary aorist . . . Paul would not be interpreting, but correcting, his own statement"). Why not?!

9 With *kai ta loipa*, "et cetera," understood.

10 Hence still in the original discourse, since it retains the dative object (while the new phrasing has moved to nominative).

11 Christoph Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der antiochenisichen Exegese* (Theophania 23; Cologne/Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1974); Bernhard Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe* (Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 18/1–2; Basel: Reinhardt, 1987).

12 Frances Young's Speaker's Lectures, published as *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), is one of the most important works on early Christian exegesis in the last half century; on this topic in particular see also her essay "The Rhetorical Schools and Their Influence on Patristic Exegesis," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 182–99.

13 Among Grant's many works, see especially *The Letter and the Spirit* (London: SPCK, 1957) and *The Earliest Lives of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1961).

14 Well emphasized by Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 76–89. On ancient education (*paideia*) under the *grammatikos* and *rhêtôr*, and its disciplines for textual interpretation, see, among many treatments, Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350–1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. 1–117; Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Malcolm Heath, *Menander: A Rhetor in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. 217–54; Raffaella Cribiore, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 137–96.

15 Young places "Apologetics" as the outermost circle in Fig. 2 of *Biblical Exegesis* (220). As this book will show, I think it holds a more primary and central place.

16 "Indeed, the most comprehensive and detailed treatments of interpretation in so-called classical antiquity come from the rhetorical manuals of Cicero and Quintilian, among others, and more particularly from their treatments of *interpretatio scripti*, the interpretation of written material pertinent to legal cases, such as laws, wills, and contracts . . . Expert in the art of accommodation, as the *ars rhetorica* was frequently called, they also recognized the accommodative nature of all interpretation founded upon this same art" (Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 2; further discussion of Eden's important work and its implications for early Christian exegesis will follow below).

17 Her two sustained patristic examples are Basil, *Ad adolescentes* and Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* (ch. 3).

18 In *Truth and Method* Gadamer engages the tradition of legal hermeneutics ("The Exemplary Significance of Legal Hermeneutics," 321ff.). After contrasting historical and theological hermeneutics with legal interpretation (in relation to Emilio Betti in particular), he concludes, "In reality, then, legal hermeneutics is no special case but is, on the contrary, capable of restoring the hermeneutical problem to its full breadth and so re-establishing the former unity of hermeneutics, in which jurist and theologian meet the philologist" (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edn., ed. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall [New York: Continuum, 2004], 325). The key thing that unites them is a concern with both past and present in adjudicating meaning. But I think the legal hermeneutical method will be differently assessed (and its application to early Christian exegetes seen more directly) if one sees it through the eyes of the advocate (or would-be advocate) rather than the judge who oversees and pronounces.

19 Schleiermacher, in "Hermeneutics: The Compendium of 1819 and the Marginal Notes of 1828," props. 15–17, situated both theological and juristic hermeneutics in the attempt to resolve misunderstanding by special meanings and special hermeneutics (Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten*

Manuscripts, ed. Heinz Kimmerle [Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977], 109–11).

20 For Eden it is Aristotle's concept of *epieikeia*, or equity, which "surpasses the law through its power to accommodate the individual's case; and the equitable person, in turn, is one who does not enforce the law's stringency on his own behalf. He is not, in Aristotle's terms, *akribodikaios* (*Nichomachean Ethics* 5.10.8)" (Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 13).

21 Margaret M. Mitchell, "Patristic Rhetoric on Allegory: Origen and Eustathius Put 1 Kingdoms 28 on Trial," in Rowan A. Greer and Margaret M. Mitchell, *The "Belly-Myther" of Endor: Interpretations of 1 Kingdoms 28 in the Early Church* (WGRW 16; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2007), pp. lxxxvi–cxxiii.

22 E.g. Cicero, *De inventione* 2.41.119: "This can be brought about by saying that the interpretation which we make is honourable, expedient and necessary, and that of the opposition by no means of such a nature" (*Id fiet, si id quod nos demonstrabimus honestum aut utile aut necessarium demonstrabimus, et si id quod ab adversariis dicetur minime eiusmodi esse dicemus*). See also the full context, where the sentiment is often repeated, such as 2.48.143: "Against the letter of the law: the value of law depends on the intention of the legislator and on the common weal, not on words" (*Contra scriptum: leges in consilio scriptoris et utilitate communi, non in verbis consistere*).

23 We shall return to this text in Chapter 4.

24 She is discussing *De doctrina christiana*.

25 I have inserted an ellipsis for Eden's next phrase, "but changes the terms to accommodate his Jewish constituency," because it is not necessary for the point she makes, and may cause an unnecessary distraction, because it is unlikely that the majority, or even very many, of Paul's Corinthian converts were Jews (as 1 Cor 12:2 shows). Nonetheless, as Eden notes in the continuation of this passage, Paul is here overtly playing upon biblical conceits of letter and intent, stones and hearts, that he inherits from the Deuteronomic and prophetic traditions, read in Septuagintal form (e.g. Deut 9:10; Ezek 11:19 [*kardia hetera* and *pneuma kainon*]; 36:26–27 [*kardia hetera* and *pneuma kainon*, and contrast between *kardia sarkinê* and the divine *pneuma*]; Jer 38:33 LXX [text of new covenant written not on tablets but on *dianoia* and *kardia*]).

26 Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 56–57.

27 Or at least more so than one's own. Cicero's descriptions of these appeals often employ comparative adjectives to construct the proof by comparison.

28 References for this series of points: *De inventione* 2.40.116; 2.40.117; 2.40.117; 2.40.118–21; 2.45.132; 2.43.125; 2.41.120.

29 This has been memorialized for generations of American children in books by Peggy and Herman Parish about the maid "Amelia Bedelia," who literalizes each of her employers' instructions, such as "drawing the drapes" or "dressing the chicken."

30 References for this series of points: *De inventione* 2.47.140; 2.47.139; 2.47.139; 2.47.140; 2.48.141; 2.49.147; 2.48.141; 2.48.142.

31 Here I am speaking not of a direct influence of Cicero's writings on Paul, but of reconstructing, via Cicero's handbook example, the educational context Paul himself would have had, as a literate Greek speaker of the early imperial period. For later Christian hermeneutics, however, there is a direct influence of Cicero on authors such as Augustine and, beyond him, Erasmus, Melanchthon and Matthias Flacius Illyricus, as is well documented by Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*.

32 Caroline Humfress has thoroughly documented the strength and ubiquity of forensic training in the late empire (as also among ecclesiastical leaders of the fourth century and beyond), and valuably emphasized the importance of this fact for the way ecclesiastical business, including the detection and punishment of heresy, was carried out in the emerging Christian imperium (*Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007]). While focusing on forensic training in particular, she makes reference throughout to "the remarkable culture of forensic argumentation that flourished during late antiquity" (p. vii, cf. p. 6; p. 272: "a culture heavily indebted to forensic argumentation").

33 *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 2.9.13–2.12.18.

34 Translation follows LSJ, *s.v.* 2.b.

35 *Adversus mathematicos* 2.36–38, in *Sexti Empirici opera*, ed. J. Mau and H. Mutschmann, 2nd edn. (4 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1958–62), III, p. 91 (Sextus presents this as the critique of the Academy [para. 20]).

36 See e.g. Hermogenes, *On staseis* 9, in *Hermogenis opera*, ed. H. Rabe (Rhetores Graeci 6; Leipzig: Teubner, 1913), 82–83, along with the following discussion of conflicting texts, assimilation and ambiguity. A fine analysis of this work may be found in Malcolm Heath, *Hermogenes* On Issues: *Strategies of Argument in Later Greek Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), with a translation of these passages on pp. 55–60.

37 Full references in Mitchell, "Patristic Rhetoric on Allegory," p. xcii, n. 23.

38 George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (WGRW 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), p. x.

39 Though as Humfress, *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity*, 180–95, insists, a fair number of Christian authors did receive advanced legal (forensic) training ("career-orientated education"). The "dramatic transformation" (146) she charts in ecclesiastical legal proceedings in the post-Constantinian empire does not, however, require that educated Christian authors in the earlier periods (such as the apologists, who are important to this continuous history from Paul forward) were not also influenced by a forensic approach to written evidence.

40 Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 7–19 *et passim*.

41 Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 46–51 ("Rhetoric in Theology").

42 As a counter-example, see how, in the debate between Origen and Eustathius, the latter complains that Origen violates the *hypothesis* of scripture in allegorizing the story of Isaac and Rebecca in Genesis 24 (*De engastrimytho* 21.6); he

does not say Origen did that in the case of 1 Kingdoms 28, however, since Origen's appeal to the unified author of all of scripture (the Holy Spirit) is in fact a contextually grand claim as well (just invoked at a different moment and in a different way from Eustathius). In other words, it is not the case that Origen in general does not care for the hypothesis or "narrative coherence" of scripture; he makes a range of contextual arguments, some of which Eustathius agrees with, others of which he does not. Hence it is not quite fair to say, as Young does, that Eustathius displays "a reading of the story which respects its narrative coherence," whereas, as she claims, "the thrust of the whole tells against Origen's view" (*Biblical Exegesis*, 163). The issue here is, what is "the whole"? In the case of Origen, "the whole" must include the reality of resurrection for believers in the *parousia*; for Eustathius, "the whole" must include divine proscriptions against divinization as idolatry in Deuteronomy 18 (*De engastrimytho* 24.12f.; Greer and Mitchell, *The "Belly-Myther" of Endor*, 141). Both are constructions of context in service of a particular reading (of the part from the whole).

43 Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 194, n. 12, recognizes that Gnostics, too, could appeal to *hypothesis*.

44 This is well recognized by scholars of ancient rhetoric. See e.g. Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 28 and Heath, *Menander: A Rhetor in Context*, 17 on the distinction between *taxis* ("natural order") and *oikonomia* ("artificial order"). "Artificial" does not, however, mean "arbitrary"; to the contrary, either in composition or interpretation, *oikonomia* is forged strategically and deliberately as part of the *heuresis*, or invention, of arguments.

45 In her insightful treatment of Irenaeus's appeal to the *hypothesis* of scripture against Gnostics, Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, in places seems to take Irenaeus's part in claiming that his *hypothesis* was *discovered* in scripture and tradition, while theirs was merely *invented* by themselves ("With received tradition behind him as the ultimate court of appeal, Irenaeus could accuse his opponents of not understanding the hypothesis of scripture. They have their own hypothesis, which neither the prophets heralded, nor the Lord taught, nor the apostles passed down" [p. 19]); on a subsequent page she acknowledges that "Neither the Rule of Faith nor the creed was in fact a summary of the whole biblical narrative" but then joins Irenaeus's literary appeal with an approving judgment: "They provided, rather, the *proper* reading of the beginning and ending, the focus of the plot and the relations of the principal characters, so enabling the 'middle' to be heard in bits as meaningful . . . They articulated the essential hermeneutical key without which texts and community would disintegrate in incoherence" (p. 21, emphasis added). But who decides what is the "proper" reading and what is the proper framing context? This formulation is both overly extreme (are there not many ways to read the plot narrative between the poles of unity and disintegration?) and underplays the fact that Irenaeus's appeal to *hypothesis* was itself a literary-critical construct. (For an approach similar to Young's, see John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005], 33–44.)

