

Chapter 14

Inclusion of and Demarcation from ‘Outsiders’

Mission and Ethics in Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the enigmatic relationship between Paul’s notions of inclusion of and demarcation from outsiders in 2 Corinthians. On the one hand, Paul proclaims in his letter that the world has been reconciled to God through Christ (5:19). On the other hand, Paul entreats the church to separate from ‘unbelievers’ (6:14–7:1). The first section of the chapter investigates the nature and scope of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians by focusing on 5:14–21. The second section provides an in-depth analysis of the controversially debated passage 6:14–7:1, which appears to portray an attitude of total exclusion towards outsiders. In this context I suggest a way out of the previous impasse of scholarship by arguing that the passage can be read as a double entendre referring to (selective) demarcation both from idolatrous people outside the church (= unbelievers) and ‘idolatrous’ people inside the church (= ‘unbelievers’), i.e., his opponents. The third section of the chapter discusses and identifies some potential interconnections between Paul’s inclusive soteriology and his seemingly exclusive ethics in the context of his mission to and beyond the Corinthians.

A. Introduction

Paul’s gospel is inclusive of *all* outsiders. This is, among other Pauline passages, evident from 2 Corinthians 5:14–21, a text which has recently been described by Adam (2009:221) as having an ‘almost unsurpassable universal significance’. After all, in 5:19 Paul proclaims that God has in Christ reconciled *the cosmos* to himself (θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσειν ἑαυτῷ). However, does this mean that 2 Corinthians portrays the whole world as the in-group, and that there are no out-groups from which the community of the reconciled is to be separate? Is Paul’s construction of Jewish-Christian identity really totally free from the sociological dynamics which appear to be characteristic of any other group, namely, that a sense of identity is established or enhanced by demarcation from others? In this chapter we will investigate some of the key features of Paul’s approach to

mission and ethics in 2 Corinthians. Section A will focus on Paul's inclusive approach to outsiders. Section B of the chapter we will turn to the potential limits of Paul's inclusivism. In this context we will give particular attention to the controversially debated passage 6:14–7:1 because it appears to portray an attitude of exclusion towards 'unbelievers' which seems to amount to the very opposite of 'sensitivity to outsiders'.

B. Paul's Inclusive Mission in 2 Corinthians

Paul's life and mission is driven by love. He says in 2 Corinthians 5:14 that the love of Christ 'compels us' (συνέχει). The word συνέχω has various shades of meaning, of which one basic sense is 'to hold together, sustain' (BDAG). This coheres with what Paul says elsewhere about the empowering character of divine and human love which 'holds people together' and builds them up (e.g. 1 Cor 8:1; Phlp 2:1; cf. Eph 3:17, 19; 4:16). In 5:14 the focus is on the way in which this experience of love causes Paul to behave towards others. On the one hand, Christ's self-sacrificing love restrains Paul from self-seeking (Thrall 1994:408). On the other hand, Paul wants to extend to his church and the world beyond the love that he himself has received (2:4; 5:14). The experience of God's love and comfort enables him to pass on comfort and love to others (cf. 1:4; 9:8–12). For this reason, one can also see the meaning of 'to urge on, impel' (providing an impulse for activity) in συνέχω (BDAG).

This 'compelling love' that guides the apostles in every aspect of their behavior extends both to 'outsiders' and 'insiders'. In 1:12 Paul asserts: 'this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God – and all the more toward you'.¹ This last aspect, namely Paul's 'sensitivity to insiders', plays a significant role in 2 Corinthians. As we will see in more detail in section B of this chapter, the relationship between the apostle and his church was strained. In this context Paul stresses, not only in 1:12 but also in a number of other places, his sincerity and openness (4:2; 5:11 etc.) and asks the Corinthians to open their hearts to him too and be reconciled with him (6:11–13; 7:2–4; etc.). His ethical lifestyle is a mainstay in this mission because it gives evidence of his sincerity in his interaction with 'insiders' (i.e. the church at Corinth), and it can attract 'outsiders' who have not yet been reached by Paul's message of reconciliation.

Paul's mission is thus both *centripetal* – directed towards the inside – and *centrifugal* – directed towards those outside of the faith community (2:14;

¹ Here and throughout, English-language citations of the Bible are taken from the NRSV.

4:15; 10:16; cf. Gl 6:10; Rm 15:18–24; etc.) (cf. Kok 2011:9).² We can see this also in the passage referenced at the outset of this article: 5:14–21. Beginning with ‘for’ (γάρ), verse 14 links back to Paul’s relationship to ‘insiders’, his church at Corinth (vv. 11–13). However, verse 14 also indicates the universal nature of Paul’s gospel, which he will expound in greater detail in the following verses (15–21): ‘one has died for all; therefore all have died’ (v. 14). This statement indicates the total inclusion of *everyone* (οἱ πάντες) in the saving act of Christ. This straightforward interpretation is confirmed by verse 19 where Paul proclaims that God has in Christ reconciled *the cosmos* to himself (θεός ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ). Accordingly, Paul seems to suggest that the divine perspective on the cosmos is that the entire world is an ‘in-group’. There are no outsiders.

If there are none outside of God’s salvation (and thus from the salvific community), then no one will perish. Salvation is universal. Consequently, when Paul speaks in 4:3 of ‘those who are perishing’ (τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις), he might be using this term with a temporary and not an eschatological meaning. Indeed, Adam in his detailed study of Paul’s *Heilsuniversalismus* calls Paul’s usage of ἀπολλυμένοι ‘pre-eschatological’ (*voreschatologisch*) (Adam 2009:221). As Paul entreats his readers on behalf of Christ: ‘be reconciled to God’, it is *God* making his appeal through the apostles (5:20). *God* achieves what he calls for, his imperative is a ‘performative’ (cf. Landmesser 1997:543–577).³ Nonetheless, Adam admits that ‘*noch nicht zu allen Adressaten der Versöhnungsruf Gottes, der im Ruf schafft, was er benennt, wirkmächtig hindurchgedrungen ist*’ (Adam 2009:221–222). Although Adam does not in this context elucidate the reasons for this lack of achievement of the divine call, he explains earlier on that the blindness of ‘those who are perishing’ (and thus their ‘perishing’ itself) is due to God himself and his predestination (Adam 2009:218–220).⁴ In line with this interpretation Adam also criticizes Hübner who points out that those of Paul’s audience who respond to the apostle’s openness with openness on their part will move from lack of understanding to understanding (Hübner 1993:213). Adam rather believes that the hardening and veiling is the problem (3:14), not the lack of openness on the side of the audience. As the

² On the holistic nature of Paul’s mission, see further Rabens (2012b:219–234).

³ A typical example of God’s creating or ‘performative’ command is Genesis 1:3–28. However, one may need to take into consideration that in Genesis there is a difference between inanimate nature and human beings, not least because the latter are infused with God’s spirit and are called to take responsibility for the rest of the creation (2:7; 1:26–28).

⁴ Presumably it would follow for Adam to read ὁ θεός τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου as a reference to God himself, because 4:4 ascribes ‘the blindness of the minds of the unbelievers’ to the work of ‘the god of this world’.

former is the consequence of divine action, thus also the move from blindness to sight and understanding is exclusively the work of God by his Spirit (Adam 2009:220 fn. 196).⁵

However, while it is true that entry into the realm of salvation is primarily dependent on divine initiative, it seems to be a false antithesis to require that there is consequently no place for human acceptance of the divine gift of reconciliation. Why would Paul otherwise call upon his audience with the imperative 'be reconciled to God' (καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ, 5:20)? Likewise, if reconciliation was a one-way street, why would the apostle need to entreat the Corinthians to actively match his openness (6:11) by calling them to 'open wide your hearts also' (6:13; 7:2)? What is the force of Paul's appeal if there is no room for either insiders or '(temporary) outsiders' to react? Adam tries to prove the total passiveness of the individual who 'turns to the Lord' (ἤνικα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον ... [aorist active subjunctive], 3:16)⁶ by pointing out that Paul says in 3:14 that only in Christ is the veil taken away (μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται) (Adam 2009:221). However, although Paul indeed stresses the divine initiative in verse 14, verse 16 seems to view the process of conversion from the perspective of the human individual: as a person turns to the Lord (active), the veil is taken away (... περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα, passive). Adam may be (theo)logically right to give greater weight to the sequence indicated in verse 14 than to that in verse 16, but he seems to take this too far when he rules out any human involvement.