46 This is a means by which rhetorical invention seeks to cover its tracks under cover of supernatural claims. That this is what early Christian authors really believed (that God had ordered the text in the way they claim) is irrelevant to the scholarly account of what they are doing as a human interpretive act to construct meaning.

47 Margaret M. Mitchell, "Rhetorical Handbooks in Service of Biblical Exegesis: Eustathius of Antioch Takes Origen Back to School," in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune*, ed. John Fotopoulos (Novum Testamentum Supplements 122; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 349–67.

48 Cicero, *De inventione* 2.40.116.

49 Cicero, *De inventione* 2.41.120, as translated by Hubbell (LCL): "It will help greatly to show how he would have written if he had wished the opponent's interpretation to be carried out or adopted." Eustathius recognizes that Origen uses this ploy at *Homilia 5* in *1 librum Regnorum* 4.7, and characterized it as "arguing against his opponents with the skill of a trial lawyer" (*hôs pros enantious dikanikê deinotêti dialegomenos*).

50 Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 17: "this strategy of 'rectifying' or 'correcting' the written statement, transmitted as an integral part of *interpretatio scripti*, provides one of the two most widely used and highly regarded interpretive tools of this tradition."

51 Translation of *epidiorthôsis* follows LSJ, *s.v.* 1 ("*correction of a previous expression*"). It is possible to take the "correction" as being less specifically to Paul's own text as to a Corinthian misunderstanding of it.

52 *Homiliae in 1 Cor.* 16.1 (PG 61.129); the sentence continues: "so that they might not think he imposed this command on them as though they were defective, as if it were the case that if perfect they might try to do it."

53 Cicero, *De inventione* 2.44.127.

54 *Homiliae in 1 Cor.* 16.1 (PG 61.129). This is a good example of Eden's appeal to Aristotle's concept of equity (*epieikeia*) in interpretation. Yet what does not quite work for Chrysostom is an opposition of this to *akribeia* (i.e. a relaxed application of the law versus a stringent one), for in Chrysostom's writing *akribeia* is used not only of a literal reading, but of all readings as acutely rooted in the details of the text; in other words, it is a statement of biblical fidelity, not methodological uniformity.

55 "The apostle cries out to us [to cleanse out the old leaven], and again, vexed at these types of people, he bequeaths the legal injunction (*diatattetai*) 'do not associate if someone named as a brother might be a fornicator or a defrauder or an adulterer or a reviler or a drunk or a rip-off-artist, nor eat with such a one'" (*Stromateis* 3.18.106).

56 I would prefer "hermeneutician," but it is apparently not a word. *OED* includes "hermeneut" and "hermeneutist."

57 Ernst Käsemann, "Sentences of Holy Law in the New Testament," in *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 66–81.

58 As I have argued especially in Chapter 1 and in Mitchell, "The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics."

59 Medieval "chain commentaries" preserving excerpts from patristic authors.
60 Or "statement."
61 Translation of *paraleleimmenon* as LPGL, *s.v.* I ("*leave out* in written accounts"; cf. the title of Chronicles in LXX).
62 Origen, *Fragmenta ex commentariis in epistulam i ad Corinthios*, on 1 Cor 5:9–11; sect. 26, in C. Jenkins, "Documents: Origen on 1 Corinthians," *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1907/08), 366.
63 Or "prefer" (LSJ, *s.v.* I); or "maintain" (LPGL, *s.v.* III).
64 Origen, *Fragmenta ex commentariis in epistulam i ad Corinthios*, on 1 Cor 5:9–11; sect. 26, in Jenkins, "Documents," 366. Origen aligns LXX Ps 31:1 as follows: Gentiles (sins forgiven) and believers (sins covered over).
65 Translation following LSJ, *s.v.* II.
66 Or "contradictory" (LSJ, *s.v.* I.3, "of arguments, *contradictory, captious*").
67 Theodoret, *Interpretatio in xiv epistulas sancti Pauli* (PG 82.264).
68 This is generally recognized, though there is debate over the extent of Theodoret's originality in interpretation. See esp. Jean-Nöel Guinot, *L'exégèse de Théodoret de Cyr* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995).
69 The question and answer format enshrines this principle; this passage from Theodoret is a nice but hardly infrequent example of this common form. In my view the study of ancient biblical interpretation needs to attend to the history of questions (in this and in other forms) as much as the history of answers, and we should find a way to incorporate that structurally into the reference works now being produced.
70 The referent could be Moses, God or scripture; all three in some sense converge for this early Christian exegete.
71 Or "spiritual matters."
72 Theodoret, *Quaestiones in Octateuchum*, sects. 15–16, in *Theodoreti Cyrensis quaestiones in Octateuchum*, ed. N. Fernández Marcos and A. Sáenz-Badillos (Textos y Estudios "Cardenal Cisneros" 17; Madrid: Poliglota Matritense, 1979), 167–69.
73 For the rhetorical form, as used here, see Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 250–54.
74 There is considerable debate about whether in antiquity there was such a thing as "typology" (the term itself is modern) and if among Christian authors "typology" is different from "allegory" (as argued, for instance, by O'Keefe and Reno, *Sanctified Vision*, 69–88, and with some reluctance by Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 152–85; see also her earlier essay "Typology," in Stanley E. Porter, Paul Joyce and David E. Orton [eds.], *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* [Leiden: Brill, 1994], 29–48). An important recent study by Peter Martens ("Revisiting the Typology/Allegory Distinction: The Case of Origen," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 [2008], 283–317) demonstrates that Origen did not clearly differentiate the two. The present volume, opening with Gregory of Nyssa, demonstrates the extent to which the terminology in use is variable, strategic and apologetic, capable of harmonization or differentiation, depending upon the context and needs. The modern critic should not be bound to particular ancient scruples in this regard.

Theodoret's reading of the leprosy legislation is an allegory/other meaning, and hence I translate the term as such to throw that into relief.

75 It perhaps bears ironic notice that the phrasing of 2 Cor 1:17–18 is itself ambiguous!

76 In Chapter 6.

77 Cicero, *De inventione* 2.43.125: *et loco communi, nihil eos qui iudicent nisi id quod scriptum spectare oportere*; elsewhere, see e.g. Cicero, *De inventione* 2.50.152: "he will deny that anything should be considered except the letter of the law" (*negabit oportere quicquam, nisi quod scriptum sit, considerare*); and *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 2.9.13: "Finally, we shall show the danger of departing from the letter of the text" (*Deinde ostendetur quam periculosum sit ab scripto recedere*) (tr. H. Caplan; LCL 403 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954]).

78 Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 86. For the considerable literature on this passage, see Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (Sacra Pagina 7; Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1999), 181–82.

79 L. L. Welborn, "A Conciliatory Principle in 1 Cor 4:6," *Novum Testamentum* 29 (1987) 320–46, tries to identify a particular diplomatic "formula" for concord here, but none of the parallels he lists is as close as the Ciceronian ones. Furthermore, appeals to stand by what is written (i.e. a "literal reading") are made in all kinds of contexts and with written texts of various genres not restricted to a single diplomatic form or context.

80 And many not in the immediate context that one might bring in here, such as Chrysostom's (historically implausible) conjecture that what is meant is Matt 7:1–2.

81 The term is used in the New Testament only by Paul (1 Cor 4:6; 2 Cor 11:13, 14, 15; Phil 3:21). BDAG absolves Paul of using veiled language for himself, and re-inscribes as lexical fact Paul's polemic against the false apostles by separating out three different meanings: "to feign to be what one is not" and "*change/disguise oneself*" for 2 Cor 11:13–15, but, "unique" to 1 Cor 4:16, "to show a connection or bearing of one thing on another, *apply to*" (pp. 641–42). See more on 2 Corinthians 11 in Chapter 5.

82 Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 3.1; 12.1 (PG 61.23; 61.95–97).

83 So Morna D. Hooker, "'Beyond the Things Which Are Written': An Examination of 1 Cor. IV.6," *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963/64), 127–32.

84 For the same rhetorical doubling of authority, see 1 Cor 14:37: "let him recognize about what I am writing to you that it is a commandment of the Lord."

85 Note the explicit apologetic language: "And if it is necessary to give an argument of defense (*apologêsasthai*) for this statement in yet another way . . . "

86 Athanasius, *Orationes tres contra Arianos* 3.25.21, PG 26.368.

87 A few lines later the unity of Father and Son is depicted in language from 1 Cor 1:10: *to auto legontes* ("saying the same thing"). We shall examine this phrase in the following chapter.

88 Cicero, *De inventione* 2.48.142: *illius verbi vim quo urgueri videatur ad suae causae commodum traducere aut ex scripto non scriptum aliquid inducere* (the strategy is called *ratiocinatio*, "reasoning from analogy").

89 *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* 13.5.26, in *Origenes Werke*, ed. Erwin Preuschen (GCS 4; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1899–1955), 229–30.
90 Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 16–17.
91 Here (as often) God appears also obedient to the deliberative *kephalaion* of utility.
92 *Septuaginta*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935) reads *mê exetaze* where Origen reads instead *mê ereuna*, by allusion to 1 Cor 2:10 (and possibly John 5:39).
93 In the ellipsis is the example of John in the gospel and Revelation (John 21:25; Rev 10:4).
94 Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* 13.5–6 (*Origenes Werke*, GCS 4, 230).
95 *Teknon* (Sir 3:17); *ha prosetagê soi, tauta dianoou, ou gar estin soi chreia tôn kryptôn* (Sir 3:22).
96 Compare Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 32.13, in *Discours*, ed. Claudio Moreschini (SC 318; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985): "if you are a child and are terrestrial in your thinking and not competent to advance to higher thoughts, then be a Corinthian (*genou Korinthios*), be nourished with milk!"

CHAPTER 3: ANTHROPOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS: BETWEEN RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY

1 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Prologue, ed. Hermann Langerbeck (GNO VI; Leiden: Brill, 1960), p. 6, l. 17 to p. 7, l. 1.
2 I am taking the adjective to be neuter, with the referent being the surface meaning of the statements in the Song (following the previous statement, *dia tôn theiôn toutôn rhêtôn*, "through these divine words"); this agrees with the usage of the adjective in the passage previously quoted on this page. It is possible grammatically, though I think not as suitable exegetically, to take the adjective as masculine, referring to readers; hence "for the more fleshly people there is some guidance toward the spiritual and immaterial condition of the soul, toward which this book leads." But this translation runs against the overall argument of the homilies that the Song of Songs is *not* understood by people who are fleshly in orientation. Homily 1 begins with the precondition for readers, in accordance with Paul's advice (Col 3:9), to have stripped off the old person with its "empassioned and fleshly reasoning power" (*empathês kai sarkôdês logismos*) (p. 14), and further in that homily Gregory reiterates the point, warning lest "any passionate (*empathês*) and fleshly person (*sarkôdês*) drag the meanings of the divinely inspired thoughts and words down to the irrational level of the beasts" (p. 25). Later in the same homily Gregory allows that "the self-evident significance (*procheiros emphasis*) of the words of the Song points to the indulgence of fleshly passions (*hai sarkôdeis hêdypatheiai*), but they do not sink down into the filthy sense (*hê rhypôsa dianoia*) but to the philosophical contemplation of divine realities (*hê tôn theiôn philosophia*)" (p. 39). Nowhere else in *In Canticum Canticorum* does Gregory ever indicate that the Song of Songs is for the "fleshly"; in fact, it is not for them, but for

those who have ascended through the "Solomonic curriculum" from Proverbs, through Ecclesiastes, and to the summit, the Song.