Paul unequivocally names different groups of outsiders in 2 Corinthians, including the 'unbelievers' (ἄπιστοι) in 6:14–7:1, a group to whom we will turn our attention in the next section. Paul also speaks of 'those who are perishing' (τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, 2:15; 4:3), whose minds have been blinded by the god of this world (4:4). Although Paul does not explicitly say that they will ultimately perish, this locution certainly speaks against a total inclusion of every human being in the realm of salvation in the present. Nonetheless, we can only speak of those who are presently not included as 'outsiders' in inverted commas (i.e. in a provisional way) because 5:14–15 says that *all* (οἱ πάντες) have died in Christ, and the universal significance of this 'all' is confirmed by 5:19: 'in Christ God was reconciling the world (κόσμος) to himself'.

We can conclude that what Paul writes about the scope of salvation in 2 Corinthians does not lend itself to either universalism or exclusivism. On

⁵ On the work of the Spirit in mission, see further Rabens (2013b).

⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:16 alludes to Exodus 34:34; however, the subject in Paul's syntax is left obscure as it is unclear who it is that turns to the Lord. After mentioning the various interpretative options, Harris (2005:307–308) argues persuasively that an indefinite τις is implied, with the sense of 'everyone' – Jew or Gentile (cf. 'we all' in 3:18).

the one hand, Paul indicates that everyone is included in the reconciliation established through God in Christ. On the other hand, Paul invites people to participate in this reconciliation, and he names groups of people that have not yet entered this reconciled relationship to the divine. While there seem to be grounds for Adam's universalistic position in Romans (which is Adam's basis), for instance 11:26 ('all Israel will be saved') (Adam 2009:220–221),⁷ 2 Corinthians does not provide an unambiguous vision of the eternal inclusion of all outsiders in the community of faith. Although the soteriological foundation for this inclusion has been laid in Christ (5:14, 19), which raises the hope for this act to have an universal impact at the eschaton, in the here and now Paul continues to invite people to let this reconciliation happen to them and to come from the outside to the inside (5:20–21).

C. Paul's Exclusive Ethics in 2 Corinthians

In section A we saw that Paul's gospel forms the basis for the inclusion of *everyone* in the realm of salvation. The family of faith is open for all humanity. Outsiders are invited to accept the reconciliation with God which has already been achieved by God through Christ. 2 Corinthians thus evidences a great sensitivity to outsiders from the perspective of Paul's approach to mission and soteriology. Does this mean, however, that for Paul there are no out-groups from which the community of the reconciled is to be separate? Is Paul's ethics fully inclusive too, or does it have limitations?

We have already observed that Paul strives for reconciliation and a deeper relationship with the 'in-group' in Corinth. In 2 Corinthians 6:11–12 he assures the church of his affection for them: 'Our heart is wide open to you. There is no restriction in our affections – but only in yours'. He continues by encouraging them to open their hearts to him too (6:13). However, what then follows is a drastic call for demarcation (6:14–7:1). Paul commands the Corinthians 'Do not be mismatched with unbelievers (Μὴ γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις)' (6:14a). This appeal is supported by five rhetorical questions (6:14b–16a) and a statement declaring that believers are the temple of God (6:16b). A catena of quotations from the Hebrew Bible is then adduced which confirms the imperative of separation ('come out from them, and be separate from them', 6:17) and leads to a promise. The section closes with a call to cleanse oneself from defilement and to make holiness perfect.

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 is the passage of the letter that deals most explicitly with how to relate to a particular group of outsiders, namely, *unbelievers*. For this reason, section B of this article is devoted to a thorough analysis of this passage and its ethical implications for religious identity

⁷ Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24–28, and the brief analysis in n. 69 below.

formation in Corinth. Processes of religious formation such as the emergence of the church at Corinth as related in the two Corinthian letters regularly require active demarcation from groups that endanger the identity of the new movement. After a phase of spatial and temporal coexistence (constituted by different zones or modes of contact), one can observe in some groups implicit or explicit processes of differentiation by establishing or assuming both a distinct self-understanding as well as a clear notion of 'otherness'. This need for discrimination through demarcation can be caused by forces from outside or inside the group (or by both, so that exogenous and endogenous factors interfere), for example, by a significant set of overlapping characteristics between two or more (religious) groups or by a situation of inner destabilization which needs to be overcome.⁸