3 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Prologue (GNO VI), p. 4, ll. 7–10.

4 Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 68–70, with full references.

5 BDAG, *s.v.* 1.b.β; LSJ, *s.v.* III.9.

6 For the meaning of these phrases in Greco-Roman political discourses, and especially of the term *homonoia*, "concord," of which the first is a periphrastic rendering, see Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 76–80.

7 See the customarily insightful comments on some of these aspects of 1 Corinthians 1—2 in Hans Dieter Betz, "The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology according to the Apostle Paul," in A. Vanhoye (ed.), *L'Apôtre Paul: Personnalité, style et conception du ministère* (BETL 73, 1986), 16–48, repr. in *Paulinische Studien, Gesammelte Aufsätze III* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1994), 126–62.

8 The "undersense," the common Greek term for allegory; famously Plutarch in *De audiendis poetis* 19e–f said this was the older term for what in his day, the late first or early second century, was called *allêgoria*.

9 For important insights into the dynamics in this passage see Henrik Tronier, "The Corinthian Correspondence between Philosophical Idealism and Apocalypticism," in Troels Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 165–96.

10 For the trifold anthropology compare the blessing formula in the earlier letter, 1 Thess 5:23: "May the very God of peace sanctify you completely, and may your spirit (*pneuma*) and soul (*psychê*) and body (*sôma*) be preserved completely, blameless at the *parousia* of our Lord Jesus Christ."

11 LSJ, *s.v.* with four glosses ("combine," "compare," "interpret" [placing 1 Cor 2:13 here], and "decree"). BDAG, *s.v.* has three glosses ("combine," "compare," and "interpret"), and it places 1 Cor 2:13 in all three categories. The translations they offer in turn are: "*giving spiritual truth a spiritual form*," "*comparing the spiritual gifts and revelations* (which we already possess) *with the spiritual gifts and revelations* (which we are to receive, and judging them thereby)," and "*interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the spirit.*"

12 Note also the variant with the adverb, *pneumatikôs* ("in spiritual fashion"), in codices B and 33.

13 LSJ, *s.v.*; BDAG, *s.v.*, which, in a confident attempt to regularize Paul's vocabulary, flattens it: "When Paul continues (from the quotation from Isa 40:13 in 1 Cor 2:16a) in the latter passage vs. 16b with *hêmeis noun Christou echomen*, he is using the scriptural word *nous* to denote what he usually calls *pneuma* (vs. 14f). He can do this because his *nous* (since he is a 'pneumatic' person) is filled w. Spirit . . . , so that in his case the two are interchangeable. Such a *nous* is impossible for a 'psychic' person."

14 Compare 2:4: "not in persuasive words of wisdom but in the proof of the spirit and of power" (*ouk en peithois sophias logois all' en apodeixei pneumatos kai dynameôs*) with 2:13: "not in didactic words of human wisdom but in didactic

words of the spirit (*ouk en didaktois anthrôpinês sophias logois all' en didaktois pneumatos*).

15 A vivid actualization of this text is found in *Homiliae in Jeremiam* 12.1, ed. Pierre Nautin, SC 238 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1977), p. 10, where Origen personifies the speech of the *psychikos*, whom he characterizes as incapable of moving beyond a "literal" interpretation: "what the prophet is commanded by God to say should be worthy of God, but it appears that it is not worthy of God if we remain on the literal level (*menontôn hêmôn epi tou grammatos*). The result of this is that some other person, after hearing the wording of the text, says: 'These words are foolishness!' And this is what the *psychikos* will say, for a '*psychikos* man does not receive the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolish to him.'"

16 Paul's argument does not in fact provide what the Bauer lexicon (BAGD, BDAG) supplies for him, i.e. a complete philosophical anthropology: "The latter [*psychikos anthrôpos*] is a person who has nothing more than an ordinary human soul; the former [*pneumatikos*] possesses the divine *pneuma*, not beside his natural human soul, but in place of it; this enables the person to penetrate the divine mysteries" (BDAG, 837, *s.v. pneumatikos* [identical to BAGD, 679]).

17 As we have seen with Cicero, the statement that one interprets like a child (hence, as a literalist) can be a sharp barb against the educated. In turn, factionalists are often ridiculed as bickering children (see Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 96).

18 What will further muddy the waters is that in 1 Cor 13:8–13 Paul will invoke much the same language to extend the then-and-now comparison into the future, in a way which puts the developmental model in question (i.e. even when I have become an adult and put away childish things, Paul says in that context – where he wishes to emphasize the flip side of this argument to admonish those who overestimate their pneumatic capabilities – we still at present only see *di' esoptrou en ainigmati*, "through a mirror in an enigma," *ek merous*, "in part"). We shall return to this topic in Chapter 4.

19 Paul will employ the same language later in this letter, at 1 Cor 15:35–49, but never again will this anthropological triad appear in the succession of letters to Corinth (but cf. *sarkikos*, *–ê*, *–on* in 2 Cor 10:4 and 1:12).

20 The language of *pneumatikos/sarkikos* appears also in Romans (7:14 and 15:27) and Galatians (6:1), but the former, written from Corinth and after the entire correspondence, certainly reflects the experience of this correspondence; on Galatians as following the Corinthian letters, see Chapter 1, n. 33.

21 Birger A. Pearson, *The Pneumatikos–Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians: A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and its Relation to Gnosticism* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 12; Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 4–5, observes that this language is largely confined to 1 Corinthians and concludes that Paul takes it up from the Corinthians themselves, which is possible, but in my view doubtful. In any case, what we have here is what Paul does with the language in his own

argument. The blessing in 1 Thess 5:23 shows that Paul could employ the anthropological triad voluntarily.

22 Collins, *First Corinthians*, 213: "Paul's anthropological dualism is not philosophical; it is soteriological." There is debate about whether the *pneuma* in question is the man's own, or that of the church (the latter being the position of Collins).

23 For full discussion see Chapter 4.

24 Significantly, of course, Paul uses the less negative term, *sōma*, but the full context of the argument (esp. 15:39–40) shows that he is aligning *sōma* with *sarx*.

25 Also another term is added, from Gen 2:7.

26 The use of this word in early Christian exegesis demonstrates beautifully my point about strategic re-employment. LPGL, *s.v.* (1526), notes that it can be used in two very different ways: (1) referring to "man as having become *choïkos* through transgression," or (2) "opposite view: man's body created *choïkos*." Hence, for example, Irenaeus says the Gnostics assign each of four parts of a human – the soul, the clay, the flesh and the spiritual component – to different sources (*Adversus haereses* 1.5.6).

27 I have argued (from this and other lexical and argumentative connections) that the author of James knows and uses 1 Corinthians in "The Letter of James as a Document of Paulinism?," in Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg (eds.), *Reading James with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 75–98, as also does Pearson, *Pneumatikos–Psychikos Terminology*, 14; Albert E. Barnett, *Paul Becomes a Literary Influence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), 191, regards it as probable.

28 Of the triad, only the adjective *pneumatikos* is found (Eph 1:3 [cf. Col 1:9]; 5:19 [cf. Col 3:16]; 6:12). Revelation 11:8 applies the adverb *pneumatikôs* to scriptural interpretation.

29 The Epistle of Barnabas contains the language of "spiritual people": "let us be *pneumatikoi*, let us be a perfect temple for God" (4:11, a most interesting combination of motifs in 1 Corinthians 2—3; cf. 16:10).

30 Discussion in Paul Foster, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament," in Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (eds.), *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 159–86.

31 Ignatius, *Ephesians* 8.2.

32 Ignatius, *Ephesians* 8.2. Is there a hint of 2 Cor 6:14–15 here?

33 Ignatius, *Ephesians* 8.2.

34 Ignatius, *Ephesians* 7.2 (a possible allusion to Rom 1:3–4). In the continuation of this sentence Ignatius also names Christ as "begotten and unbegotten (*gennêtos kai agennêtos*), having been God in flesh (*en sarki*)." William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 64, notes: "The declaration of

the coinherence of the spheres of flesh and spirit at the anthropological level mirrors their coinherence at the christological level."

35 See the excursus on the history of reception in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 276–77. Thiselton, however, noticeably weights his survey with an unjustified evaluative comment of his own: the Valentinians' "conceptual frame remains so alien to Pauline thought that the coincidence of parallel terminology remains part of what Irenaeus calls their 'self-deception.' Elsewhere Irenaeus himself takes up the Pauline argument . . . in a way which matches Paul's thread of thought in 2:9—3:4." Our interpretation will show that each of them tends toward one pole of the Pauline argument, between the anthropological terms as philosophical categories and as rhetorical labels. One is not "alien" and the other a simple "match" to Paul.

36 Literally, "ensouled."

37 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* (*AH*) 1.8.3; Greek text *apud* Hippolytus and Epiphanius, cited from Louis Doutreleau (ed.), *Contre les hérésies* (SC 264; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1974–2002), 120–24.

38 E.g. *AH* 1.6.2; they, too, could appreciate the rhetorical effectiveness of anthropological language!

39 *AH* 4.33.

40 *AH* 4.33.1–7 (SC 100, 802–819).

41 *AH* 4.33.7 (SC 100, 819).

42 *AH* 5.6.1 (SC 153, 73–75, 79).

43 John J. O'Keefe, "Scriptural Interpretation," in John Anthony McGuckin (ed.), *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2004), 194.

44 Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture within Origen's Exegesis* (The Bible in Ancient Christianity 3; Boston: Brill, 2005); see n. 74 below.

45 Lauro positions her argument against those who faulted Origen for not carrying out the schema consistently, such as R. P. C. Hanson. Where I differ from the latter is that I do not think that Origen's anthropological hermeneutics is "arbitrary," but, indeed, strategically variable.

46 See Marguerite Harl, "Structure et cohérence du *Peri Archon*," in Henri Crouzel *et al.* (eds.), *Origeniana: Premier colloque international des études origéniennes, Montserrat, 18–21 septembre 1973* (Quaderni di Vetera Christianorum 12; Bari: Istituto di letteratura cristiana antica, 1975), 11–32, with further literature on the form and structure of the *Peri Archon*.

47 *PA* 4.1.1, ed. Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti (SC 268; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1980, 256–58). The first part of the sentence includes the key line: *prosparalambanomen eis tên phainomenên hêmin apodeixin tôn legomenôn martyria ta ek tôn pepisteumenôn hêmin einai theiôn graphôn* ("we use also the testimonies from the scriptures which are believed by us to be divine to render a proof which seems to us self-evident").

48 This fits the last line of the Prologue (para. 9) for the four-volume work, in which Origen said he would offer in defense of his single body of teaching *exempla* and *affirmationes, uel his, quas in sanctis scripturis inuenerit, uel quas ex consequentiae ipsius indagine ac recti tenore reppererit* (tr. Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti [SC 252, p. 89] as follows: "à l'aide de comparaisons et d'affirmations, celles qu'on aura trouvées dans les saintes Écritures, ou celles qu'on aura découvertes en recherchant la conséquence logique et en suivant un raisonnement droit"; tr. George W. Butterworth [Origen, *On First Principles, Being Koetschau's Text of the De principiis Translated into English, together with an Introduction and Notes* (London: SPCK, 1936), 6] thus: "with the aid of such illustrations and declarations as he shall find in the holy scriptures and of such conclusions as he shall ascertain to follow logically from them when rightly understood").

49 *PA* 4.2.1 (SC 268, 292–300).

50 Irvine trenchantly notes that "The concealment tropes reveal an important feature of the rhetoric of sacred texts in the late classical and early Christian tradition" (*The Making of Textual Culture*, 254). We shall take up this theme in the following chapter.

51 "Hidden behind a veil."

52 Heb 10:1.

53 *PA* 4.1.6 (SC 268, p. 282).

54 *PA* 4.1.6 (SC 268, p. 282). The full passage reads: "And the light which was present in the Law of Moses, but hidden away 'in a veil' (*kalymmati enapokekrymmenon*, 2 Cor 3:13–14) shone broadly at the advent of Jesus 'when the veil was taken away' (*periairethentos tou kalymmatos*, 2 Cor 3:16) and 'the good things' (Heb 10:1) of which 'the letter' (*to gramma*, 2 Cor 3:6) 'contained a shadow' (*skia*, Heb 10:1) came bit by bit to be known. But it would take too long now to catalogue the ancient prophecies about each of the things to come, so that through them those who doubt, struck by their God-inspired nature, might set aside all hesitancy and distraction, and devote themselves to the words of God with their whole soul."

55 PA 4.1.7 (SC 268, p. 284).

56 On which see Pierre Hadot, *Le voile d'Isis: Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de Nature* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2004) (and the fuller discussion in Chapter 4).

57 *PA* 4.1.7 (SC 268, p. 288).

58 *PA* 4.1.7 (SC 268, pp. 288–90).

59 Especially the role of the *corpus Paulinum* (as a double entendre).

60 *PA* 4.2–3. This proposition was likewise foreshadowed in the Prologue (para. 8), which has many of the same terms in play as in 1 Corinthians 2, but no direct quotation (see SC 252, pp. 84–86).

61 *PA* 4.2.2 (SC 268, p. 300).

62 *PA* 4.2.2 (SC 268, p. 302).

63 *PA* 4.2.2 (SC 268, p. 304).

64 In the next chapter we shall see that the term *ainigma* is both a philosophical and biblical term in Greek for allegory.

65 *PA* 4.2.3 (SC 268, p. 306).

66 An allusion also to 1 Cor 3:10.

67 *PA* 4.2.3 (SC 268, p. 306).

68 In many places 2 Cor 12:1–5 is adduced by Origen (and other early Christian interpreters) as an exemplification of 1 Cor 2:6–16.

69 From here Origen moves to the other two New Testament corpora, the Revelation to John and the letters of the apostles.

70 My argument does not require that Origen received this idea *only* from Paul, but that he is thoroughly clothed in Pauline texts here, especially those from the Corinthian correspondence. For earlier attestations of the idea of the text as having a body and soul, including in Philo, see Annewies van den Hoek, "The Concept of *sôma tôn graphôn* in Alexandrian Theology," *Studia Patristica* 19 (1989), 250–54.

71 *PA* 4.2.4 (SC 268, pp. 310–12).

72 As Marguerite Harl, among others, has emphasized. See *Origène Philocalie, 1–20 sur Les Écritures* (SC 302; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1983), 103–04. She does not highlight the key role of 1 Corinthians 2 here, however.

73 Harl analyzes a passage from Origen's later *Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei* (21, 33–43), in which he aligns the three elements of scripture with the three-part division of Stoic philosophy (logic, ethics, physics) (Harl, *Origène Philocalie*, 110–18).

74 Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture within Origen's Exegesis*. Here I think we see the tradition continuing of scholars who seek to systematize what is left rough in the classic sources. We might say that while Origen moved the needle toward systematization further than Paul, he did not do so 100 per cent. Then his own interpreters, through selective readings, try to do the same for him. While the attempt is valiant, it is a very hard case to make, and ultimately unconvincing. First off, as employed in Lauro's study, the relationship between theory and practice is overly rigid, and contestable (why, for instance, are some homilies expansions of the "theory" of *PA* 4, and others the "practice" of it?). Second, the case for the psychical meaning as "moral" is forced; for example, Paul does not say in 1 Corinthians 9 (a major example for her argument) that the apostolic right to support is a "moral" duty, nor does Origen say it in his favor. Further, Origen does not consistently refer to Paul's 1 Cor 9:9–10 as a reading that is exclusively *psychikôs*. Most difficult for this argument of a consistent Origenic systematic exegesis is the fact that Origen rarely uses the term *psychikos*; Lauro's deflection of this problem (pp. 68–69) is unsatisfactory (either the term is a label for a category, or it isn't). I also think the Greek has been misconstrued in at least one passage (p. 63) which allows for a correlation between the somatic and psychical senses in a way that does not quite work. One can appreciate the difficulties one faces in this brave attempt to systematize Origen!

75 *PA* 4.2.4 (SC 268, pp. 312–16).
76 *PA* 4.2.4 (SC 268, p. 314); cf. 4.2.2 (SC 268, p. 300).
77 The 1 Corinthians 9 text was cited also by Gregory in the Prologue to *In Canticum Canticorum*, and by "Adamantius" in the dialogue (both passages were cited in Chapter 1).
78 A limitation of the "commentary on" model (such as in Gerald Bray, *1–2 Corinthians* [Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture 7; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999] or even the clearly superior volume by Judith L. Kovacs, *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators* [The Church's Bible; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005]), is that the format does not allow readers to see how often ancient interpreters used a verse, or drew upon it when dealing with various other passages or subjects, rather than how they commented on a verse.
79 Translation in consultation with LSJ, *s.v. para*, B.II.4.
80 *PA* 4.2.6 (SC 268, pp. 318–20).
81 As Origen points out in *Homiliae in Jesu Nave* 9.8: *non de bobus haec, sed de Apostolis dixerit* ("Paul said this not about oxen, but about Apostles") (ed. Annie Jaubert [SC 71; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1960], 260).
82 On 1 Cor 9:9–11 as spiritual reading: *Hom. in Josh.* 9.8 (SC 71, pp. 258–60); in *Homiliae in Leviticum* 8.5; 9.8 (ed. Marcel Borret [SC 287; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1981], pp. 28, 108), the passage is cited as an example of the need not to rest on the corporeal sense, but to "lift the veil" (*velamen abstraxit* [sc. *Dominus*]) and seek "the fine and subtle meaning" (*minutum in his sensum subtilemque perquirere*); in neither case is this sense denominated as either spiritual or psychical.
83 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.49, (ed. Marcovich VCSup 54, p. 266): "but since the very fathers and authors responsible for these teachings interpreted such stories allegorically (*tropologein*), what else is it possible to understand other than that they were written in such a way so that in accordance with their prevailing intent (*proêgoumenos nous*) they be allegorized (*tropologeisthai*)? We shall cite a few from the many possible examples to demonstrate that Celsus brings a false accusation against the divine words of scripture as not being of a kind that accepts allegory (*allêgoria*). Indeed, Paul, the apostle of Jesus, says . . . " (quotations from 1 Cor 9:9–10, Eph 5:31–32 and 1 Cor 10:1–4 follow in a tumble).
84 *Fragmenta ex commentariis in epistulam i ad Corinthios*, in Jenkins, "Documents," *Journal of Theological Studies* 10 (1908/09), p. 41, ll. 2–5.
85 *PA* 4.2.6 (SC 268, pp. 320–22).
86 See Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis. Volume 1: The Four Senses of Scripture*, tr. Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 1–14, 271–79, on schemes of from four to 12 senses.
87 "clarifying Homer by Homer." For the influence of this literary-critical principle on Origen, see Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe*, 1, 276–85; 11, 481–87.
88 Translation of *aphormai* here follows Harl, SC 302, pp. 245, 252.
89 Origen, *Philocalia* 2.3 (SC 302, p. 244).

90 Compare also, e.g., *Contra Celsum* 7.11 (ed. Marcovich, VCSup 54, p. 468), where Origen again appeals to Paul's *pneumatika pneumatikois synkrinein* in defending allegorical interpretation against Celsus's charge that it is arbitrary or based on personal bias. Instead, Origen maintains, it is rooted in the divine *oikonomia* or *heirmos* (contextual sequence) of scripture, which, revealed to the person who is wise in Christ, provides the meaning of any part.

CHAPTER 4: THE MIRROR AND THE VEIL: HERMENEUTICS OF OCCLUSION

1 A rhetorical praising of the addressee to set up a persuasive argument.
2 This is a good Platonic concept. See e.g. Plato, *Respublica* 533d: *to tês psychês omma.*
3 *Aparapodistôs* can also mean "without embarrassment," so Gregory is probably making a double entendre here, in reference to the sexually explicit language of the Song.
4 "through the wisdom (*sophia*) that lies hidden (*enkekrymmenê*) in this book" (Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Prologue [GNO VI], p. 4, ll. 9–10). This repeats a refrain introduced just lines earlier: "the philosophy (*philosophia*) that lies hidden (*enkekrymmenê*) in the words" (p. 3, l. 5).
5 One could write the entire history of early Christian biblical interpretation via the mirror and the veil, an enormous task toward which the present chapter is just a suggestive start.
6 A contrast seen most markedly between 1 Thess 4:13–18 and 5:1–2.
7 Including the LXX, as in Num 12:8, which we shall discuss below as an intertext for Paul's 1 Cor 13:12.
8 See Peter T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), which traces the language of *symbolon* and *ainigma* from the pre-Socratics to Pseudo-Dionysius (he does not mention Paul, however, or 1 Cor 13:12!). This fine book draws more of a line between rhetorical critics (such as Aristotle) and allegorical critics than I think can be sustained for early Christian exegetes such as Origen or Gregory of Nyssa, but it is nonetheless a very important resource for ancient exegetical vocabulary as it relates to clarity and obscurity, on the one hand, and religious ritual and philosophical contemplation, on the other.
9 Later, in Homily 11, Gregory will see in the knocking of the beloved at the door of Song of Songs 5:2 the hermeneutical disclosure of the divine word in the night to the soul: "The truth, standing outside our nature, through the knowledge which is 'partial' (*dia tês ek merous gnôseôs*), as the apostle puts it, knocks on the mind in allegories (*hyponoiai*) and *ainigmata*, saying 'Open,' persuasively offering the principal means by which one might suitably open the door" (GNO VI), p. 324.
10 See the customarily thorough treatment of Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (ICC; (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1, 290–95.

11 *prosôpon pros prosôpon*; compare 2 Cor 3:18: "with unveiled face" (*anakekalymmenô prosôpô*).