It is clear that the Corinthian conflict posed a situation of destabilization – induced, among other things, by a group of opponents of Paul who endeavored to steer the church away from the apostle.⁹ What kind of demarcation is Paul requiring from his church in these circumstances? The action that Paul is asking for is one which will provide identity-formation for 'his' group. Straub (1998:92) explains that 'identity is gained in *transitions*, that is to say, in the mental processing of transitions and transformations, not in fixed unchanging situations'.¹⁰ Against this background, what was it that Paul wanted to see transformed in the situation of the Corinthians? Why did Paul see a need for demarcation? In order to find an answer to these questions, this chapter seeks to identify the group that is 'othered' by Paul in the so-called 'fragment' (2 Cor 6:14–7:1). Who are the ἄπιστοι, and what kind of relationships with them are to be avoided (μὴ γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες) (6:14a)?

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 is a heavily debated passage. Whether it was written by Paul has been called into question, not least because it appears to display such a severe notion of demarcation which seems to be incoherent with what Paul writes on this matter elsewhere, especially in 1 Corinthians 5. However, as I have argued elsewhere, there are good reasons to assume Pauline authorship or at least a Pauline redaction of the passage (the frag-

⁸ On inclusion and exclusion, see further Luhmann (2008:226–251).

⁹ See the recent discussions, e.g., in Harris (2005:54–87) and the much briefer Dunn (2009:834–842).

¹⁰ The translation is my own. Cf. Straub (1998:87): "'Identitätsarbeit" ... [means] dem Selbst- und Weltverhältnis von Personen eine spezifische Struktur oder Form zu verleihen'.

ment may have had its original *Sitz im Leben* in an early Christian catechesis¹¹) (Rabens 2006:esp. 44–50).¹² While there is no need to rehearse the broader discussion here, it is of relevance for our inquiry into the nature of the demarcation from outsiders demanded by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 that our passage does not stand in fundamental opposition to Paul’s tolerance in 1 Corinthians. This is particularly obvious when we look at 1 Corinthians 5:10b where Paul explains that he did not mean to say that the Corinthians ‘need to go out of the world’ (*pace* Allo 1956:189; Heil 1996:725). For one thing, a tension between the positions of separation and association is already apparent in 1 Corinthians itself.¹³ Furthermore, the nature of separation in 1 Corinthians 5:10b and 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 is distinctively different, as pointed out by Webb (1993:190–191; cf. Newton 1985:112–113): ‘Separation from the world (outsiders) in 1 Cor. 5:10b is a *complete removal* from even casual physical contact, while the nature of separation from the world/outsiders in 2 Cor. 6.17a is a *selective removal* from intimate contact (that is, only from certain covenant-forming relationships)’. The former is condemned in 1 Corinthians 5:10b, whereas the latter is encouraged in 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1. In 1 Corinthians 5:9–13 nothing is said to prohibit a selective withdrawal from the world in a case where a serious covenant violation occurs.¹⁴ In the same way, in 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 nothing is said to prohibit contact with unbelievers. The covenant language in the rhetorical questions and the two covenant formulas of the Hebrew Bible suggest that more is at stake than social contact. We can hence conclude that only if the two passages were speaking about the same kind of separation could a contradiction be inferred (cf. Webb 1993:191–192).

Against this background, how are we to envisage the development of Paul’s interaction with the Corinthians on the topic of interaction with

¹¹ Martin (1986:193), though emphasizing that it is not a case of direct borrowing, finds it doubtful that this paragraph originally came from Paul. Rather, he reckons with Paul’s use of a piece of tradition put together previously by a Christian of Essene background (building on Rensberger 1978:41). For more recent tradition-critical proposals, see, e.g., Baumert (2008:128) and Schmeller (2010:371).

¹² Part 2 of this chapter is an adaptation of my previously published 2013a essay for the present study. It incorporates, in slightly edited form, sections of Rabens (2006) but moves significantly beyond this publication, particularly in its double entendre reading of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1. For a helpful overview of the reasons that speak for Pauline authorship as well as contextual integration of the fragment in its present place, see Nathan (2013). Apart from the scholars supporting Pauline authorship mentioned by Nathan, see, *inter alia*, Matera (2003:159–160); Harris (2005:25); Woyke (2005:289–294); Baumert (2008:128); and Maschmeier (2011:153).

¹³ See the compelling compilation of the various aspects in 1 Corinthians by Barrett (1982:196). On identity formation in 1 Corinthians 5, see further Horrell (2009:197–212).