12 Num 12:8 LXX: "mouth to mouth I shall speak with him, and not through *ainigmata*; and he saw the glory of the Lord (*doxa kyriou*)." Paul's rephrasing may be influenced also by Gen 32:31 ("face to face I saw the Lord").

13 Origen, *Exhortatio ad martyrium* 13, ed. Paul Koetschau (GCS 2: *Origenes Werke*, 1 [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899], pp. 202–04).

14 See Shadi Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), on the development of the metaphor of the mirror in philosophical speculation from Plato to Seneca (Paul's contemporary).

15 *Mart.* 13. If the present is the time for allegorical knowledge (because of the eschatological epistemological reserve) then there can in effect be no truly literal, unmasked communication, at least on this side of the veil of history. And scriptural interpretation is itself a part of the larger whole of divine revelation and human inspiration, at once a paradigm of its limitation and of its promise.

16 In *Contra Celsum* 7.38 Origen will deal with the problem of anthropomorphism in God, who is, after all, "mind," "simple, unseen and bodiless," having a "face": "Now, since we say that the God of all things, being simple, invisible and incorporeal, is mind or things beyond mind and being, we shall aver that God is apprehended by no one other than one who was made according to the image of that mind. Thus, that I might use the literal statement (*lexis*) of Paul: 'now [we see] through a mirror and in an enigma, but then face to face' (1 Cor 13:12); but if I say 'face,' let no one because of this literal wording (*lexis*) bring as a false accusation the sense disclosed by the term, but one should learn by the statement, 'with unveiled face seeing as in a mirror the glory of the Lord and the same image, being transformed from glory into glory' (2 Cor 3:18), that 'face' is not to be taken in statements such as these as a visible reality (*ou prosôpon aisthêton en tois toioutois paralambanomenon*), but is to be understood allegorically (*kata tropologian nooumenon*), as also eyes and ears and all the things we presented earlier that have the same name as parts of the body" (ed. Marcovich, VCSup 54, p. 491).

17 *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 7.2 (PG 61, 56–57): "Now children, when they look at books, do not know the meaning [literally: power, *dynamis*] of the letters (*grammata*), nor do they know what they are looking at. Indeed, even an adult who has no experience with letters will suffer the same thing. But the experienced (*empeiros*) reader will find great meaning stored up in the letters, and complete lives and histories. The inexperienced reader (*apeiros*), if he takes up an epistle, will consider it paper and ink; but the experienced will even hear a living voice, and he will converse with the absent friend (*dialexetai tô aponti*) and will in turn say whatever he wishes by means of letters (*hoper an boulêtai dia tôn grammatôn palin erei*). This is just what happens in the case of the gospel mystery (*mystêrion*), too: the unbelievers, although they hear it, do not seem to hear it, while the believers, having experience of the Spirit, see the meaning

of the things stored up there. This indeed is precisely what Paul indicated when he said: 'Because even now what is preached is hidden,' for, he said, 'it is hidden to those being destroyed'" (2 Cor 4:3, paraphrased).

18 Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 7.2 (PG 61, 56).

19 Note that John has rephrased Paul's deliberate third person into first.

20 The phrase is usefully ambiguous; it could equally mean "unspeakable words which it is not lawful to speak to a human being." The two sides of the forbidden communication are in view – the speaker and the hearer.

21 Another rewording by John, from Paul's plural *blepomen* ("we see") to the singular.

22 *De incomprehensibili dei natura*, hom. 5, ll. 315–35 (SC 28bis, p. 298). In an earlier homily in this series (hom. 1, ll. 140–56) John argued that the three elements of 1 Cor 13:10 and 12 (the child, the mirror and the *ainigma*) serve as three signs or examples of limited knowledge (just as God gave Moses three signs to perform as proof before the Israelites) (SC 28bis, pp. 108–10).

23 This tension within rhetorical training (and also practice, I would add) can call into question too-rigid distinctions between rhetorical readers and allegorical readers, on the grounds that the former (all Aristotelians) relentlessly prize "clarity," while the latter luxuriate in ambiguity (so sometimes Struck, *Birth of the Symbol*, e.g. p. 13: "In particular, I will be suggesting that Aristotle's notions of poetic language, which value clarity above all, are actually part of a decidedly anti-allegorical project that sits at the head of rhetorical criticism"; but see also the caveat on p. 18: "For me, on the other hand, the opposition between allegorical and rhetorical readers is a heuristic one and not by any means a hard and fast division in the ancient sources").

24 I.e. word and intent, and ambiguity.

25 This quotation and the prior one are from Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 10–11.

26 *PA* 4.1.7.

27 *Epistula Petri ad Jacobum* 2.3–5, ed. B. Rehm, J. Irmscher and F. Paschke, *Die Pseudoklementinen I. Homilien*, 2nd edn. (GCS 42; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1969) p. 2.

28 See Mitchell, "Pauline Accommodation and 'Condescension' (*synkatabasis*)," 197–214.

29 [Dionysius of Halicarnassus], *Ars rhetorica* 8, ed. H. Usener and L. Radermacher, *Dionysii Halicarnasei quae exstant* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899), VI, p. 295.

30 I would take the *kephalaia* here to be the deliberative headings of *to sympheron*, *to dynaton* ("the advantageous," "the possible"), etc.

31 I.e. "making a double brief."

32 [Dionysius of Halicarnassus], *Ars rhetorica* 8.2–3; *Dionysii Halicarnasei*, VI, pp. 295–96.

33 On this deliberative appeal, and its role in arguments on concord and 1 Corinthians in particular, see Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 33–39, 142–47. Gregory's later appeal to "utility" (*ôpheleia*) is precisely

the same as Paul's *sympherein / ôphelein* throughout 1 Corinthians. Both are applying the language of politics to the world of spiritual realities, with the same inbuilt tensions.

34 In contrasting the poetics of these roles I am indebted to Michael Murrin's fine book, *The Veil of Allegory: Some Notes toward a Theory of Allegorical Rhetoric in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 3–53.

35 Or "meaning."

36 An interesting comparison is afforded from the literalism *topos* in Cicero, *De inventione* 2.45.132: "and other citizens will not know what to do if everyone regulates all his affairs according to his own ideas or any whim that strikes his mind or fancy, and not according to the ordinances common to the whole state" (*et ceteros cives quid agant ignoraturos si ex suo quisque consilio et ex ea ratione quae in mentem aut in libidinem venerit, non ex communi praescripto civitatis unam quamque rem administrabit*).

37 In my view it was Paul who brought the example of Moses into his own argument. This was suggested also by Thrall, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1, 258: "If this is so, the use of the veil motif from the Exodus story may well be due entirely to Paul himself" (but she does think that Paul is responding to people who "compared him unfavorably with Moses").

38 Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 123 (italics added).

39 Antoinette Clark Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) stresses the theological acumen of the Corinthians. It bears emphasizing in this connection that one thing we know about the Corinthians is that they were readers – indeed, critical readers – of his letters to them.

40 Hays has himself made a similar observation, on the level of modern Pauline interpreters, in his *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (2nd edn.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 228: "we must take more seriously the poetic functions of language for Paul." The same is true for how we imagine that the earliest addressees of his letters appreciated them.

41 Although my reading is based upon my judgment that 2:14—7:4 is a single letter, those who think chs. 1—9 or even 1—13 of 2 Corinthians is a single letter would still turn to much the same evidence within this literary context to try to fill out the meaning of this accusation.

42 Tellingly, Porphyry will fling this same charge (of *kapêleuein*) against Origen for using his interpretive skills to allegorize the Old Testament's "strange myths" (Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.19.7).

43 2 Cor 4:1–3; cf. 8:23, where Paul avers that the collection is all for "the glory of Christ" (*doxa Christou*).

44 See 2 Cor 8:4, 19–20.

45 See Margaret M. Mitchell, "New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Conventions: The Example of Timothy and Titus," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992), 661–82.

46 The full argument in support of this point may be found in Mitchell, "The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics," and "Paul's Letters to Corinth: The Interpretive Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction."

47 Among modern commentators, this has been best understood and explicated by Paul Brooks Duff. See his "The Transformation of the Spectator: Power, Perception, and the Day of Salvation," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 26 (1987), 233–43; "Metaphor, Motif, and Meaning: The Rhetorical Strategy Behind the Image 'Led in Triumph' in 2 Cor 2:14," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53 (1991), 79–92; "The Language of Processions in 2 Corinthians 4.7–10," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 21 (1991), 158–65; "The Mind of the Redactor: 2 Cor 6:14—7:1 in its Secondary Context," *Novum Testamentum* 35 (1993), 160–80.

48 See 1 Cor 1:24, as well as the epistolary prescript of 1:2: "called saints" (*klêtois hagiois*).

49 Whereas Hays argues that 2 Corinthians 3 is not "a practical discussion of how to do exegesis," but "instead, it is Paul's apologia, which upholds the legitimacy of his apostleship by expounding a vision of authentic ministry" (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 149), I think we must not oppose these two things, but bring them together: it is a discussion of hermeneutics because the basis of doubts about Paul's apostleship was questions about the status of his *logos*.

50 For this translation of *diakonos* see J. N. Collins, *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

51 Or, at least, he devalues texts written with letters over those written with the spirit, as he claims of the Corinthians as letter in 2 Cor 3:2–3 (as was suggested to me by Paul Duff; for a full discussion see his "Glory in the Ministry of Death: Gentile Condemnation and Letters of Recommendation in 2 Cor. 3:6–18," *Novum Testamentum* 46 [2004], 313–37). Duff argues that in the fuller argument Paul "supervalues" the spirit-text over the letter-text (Torah).

52 Cicero, *De inventione* 2.40.116.

53 Contrast Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 150: "When Paul's argumentative framework is kept firmly in mind, it becomes evident that *gramma* and *pneuma* are not the names of hermeneutical principles and that the difference between them is not a distinction between two ways of reading texts."

54 I.e. of letter and intent.

55 Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 56–57 ("This Christianization of rhetorical interpretation-theory, however, is Paul's doing, not Augustine's"). In the ellipsis Professor Eden argues that Paul changed the terms "to accommodate his Jewish constituency," but the Corinthian Christians are predominantly Gentile (see 1 Cor 12:2). See my earlier discussion of Eden's argument in Chapter 2.

56 A commonplace rhetorical argument from the lesser to the greater ("if such is true in this lesser case, how much more so in the greater"). For a nuanced

attempt to emphasize both the discontinuity and continuity that such an argument implies (and hence to reconcile the antithesis of 3:6 with the fuller context), see Duff, "Glory in the Ministry to Death," 319–26.

57 *De inventione* 2.48.143.

58 See esp. 2 Cor 3:14–15, "whenever Moses is read" (*hênika an anaginôsketai Môusês*). The Corinthians, too, are a text that is read (*hê epistolê hêmôn hymeis este . . . ginôskomenê kai anaginôskomenê hypo pantôn tôn anthrôpôn*).

59 See Duff, "The Language of Processions."

60 Carrying forward the metaphor of the procession, 2 Cor 4:10 is like the signs carried in the parade to identify the contents, whether cultic items or military spoils, to the spectators. In Gal 3:1 Paul will use a shorthand expression for this same idea, that his own body and self-presentation served to "placard (*prographein*) Jesus Christ crucified" before their eyes.

61 Especially the contrast between knowledge that is *ek merous* ("partial," or "from a part") and the future knowledge which will be *teleion* ("perfect," "complete") and *prosôpon pros prosôpon* ("face to face") (13:9–12).

62 See Mitchell, "Rhetorical Shorthand in Pauline Argumentation."

63 Or "on their side."

64 John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Genesim* 8.2 (PG 53, 71).

65 Exodus 33—34.

66 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 32.15 (SC 318, p. 116).

67 Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 2.1.138: "through which it is possible – for those not veiled (*kekalymmenoi*) by the heretical veil (*hairetikon prokalymma*) – to perceive with clarity (*saphôs*) that the divine . . . "

68 For other such examples see Nautin (ed.), *Homélies sur Jérémie*, SC 232, p. 298 n. 2, who lists *PA* 1.1.2; *Hom. in Exod.* 12.1 (in the case of Jews, but also "us," wherever we do not understand the text, it is because we are not turning to the Lord so the veil can be taken away); *Hom. in Num.* 7.2 (slavery to the literal sense by Jews, heretics and even non-heretical Christians); *Hom. in Josh.* 9.4 (Jews); *Hom. in Luc.* 26.1; *Comm. in Rom.* 5.2; *Comm. in Mt.* 10.14 (scribes, Jewish or Christian, leaving the letter for the allegorical sense); *Comm. in Mt.* (Lat.) 138; *Contra Celsum* 4.50 (justifying allegorical interpretation against Celsus from within the text of scripture), etc.

69 *Hom. in Jerem.* 5.8 (SC 232, p. 298).

70 The "orthodox" authors will find this a difficult verse when arguing against Marcionites, for whom it seems a clear indication of the demiurge. "Adamantius" claims a Pauline *hyperbaton* to render it not "the god of this age blinded the minds of unbelievers" but "God blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this age" (*Peri tês eis theon orthês pisteôs* 21 [GCS 4, pp. 110–12]).

71 So Nautin, *Homélies sur Jérémie*, SC 232, p. 21.

72 Origen, *Hom. in Jerem.* 5.8 (SC 232, pp. 298–300).

73 Origen, *Hom. in Jerem.* 5.9 (SC 232, p. 302).

74 Note that this contrasts markedly with the position Origen advocated in the *Exhortatio ad martyrium* passage examined at the outset of this chapter.

75 Cf. Heb 10:1.

76 In the section omitted John gives examples of events that took place in the past (wars, pestilence, famines) and those that have come to pass in his own day (the election of the church, the overthrow of the synagogue, the abolition of the Law) in order to explain the principle of divine apportionment of knowledge (i.e. why God put some things in the shadows): people in the times of the biblical prophets were allowed to know the former, but not the latter.

77 A reference to the Christological and ecclesiological referents of scripture.

78 Or perhaps, what is not being unveiled is "that" in Christ it is brought to naught (*hoti* can mean either).

79 John Chrysostom, *De prophetiarum obscuritate*, hom. 1.6 (PG 56, 173).

80 See Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, esp. 1–33, 66–68 and 436–39.

81 As Cicero recommends: "In the second place it must be shown that from what precedes or follows in the document the doubtful point (*id*, sc. *ambiguum*) becomes plain (*perspicuum*) . . . but it is not right to regard as ambiguous what becomes plain on consideration of the whole context" (*quae autem ex omni considerata scriptura perspicua fiant, haec ambigua non oportere existimare*) (*De inventione* 2.40.117).

82 Analysis of early Christian exegesis as deliberately self-plotted on a spectrum between clear and unclear might be more productive than continually trying to press into service the binary literal/allegorical, because the former is attuned precisely to the *poetics of presentation* of ancient biblical interpretation, and to its inherent tensions, both hermeneutical and theological.

CHAPTER 5: VISIBLE SIGNS, MULTIPLE WITNESSES: INTERPRETIVE CRITERIA IN THE AGONISTIC PARADIGM

1 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Prologue (GNO VI), p. 7, ll. 1–2.

2 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Prologue (GNO VI), p. 7, ll. 12–16.

3 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Prologue (GNO VI), p. 7, l. 19 to p. 8, l. 1.

4 The LXX text of Deut 19:15–19 reads: "One witness (*martys*) will not hold good to testify (*martyrêsai*) against a man for any injustice, fault or sin which he has committed. At the mouth of two witnesses (*epi stomatos duo martyrôn*) and at the mouth of three witnesses (*epi stomatos triôn*) any matter will stand (*stathêsetai pan rhêma*). But if an unjust witness (*martys adikos*) stands against (*katastê*) a man, bringing an accusation of impiety against him, then two men shall stand (*stêsontai duo anthrôpoi*), who will speak against him in the presence of the Lord (*enanti kyriou*) and in the presence of (*enanti*) the priests and in the presence of the judges (whoever they might be in those days) and the judges (*hoi kritai*) should perform their scrutiny (*exetasôsin*) with precision (*akribôs*). And if an unjust witness (*martys adikos*) gives unjust testimony (*emartyrêsen adika*) and stands up against (*antestê*) his brother, then you will treat him in accordance with the way he acted, to do evil against his brother, and you will cast out the evil one from your very midst" (*Septuaginta*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935]).

5 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Prologue (GNO VI), p. 8, ll. 1–2: "therefore he says that the two men whose testimony (*martyria*) is true are himself and the father."

6 *synistantes heautous* (Paul is referring back to the term for letters of recommendation, *epistolai systatikai*, he had used in 3:1; cf. the rhetorical denial in 5:12: "we are not again recommending ourselves to you" [*heautous synistanomen hymin*]).

7 2 Cor 6:3–10.

8 A pronoun meaning "such a person." It was a customary rhetorical move among orators to use such pronouns for their opponents, instead of their names.

9 2 Cor 2:16; 3:5–6.

10 2 Cor 11:6.

11 Notice the plural (a possible difficulty for those who think 2 Corinthians is a single letter).

12 For an explanation of this Greek term, see pp. 64 and 67, in relation to 2 Cor 3:12.

13 Full bibliography in Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Thrall, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*; Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (Anchor Bible 32A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2nd edn. 1984); and Calvin J. Roetzel, *2 Corinthians* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2007). Those maintaining the unity of 2 Corinthians include Frances M. Young and David F. Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987); Reimund Bieringer and Jan Lambrecht, *Studies on 2 Corinthians* (BETL 112; Louvain: Peeters, 1994); and, most recently, Frederick J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology: The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 131; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

14 A possible exception is Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology*, who posits three completely different argumentative movements within this part of the full letter of 2 Corinthians: 10:1—11:15 (*refutatio*), 11:16—12:10 (self-adulation, regarded as a regular and expected part of forensic rhetoric) and 12:11—13:10 (*peroratio*). In addition to being questionable in terms of ancient rhetorical categories, this disposition fails to account for the *inclusios* in the composition of chs. 10—13, as I shall show below.

15 *ta sêmeia tou apostolou . . . sêmeiois te kai terasin kai dynamesin. Dynamis*, translated here "miracle," means literally an "exercise of power," and hence is the antonym of Paul's appeal to his weakness (see esp. 2 Cor 12:8–18; 13:4).

16 Or the one Luke gives him at Philippi in Acts 16.

17 Acts 9:7 (Paul's companions hear the voice but see no one); 22:9 (they see the light but do not hear the voice); 26:13–14 (they see the light but do not hear the voice).

18 Even where one might expect it, such as in 1 Cor 15:8 (cf. 9:1), or Gal 1:13–24. Witnesses for the latter include God (1:20) and the churches of Judea, who cannot attest the ecstatic experience, but only its purported result (Paul's shift from persecutor to evangelist).

19 A very commonly used form of rhetorical proof that was also one of the *progymnasmata*, or school exercises.
20 I.e. 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1.
21 Notice the overt courtroom diction.
22 Adamantius, *Peri tês eis theon orthês pisteôs* 2.12 (GCS 4, p. 80).
23 In the second part of the work Adamantius displays his courtroom versatility and endurance as his first antagonist, Megethius, gives way to Markus, the former having advocated three *archai*, or ruling principles, and the latter only two.
24 Probably because John's gospel is not authoritative for his opponent.
25 Compare John 5:31–32; 8:13–14 with our text: "If I testify (*egô martyrô*) about myself (*peri emautou*), then my testimony (*martyria*) is not true (*alêthês*). It is another who testifies about me (*ho martyrôn peri emou*), and I know that the testimony (*martyria*) that he testifies (*martyrei*) about me (*peri emou*) is true (*alêthês*)."
26 Adamantius, *Peri tês eis theon orthês pisteôs* 2.12 (GCS 4, p. 82).
27 The judge refers to Luke 6:13 (and pars.) and Luke 10:1 (unparalleled) because it is the only gospel the Marcionite will accept as evidence.
28 Adamantius, *Peri tês eis theon orthês pisteôs* 2.12 (GCS 4, pp. 80–82).
29 The unit is carefully demarcated, from 11:1, "would that you would put up with a little foolishness (*aphrosynê*) from me," to 12:11, "I have been a fool (*aphrôn*)."
30 The rhetorical form of "personification" of another, one of the schoolroom exercises of ancient rhetorical education (the *progymnasmata*), with which Paul shows himself familiar here (as elsewhere in his correspondence).
31 *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 21.1 (PG 61, 541); he is, however, referring to the whole letter, of course (though this discussion is at 2 Cor 10:1–2).
32 Full discussion in Margaret M. Mitchell, "A Patristic Perspective on Pauline *periautologia*," *New Testament Studies* 46 (2001), 354–71.
33 This term refers to the trials and tribulations Paul lists in 1 Cor 4:9–12; 2 Cor 11:23–29, etc. (on this form of the catalogue of woes of the philosopher, and Paul's uses of it, see John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* [Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 99; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988]).
34 Or, "to speak to a human being."
35 The speech extends from §16 to §43. This is one of two rhetorically designed speeches in the narrative work; the second is with "pagan" philosophers in §§74–80.
36 *Vita Antonii* 39.1 (SC 400, p. 240).
37 *Vita Antonii* 23.3 (SC 400, p. 198). Indeed, Athanasius makes the connection also with the use of *metaschêmatizein* in 1 Cor 4:6. After listing the considerable machinations of the wily demons (including quoting the words of scripture, taking the form of food or riches, striking the monk), Antony avows: "My children, I took remembrance of the apostolic statement (*to apostolikon rhêma*): 'I have given figured expression of this in myself, so that you might learn'

(*meteschêmatisa* [*tauta*] *eis emauton, hina mathête*) not to lose heart in the ascetic life, nor fear the apparitions of the devil and his demons" (40.6 [SC 400, p. 244]).

38 *Vita Antonii* 41.1 (SC 400, p. 246).

39 2 Cor 12:11 ("I have been a fool"); 11:1; cf. 1:20 ("I do not lie!") and 1 Cor 9:22 ("I have become weak").