¹⁴ In fact, selective withdrawal is commanded by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:18–20; 8:10; 10:14–22.

'unbelievers'? My solution to this riddle is elucidated in the chart below. In particular, I seek to advance the thesis that the demarcation that is demanded by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 should be/can be understood on a first and primary reading/hearing as a selective removal from covenant-forming relationships with idolatrous people outside the church (= unbelievers/ outsiders). However, the text appears to transport deliberate ambiguity through the rhetorical device of *double entendre* (lit. 'double hearing/ understanding').¹⁵ The readers/hearers of Paul's letter are thus in a position to interpret the imperative not to be mismatched with ἄπιστοι upon a second and secondary reading/hearing as a reference to Paul's opponents, the 'false apostles' (= 'unbelievers'/'outsiders'). This reading suggests itself when the recipients progress towards chapters 10–12, where Paul overtly defends himself and his ministry against the accusations of his opponents. Moreover, this double entendre is strengthened by the preceding and the immediate literary context of the fragment (at least upon a second reading of the letter), as I will demonstrate below (sub-section C.II).

[1] Paul in his previous letter (mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9)	'Do not associate with immoral people (πόρνοι)' ¹⁶
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Misunderstood by the Corinthians as:	'Do not associate with the sexually immoral people (πόρνοι) of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters' (=outsiders, οἱ ἔξω, 5:12) [this is <i>not</i> what Paul had meant (5:10)]
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[2] Rectification by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:11.	'Do not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do not even eat with such a one.'
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[3] Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:14(–7:1)	'Do not be mismatched with unbelievers (ἄπιστοι)'
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Double entendre:

first hearing/meaning:	(1) 'Do not be mismatched with unbelievers' (idolatrous people <i>outside</i> the church)
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second hearing/meaning:	(2) 'Do not be mismatched with "unbelievers"' (idolatrous people [i.e. 'false apostles'] <i>inside</i> the church)
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¹⁵ See the fuller discussion of double entendre in sub-section C.II below.

¹⁶ It cannot be ruled out that 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 is the command of the previous letter referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9, as suggested by Martin (1986:194, building on Rensberger 1978:25–49). However, whereas 1 Corinthians 5:9 specifies sexually immoral people as the group to be avoided (πόρνοι), 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 seems to be targeted at idolatry (see sub-section C.I, below). While both sins are related in Paul (see Wolter 2011: 328–335), it remains speculative to assume that both passages are identical.

In order to prove my thesis that 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 can be read as a double entendre referring first to demarcation from idolatrous people outside the church (= unbelievers), and second to demarcation from false apostles (= ‘unbelievers’), I will show in sub-section C.I how the first meaning is suggested by the wider contextual integration of the fragment in 2 Corinthians 1–9 as well as by the intertextual references to the Hebrew Bible within the fragment. In 2.2. I will expound how the passage transmits by means of a double entendre the notion of ἄπιστοι as Paul’s opponents. In 2.3. I will then suggest a number of conclusions regarding the relevance of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 for understanding processes of demarcation and identity formation in the context of Paul’s approach to outsiders in his Corinthian correspondence.

I. Demarcation from Idolatrous People Outside the Church (= Unbelievers/ Outsiders)

In order to determine the details of the demarcation from outsiders that Paul commands in 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1, it is necessary to tackle the two key interpretative questions posed by the fragment, namely, the meaning of ἄπιστοι (‘unbelievers’) and the interpretation of ἑτεροζυγέω (‘to be unevenly yoked’) in verse 14. The results of this investigation will be paradigmatic for our comprehension of the meaning of the entire passage, because, among other things, Paul edits the pronoun in the source of his central appeal ‘Come out from them!’ so that it agrees with ἄπιστοι (he changes the αὐτῆς of Isaiah 52:11 to αὐτῶν in 6:17). Thus, in order to determine what is meant by ‘coming out’ we need to ascertain from what kind of relationships with what kind of people Paul wants the Corinthians to abstain.