40 See the discussion in Chapter 3, and p. 64, in particular, on the importance of this term.

41 Literally, "object of impalement secured in his flesh."

42 See esp. 13:4: "he was crucified from weakness (*ex astheneias*)."

43 Space does not allow a full discussion, but God is also invoked as an attestor in 11:11; 12:2 and 3: "God knows" (*ho theos oiden*).

44 "If I love you all the more am I loved all the less?" (12:15).

45 On the judicial use of *enanti* to mark out the presence of the judge, see Deut 19:17 LXX (n. 4 above).

46 Paul had insisted to the Corinthians that this is the only venue that matters as early as 1 Cor 4:1–5; cf. 2 Cor 5:10.

47 John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 29.1 (PG 61, 595–96).

48 This term is also used of the torture of witnesses (usually of slaves) to extract their true testimony. For its use by Origen in reference to exegetical scrutiny, see e.g. *PA* 4.2.3, 8, 9 (where the phrase *basanos tês exetaseôs* is used); *Contra Celsum* 6.4; 7.10, among many instances in patristic interpreters.

49 The "only begotten" (cf. John 1:18).

50 Origen cites Deut 19:15 in an excerpted form such as was done by Paul in 2 Cor 13:1. The SC edition (ed. Pierre Nautin) lists Deut 19:15 here, but I think the intertext of 2 Cor 13:1 must also be noted. Strictly speaking, Origen's version is closer to Paul's in not repeating the *epi* phrase before each of the two ordinals, as well as the noun *martyrôn*; yet he has the object of *epi* with the dative, not the genitive (as both LXX and Paul have it). The Deuteronomy verse is also quoted at Matt 18:16, and in part in 1 Tim 5:19 (in conjunction with Deut 25:4). The latter may be another case of an intertextual rewriting of the Corinthian correspondence (see Mitchell, "Corrective Composition, Corrective Exegesis," and the important study by Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus*).

51 Or "word," as in the next sentence.

52 One reason Origen can find in this judicial verse an exegetical principle is because his exegetical vocabulary, following ancient literary criticism generally, understands the act of interpretation to be an *exetasis* or act of *exetazein* ("scrunity" or "examination") of texts, as of witnesses. This is precisely what a judge does in court, as found in the continuation of this verse, Deut 19:15, in the Septuagint (see n. 4 above).

53 Origen, *Hom. in Jerem.* 1.7 (SC 232, p. 208).

54 Perhaps Origen also gets an impetus for this inner scriptural principle of "double attestation" from Paul in Rom 3:21, where God's righteousness is said to have been "testified to by the law and the prophets" (*memartyroumenê hypo*

tou nomou kai tôn prophêtôn). Hendrik van Vliet regards this also as an echo of Deut 19:15 (*No Single Testimony: A Study on the Adoption of the Law of Deut. 19:15 Par. into the New Testament* [Studia Theologica Rheno-Traiectina 4; Utrecht: Kemink and Zoon, 1958], 5).

55 2 Cor 11:13–15 will be used by early Christian authors in exegesis and heresiology as a kind of "lie detector" (see, for instance, Eustathius of Antioch, *De engastrimytho* 4.9 [Greer and Mitchell, *The "Belly-Myther" of Endor*, 73]. It also is used to explain "witness tampering," as, for instance, in Adamantius, *Peri tês eis theon orthês pisteôs* 2.17 (GCS 4, pp. 94–96).

56 In a similar vein, when Epiphanius of Salamis argues against the followers of Arius and Sabellius, who maintain (rightly) that the term *homoousios* is not biblical, the rule of Deut 19:15 about multiple attestation is itself given multiple attestation, as found in Law, apostles and prophets. However, despite citing this rule, which appears to have been used by Arius to insist that scriptural testimony and vocabulary are required, Epiphanius concludes that "nevertheless it is lawful for us to employ a useful term for the sake of piety when we are shoring up the holy faith" (*Panarion* 72, ed. K. Holl [GCS 3, p. 220]).

57 Translation follows LPGL, *s.v. dysôpêteon*.

58 *Comm. in Matt.* 10.15 (SC 162, pp. 202–04).

59 See Chapter 3.

60 Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 11–12.

61 In partial anticipation of my answer (to be more fully developed in Chapter 6) I cite the apt statement of Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*, 265: "But commentary and exegesis have a problematic status in relation to the texts which are being interpreted: exegesis, itself another text, can never exhaust the possibilities for meaning, never reach closure, never represent, once and for all, the unity which is *logos*. Exegesis and commentary are never-ending, forever attempting to lay bare in another discourse that which was suppressed or unexpressed in the object text."

CHAPTER 6: HERMENEUTICAL EXHAUSTION AND THE END(S) OF INTERPRETATION

1 Although this is not the time to engage this question, the word *theôria* is a perfect choice for Gregory (as for others before him, including the Antiochene Diodore [Prologue to *Commentarii in Psalmos*, ll. 127–8]) since the term is both philosophical and rhetorical (see LSJ, *s.v* III.2, "of the mind, *contemplation*; *consideration*," with citations from both types of works; also LPGL, *s.v.*, pp. 648–49). A valuable examination of the roots of *theôria* in the cultural and intellectual life of fourth-century BCE Athens is Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in its Cultural Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), who explores the difference between Plato and Aristotle on whether *theôria* is useful or not. As we saw in Chapter 1, Gregory's defense of allegory (one of the terms for which is *theôria*)

connects it directly to a principle of utility. The passage we discuss here does so using metaphorical language.

2 Cf. 2 Tim 3:16.

3 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Prologue (GNO VI), p. 12, ll. 1–19.

4 LSJ, *s.v.*: "not worked up"; "of bread, not thoroughly baked"; "undigestive" and "indigestible" (each angle a suggestive one!).

5 A striking contrast within Gregory's own corpus is the injunction in *De vita Mosis* 2.104, 109–11 against "breaking the bones" of scripture to get out the marrow (identified with knowledge about God that only "busybodies" seek out) (GNO VII/1), pp. 64–67. Both culinary metaphors align scriptural interpretation with preparation, cooking and eating, but the first stresses the need for the diligent "working over" of the text, and the second the limits of "cracking" the text in the quest for divine knowledge. In homily 6 of *In Canticum Canticorum* Gregory exhorts readers who want to taste the divine marrow of scripture to "seek it from the one who reveals (*apokalyptôn*) things hidden (*ta kekrymmena*) to those who are worthy" (GNO VI), p. 193.

6 *In Canticum Canticorum*, hom. 7 (GNO VI), pp. 226–27.

7 This was the subject of Chapter 5 above. Of course, that was not John's own view, as he thought the letter being contested was 1 Corinthians.

8 John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 10.1 (PG 61, 406).

9 On the relationship between linguistic theory and hermeneutical exhaustion in Origen, see the keen analysis of Catherine Chin, "Origen and Christian Naming: Textual Exhaustion and the Boundaries of Gentility in *Commentary on John* 1," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14 (2006) 407–36, esp. 420–27, "Exhausting the Text, Exhausting the Reader."

10 See Thrall's translation (*Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1, 128): "For we write to you nothing other than what you read, nothing other, indeed, than that to which you accord recognition." It is a marvelous irony of interpretation that to capture the sense of this sentence translations sometimes go well beyond the literal! Other translations include: JB: "There are no hidden meanings in our letters besides what you can read for yourselves and understand"; NRSV: "For we write to you nothing other than what you can read and also understand"; NEB: "There is nothing in our letters to you but what you can read for yourselves, and understand too"; KJV: "For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge."

11 LSJ, *s.v.* II. As we have seen in Chapter 4, literary style is seen as a vehicle of character, which is why the term can refer so easily to both.

12 LPGL, *s.v. haplous*, B.3.

13 This is an interesting term, meaning a scar or light skin cover over a festering wound (LSJ, *s.v.*); hence, a band-aid hiding a blemish.

14 *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 3.1 (PG 61, 405–06).

15 The prescript self-designation, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God," is almost the same as in 1 Corinthians, and has none of the defensiveness of Gal 1:1, for instance. Indeed, later in this letter at 7:7 Paul

says that Titus had reported about the Corinthians' new state of zeal (*zêlos*) on Paul's behalf.

16 Edgar J. Goodspeed, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), p. 64: "They do not need to read between the lines of his letters; there is no ulterior meaning in them, [2 Cor] 1:12–14."

17 Thrall, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1, p. 133.

18 Paronomasia is a word play or pun.

19 cf. Acts 8:30: "so then, do you recognize (*ginôskeis*) what you are reading (*anaginôskeis*)?"

20 In one Pseudo-Chrysostomic homily, *In venerabilem crucem sermo*, heretics are those who "read (*anaginôskontes*) and do not understand (*epiginôskontes*)" (PG 50, 818).

21 In Cicero's terms (see Chapter 2 above), Paul will defend his earlier letter both as *qui scriptum defendet* ("one who defends the letter") and as *contra scriptum qui dicet* ("one who speaks against the letter").

22 It seems strange that BDAG explicitly denies this, with an argument that works more against than for the contention: while under 1a BDAG lists 1 Cor 13:12a as an instance where the preposition *epi* is "making its influence felt, *know exactly, completely, through and through*," in opposition to *ginôskein ek merous*, 2 Cor 1:13–14 is listed under 5 with the opposite judgment – "here the intensifying *heôs telous* causes *epiginôskein* to equal the simple verb *ginôskein*."

23 For full bibliographic information on partition theories of 2 Corinthians, see Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, and Mitchell, "The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics," 20–36.

24 James Houghton Kennedy, *The Second and Third Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Methuen, 1900); Goodspeed, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 59–60. ("Let us examine the latter part, chapters 10—13, on the theory that it is the missing letter or part of it, always remembering that, when we really hit upon the historical situation that called forth an ancient document, especially a personal letter, it should gain greatly in intelligibility and meaning"); Francis Watson, "2 Cor. x—xiii and Paul's Painful Letter to the Corinthians," *Journal of Theological Studies* 35 (1984), 324–46. For a complete list of adherents to this hypothesis, see Thrall, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1, p. 49. As is well known, many contemporary scholars (such as C. K. Barrett, Victor Paul Furnish and, most recently, Margaret E. Thrall) also take 2 Corinthians 10—13 to be a separate letter, but they think it came after, rather than before, 2 Corinthians 1—9 (or 1—8).

25 Earlier Kennedy, *Second and Third Epistles of St. Paul*, 80–86, and Kirsopp Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul: Their Motive and Origin* (London: Rivingtons, 1911), 57–58, pointed to the following parallel passages: 13:10 || 2:3; 13:2 || 1:23; and 10:6 || 2:9.