The straightforward reading of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 is to interpret ἄπιστοι in 6:14 as a reference to unbelievers outside the church. For one thing, this is suggested by the fact that Paul nowhere else appears to use ἄπιστοι for his Christian opponents; rather, he usually employs this term to denote unbelievers.¹⁷ This also seems to hold true for the other occurrence

¹⁷ Cf. Belleville (1996:177); Harris (2005:499); *et al.* Woyke comments that the pairs of opposites (πιστός and ἄπιστος, etc.) in 6:14–16 ‘in der Tendenz Heils- und Unheilsbereiche beschreiben’ (Woyke 2005:321). According to Webb, the defining sense of ἄπιστοι is not the main issue, since the sense could be ‘unbelievers’ while the referent would be ‘false apostles’. Indeed, Rensberger (1978:30) rightly argues that ‘those who reject the Gospel of Christ and the Apostle of Christ belong in the category of “unbelievers” whether nominally Christians or not’. Over this there is no dispute. The real question is, however, whether this is Paul’s *normal* referent when using the term. It is therefore important to note that – in agreement with Pauline semantics in general – within the Corinthian correspondence the ἄπιστοι referent is used of a group outside the church, i.e., pagans or heathens (Webb 1993:194–95). Although this ‘statistical’ evidence of Pauline

of the term in 2 Corinthians, namely at 4:4, where 'those who are perishing' (4:3; cf. 2:15) and who have not 'turned to the Lord' (3:16) are being described (Murphy-O'Connor 1987:237) (although even here a double entendre may be indicated by the context: see 4:2 and 4:5). Likewise, in the context of the strong dualisms in 6:14–16, the employment of ἄπιστοι/ἄπιστος in 6:14 and 6:15 seems ill-suited to accommodate any subcategories. Rather, it appears that Paul uses ἄπιστοι with reference to non-Christians (Webb 1993:195–196; Belleville 1996:177).

Moreover, the spatial concept (and the 'direction' of the imperative) that is suggested by the formulation 'Come out from among them' indicates that Paul first and foremost visualizes the Corinthians as being in the midst of a larger entity that is surrounding them (i.e. paganism¹⁸). Had Paul primarily wanted to ask for separation from the perhaps handful of false apostles, a formulation as in 1 Corinthians 5:2 and 13 ('Drive out the wicked person from among you') would have been more fitting (Saß 1993:53).¹⁹

Finally, Webb makes the critical observation that a primary reading of ἄπιστοι as false apostles has little choice but to take the 'idols' (εἰδωλα) in the final rhetorical question, 'What agreement has the temple of God with idols?' (6:16a), in a non-literal, metaphorical sense. Webb, *per contra*, is convinced that 'idols' should be understood in a literal sense. For one thing, the contrastive appellation 'living God' versus '(dead) idols' is used idiomatically in the Hebrew Bible, in early Judaism, and in the New Testament in relation to *literal* idols.²⁰ Furthermore, Webb states that all of the twenty

usage does not provide decisive evidence, it nevertheless adds to the likelihood that 'pagans' are the primary point of reference in 6:14.

¹⁸ Webb explains that the interpretation of ἄπιστοι as pagans is clearly favored by the Hebrew Bible traditions in the catena. For example, the references to 'Babylon' in quotation 2 (2 Cor 6:17a–c) and the 'heathen nations' in quotation 3 (2 Cor 6:17c) are most easily identified with non-believers, that is, all people beyond the covenant people of God. He thinks that particularly the parallel imperative 'touch nothing unclean' relates better to the separation from the worship of pagan gods (corresponding to the practice of cult religions at Corinth) than to separation from false apostles (Webb 1993:194, 198). On the other hand, however, the spatial direction of 'coming out' in Paul's imperative may mainly be due to this very *Vorlage* rather than to the apostle actually visualizing the Corinthians as being in the midst of a larger entity that is surrounding them.

¹⁹ However, Baumert argues that this interpretation of the quotation from Isaiah 52:11 in v. 17 is not compelling. 'Paulus greift nur im Extremfall zu diesem Mittel [i.e. excommunication] (1 Kor 5,1–8.13, und auch dann, damit man wieder zurückfindet), aber er löst nicht alle Klärungsprozesse durch Ausschluß aus der Versammlung! Das Zitat zielt auf eine Distanzierung von Menschen mit bestimmten Verhaltensweisen (analog 1 Kor 5,9–11)' (Baumert 2008:129 n. 71).