26 As shown in Chapter 2.

27 This appeal to precise meaning indicates that Paul presumes that the Corinthians have the letter before them for continual consultation and that he probably kept copies of his own letters so that he could join them in the negotiation

of meaning. This allowed him to develop arguments for later letters beyond this particular correspondence, such as the refashioning of 2 Cor 2:9 ("I shall boast in the afflictions") in Rom 5:3 ("we might boast in the afflictions"), or 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 and Romans 14—15 (on food sacrificed to idols). This suggests that we must locate the generative impulse of the *corpus Paulinum* already in Paul's own lifetime (as is well argued by Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995], 101: "The tangled correspondence of Paul with the Corinthians, if not typical, certainly indicates that Paul needed to and did keep track of what he had written"). It is in any case hard to imagine that Paul would have labored over such a huge letter as 1 Corinthians, for instance, and then let the only copy out of his hand! Alternatively, if Paul did not keep copies of his letters, then he is at a bit of a disadvantage in the task of textual interpretation, working from memory while the Corinthians were in possession of the sole copy of the contested text, an interesting prospect in itself. Again Gamble recognizes the issue well: "the text, once placed in the hands of the recipients, was no longer under Paul's control and might be used as the community or its members saw fit" (96).

28 Cf. 10:18, "For it is not the one who recommends himself who is *testworthy* (*dokimos*), but the one whom the Lord recommends"; 13:3, "since you seek a *test* (*dokimê*) that the one speaking in me is Christ."

29 In the Greek this term is emphasized so much that it is pulled forward out of its own clause.

30 John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 10.3 (PG 61, 408): "So then Paul says this: I do not wish 'according to the flesh,' and I am not independent of the piloting of the Spirit, nor do I have authority to go where I wish. For I am placed under the rule and command of the Paraclete, and I am led and borne about by his decrees."

31 Cicero, *De inventione* 2.40.117 (text and tr. H. M. Hubbell, LCL 386).

32 Pseudo-Libanius includes the *miktê charaktêr* ("mixed style") as the last of 45 types (cited from Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* [Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study 19; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988], p. 72).

33 Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, 66–80.

34 *De inventione* 2.40.117, cited above, pp. 100–01.

35 *De inventione* 2.42.121–24. The line that introduces this quotation reads: "A controversy over the letter and intent occurs when one party follows the exact words that are written (*cum alter verbis ipsis quae scripta sunt utitur*), and the other directs his whole pleading to what he says the writer meant (*alter ad id quod scriptorem sensisse dicet omnem adiungit dictionem*)."

36 Full discussion of this ancient rhetorical form, meant to turn the hearer into a spectator, and its use in later Pauline interpretation, may be found in Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 101–04.

37 Rembrandt van Rijn, portrait of Paul, c. 1657 (National Gallery, Washington, DC).

38 Lovis Corinth, right panel of triptych in the church of Tapiau, 1911, now in Kunsthalle Mannheim.

39 Cicero, *De inventione* 2.41.119: *si id quod nos demonstrabimus honestum aut utile aut necessarium demonstrabimus.*

40 Cicero, *De inventione* 2.48.142: the speaker who opposes the letter when exploiting ambiguity will "introduce a definition of some word and interpret the meaning of the word which seems to bear hard upon him, so as to support his own case, or develop from the written word something that is not expressed" (*aut verbi definitionem inducere et illius verbi vim quo urgueri videatur ad suae causae commodum traducere aut ex scripto non scriptum aliquid inducere*).

41 Note the word play (paronomasia) on *metanoia, ametamelêtos*/*metamelesthai* throughout this argument in 7:8–10 (especially in v. 10: "for godly grief works an unregrettable [*ametamelêtos*] repentance [*metanoia*] for salvation"). *Ametamelêtos* can mean not only "unregrettable," but also "unchangeable"; Paul certainly has both in view.

42 See Wayne A. Meeks, "The Polyphonic Ethics of the Apostle Paul," in *In Search of the Early Christians*, ed. Allen R. Hilton and H. Gregory Snyder (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 196–209.

43 I mean this in both senses; some of these terms were in Paul's Bible (the Septuagint) and all were to become "biblical" when the New Testament canon (list of authoritative writings) began to emerge between the second and the fourth centuries. The Corinthian letters were never in dispute in the early church, but were esteemed by "orthodox" (or "proto-orthodox"), "Gnostics" (Valentinians, Sethians), "Marcionites," "Montanists," etc.

44 J. Allenbach *et al.* (eds.), *Biblia patristica: Index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique* (6 vols.; Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1975–).

45 As stated earlier in this book, this involves a shift in the conceptualization of "patristic biblical interpretation" from a concentration solely on how early exegetes "commented on" a passage, to how they "commented with" key passages.

46 Such as the quotation from the skeptic Sextus Empiricus about "rhetoric," as cited in Chapter 2, p. 24.

47 Cicero, *De inventione* 2.41.119: *res utilior aut honestior aut magis necessaria.*

48 Passages which of course exercised tremendous influence on Augustine and his hermeneutics.

49 In this discussion I am going beyond my title, in the sense that I do not restrict "biblical scholarship" here to "Christian hermeneutics," but I have in mind the tasks and audiences of academic biblical scholarship, as well as that carried out in particularly ecclesial contexts and the ways in which they overlap in the public sphere.

50 Another salient value of ancient hermeneutics which Eden accents is the depiction of reading as a process of *oikeiôsis*, "homecoming" (pp. 73 *et passim*, with Odysseus as its exemplar) and "rendering familiar," which is most applicable, if in different ways, to biblical scholarship in both academic and ecclesial

contexts. In ancient exegesis, influenced also by Stoic *oikeiôsis*, this familiarization process was theologized as a form of divinization, seen paradoxically as both prerequisite and outcome of holy reading (see e.g. Gregory's view that the reader of the divine scripture must herself become "like God" [*homoiôtheis tô theô*]: *In Canticum Canticorum*, hom. 1 [GNO VI), p. 25, ll. 8–9].

51 Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 43 n. 4.

52 Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, esp. 9–49 ("Exegesis and the Unity of the Scriptures").

53 Hans W. Frei, "The 'Literal Reading' of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does it Stretch or Will it Break?," in *The Bible and the Narrative Tradition*, ed. Frank McConnell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 36–77.

54 Origen, *Hom. in Jerem.* 1.7 (SC 232, p. 208), cited in Chapter 5, p. 92.

55 A telling instance appeared as this volume was going to press: "An Elephant in the Room: Historical-Critical and Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible," by George Aichele, Peter Miscall and Richard Walsh, in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128 (2009), 383–404. The authors, who late in the essay express their wish to escape "the peril of demonizing historical-criticism as the hated other" (401), begin with the unargued premise (presented as what "everyone ... knows") that "historical critics and postmodernists are entrenched, embattled groups that speak to one another across the field of biblical studies only in sniping, intellectually unengaged footnotes" (383). Granting that the authors' wish for dialogue is genuine, it is nonetheless hard to see how reconciliation can be achieved from within the agonistic paradigm, i.e. a starting point that involves a reification of the opposition into a single position, one continually defined not on its own terms, but in contrast to their own (ironically, this is their own definition of the category of "myth" with which they seek to tar their counterparts: "adversarial self-creation vis-à-vis the doubled other" [388]). What is most interesting in terms of the argument of the present volume is the way the literalism and allegorizing *topoi* at work in the agonistic paradigm of interpretation are inverted for rhetorical comeuppance. The authors charge historical critics with being hopelessly and obliviously embedded in a modernist mythic construct, which is meant to be a disabling blow (you think you are literal, but you are actually supported by the very vehicle of allegory!). The postmodernist authors for their part deflect the (presumed) charge they face of excessive allegorical fancy (i.e. reading anything they want into the text) by claiming to be "fascinated with surfaces" (not depths!) and with "the signifier as opposed to the signified" (hence they are the true literalists!) (399). Of course, in reality, neither "historical critics" nor "postmodernists" are purely or exclusively either. My discussion of ancient rhetoric on textual interpretation should call into question the complete novelty of these hermeneutical issues or such forms of expression to the present context, even as it suggests the implacability of any debate cast in such terms. Below I suggest a different way to resist this polarization of the enterprise, and resolutely straddle the line on textual determinacy by deliberately holding together some of these proverbial tensions in textual interpretation.

56 The English term "discovery" (like the Greek rhetorical term *heuresis*) nicely unites the task of finding what might be there in the text and the work of the exegete to contribute to what is found.

57 Diodore of Tarsus repudiates "allegory" ("For that which is said differently from what lies in the text is not '*theôria*' but '*allêgoria*'"), and then immediately offers as his example of the approved method of *theôria* or *anagôgê* a reading of Genesis 4 that aligns Cain with the synagogue and Abel with the church (*Comm. in Ps.*, Prologue, ll. 132–53 [CCSG 6, pp. 7–8]).

58 See also Frances M. Young, "The Fourth Century Reaction against Allegory," in Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica 30* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 120–25.

59 Richard Bauckham (ed.), *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Francis Watson has an essay in that volume ("Toward a Literal Reading of the Gospels") which continues threads of some of his own earlier work, as in *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

60 This debate has been more widely distributed via the Internet (as a Google search will show).

61 Wayne A. Meeks, *Christ Is the Question* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006), 118.

62 The full quotation reads: "The struggle between clarity and confusion, between the necessity to make sense in a continually changing world and the passion to be faithful to foundations once laid, was and is unending. In many ways those struggles can be glimpsed *in nuce* already in that master interpreter of the first generation, the apostle Paul. The next chapter examines the way in which Paul transformed the story of Jesus' death into the master metaphor for Christian life and thought, a story to think with" (Meeks, *Christ Is the Question*, 82).

63 See Margaret M. Mitchell, "How Biblical is the Christian Right?," published online in May 2006 on the Religion and Culture Web Forum, Martin Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion, University of Chicago Divinity School. (http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications/webforum/052006). In this context it is useful to revisit an earlier incarnation of the Barton–Meeks debate in another Oxford–Yale pair: James Barr and Brevard Childs (James Barr, "The Literal, the Allegorical, and Modern Biblical Scholarship," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 44 [1989], 3–17, and B. S. Childs, "Critical Reflections on James Barr's Understanding of the Literal and the Allegorical," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 46 [1990], 3–9).

64 It is the case that "generic competency" and various forms of literary archaeology, as well as philological analysis (which is the bread and butter of biblical scholarship, past and present), have characterized modern critical biblical study more than pure who, what, when and where questions of historiography. But one cannot leave the "historical" piece out, for one of the best reasons that "historical" study cannot be put aside is that, as Barton himself expresses well in another essay, curious readers continue to generate historical questions

(John Barton, "Historical-Critical Approaches," in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John Barton [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 2–20). Indeed, the modern media organs seek to meet that interest as they churn up a new historical discovery every year, timing their disclosure, ironically, to coincide with the liturgical calendar, thus reinforcing positivist simplicity about the empirical verifiability of Christian faith, ritual or forms of community.

65 See e.g. Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 228: "A word of caution is necessary here: I am not proposing that New Testament exegetes should abandon the quest for *clarity* in interpreting Paul. I am advocating only that the presupposition of *univocity* be discarded" (italics original). I fully agree, but with the model I am about to propose I wish to locate the multivalence hermeneutically both in the author, Paul, and in the text and its readers, and to find a way to capture the dynamism that runs throughout the process.

66 *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 77.

67 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, Prologue (GNO VI), p. 12, ll. 20 to p. 13, l. 21.

68 The extant homilies cover Song of Songs 1:1—6:8 (the book extends to 8:14). Gregory underestimates his progress when he says he has only managed to work through about half the book.

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