²⁰ Webb mentions Jeremiah 10:8–10; 2 Kings 19:4, 16; Isaiah 37:17; Bel and the Dragon 5, 6, 24, 25; *Joseph and Aseneth* 8:5–6; 11:9–10; 19:5–8; Acts 14:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; *et al.* (Webb 1993:193 nn. 3–6).

occurrences of the εἰδωλ-stem in the accepted Pauline epistles, sixteen of which are found in 1 Corinthians,²¹ refer to literal idols (Col 3:5 and Eph 5:5 explicitly indicate by means of a parenthesis that a metaphorical meaning is in view) (Webb 1993:193–194; cf. Garland 1999:332; Harris 2005:500–501). Methodologically speaking, these observations of Webb point towards a literal usage of εἰδωλα in 6:16. Nonetheless, this survey alone cannot settle the issue. Rather, the literary and cultural contexts of Paul’s employment of the term in 6:16 should provide the decisive indicia for identifying the reference point of ‘idols’. In this regard, however, Webb convincingly shows that the literal-idols referent in 6:16 is well-suited to the pagan cultural context of Corinth,²² especially as Paul repeatedly addresses the Corinthians’ relation to idol-worship in 1 Corinthians. Also, the strong conceptual affinity between pagans and idols sufficiently carries the argument of the terse rhetorical contrasts in 2 Corinthians 6:14–16 (Webb 1993:198; cf. Harris 2005:500–501). It is possible to infer from these indications that εἰδωλα in 6:16 most likely refers to literal idols.²³ If this interpretation is correct, it provides additional support for the identification of the ἄπιστοι as idolatrous unbelievers outside the church.

On the basis of how Paul employs the term in his letters in general and in 2 Corinthians 6:14–16 in particular, we hence conclude that it is natural to understand Paul’s use of ἄπιστοι in 6:14 to refer first and foremost to idolatrous unbelievers outside the church. Our second question regards the nature of the prohibited relationship with this group of people. In other words, what is the ‘unequal yoke’ (6:14)? The interpretation of the *hapax legomenon* ἐτεροζυγοῦντες is very complex. However, an investigation of the integration of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 into its literary context²⁴ can provide us with a number of decisive hints.

Excursus: The Integration of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 into its Literary Context

This excursus is not designed to provide an extensive discussion of the various models of contextual integration that have been provided by previous scholarship.²⁵ We have to make sense of the letter as it stands, for that is what the final redactor – most likely Paul himself – was able to do too. However, it is possible to investigate the rationale that may lie behind

²¹ 1 Corinthians 5:10, 11; 6:9; 8:1, 4, 7, 10; 10:7, 14, 19, 28; 12:2.

²² On this, see further Savage (1996:49–51).

²³ See Woyke (2005:309), who thinks that the context does not provide sufficient evidence for deciding on the referent of εἰδωλα. He thus remains agnostic as to which reference is intended.

²⁴ The terms ‘cotext’ and ‘literary context’ are used interchangeably throughout this article. Cf. Cotterell and Turner (1989:16).

²⁵ On this, see the overview in Nathan (2013:211–28).

placing the fragment in its current location. Such an investigation has the potential to provide new clues for determining the debated nature of the demarcation from outsiders that Paul calls for in 6:14–7:1.

The most detailed study on 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 was published by William J. Webb (1993).²⁶ Webb develops Beale's contention that the inability of commentators to account for how 6:14–7:1 fits into the logical flow of the epistle is due to the lack of any serious attempt to study the quotations from the Jewish Bible in their original contexts. Beale (1989b:569) argues that 'almost without exception, the six generally agreed upon Old Testament references refer in their respective contexts to God's promise to restore exiled Israel to their land [*italics removed*]'.

Webb's model of the integration of 6:14–7:1 into its immediate context comprises the following three points.

First, Webb supports his focal theory, namely that it is new covenant and second exodus/return theology which establishes the conceptual threads that tie 6:14–7:1 to its context, by referring to Paul's citation of Isaiah 49:8 in 2 Corinthians 6:2. Not only does the use of Isaiah 49:8 forge strong verbal and conceptual ties with the Old Testament traditions of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1, but in this way Paul also sheds light on the nature of the salvation and acceptance (6:1–2) of which he speaks: deliverance, acceptance, and welcoming to the homeland, patterned after the exilic return. 'It is here in 2 Cor 6:1–2, through the apostle's identification with the *'ebed*'s mission, that the second-Moses overtures in Is 49.1–13 converge with Paul's earlier self-portrait as a "new Moses" and anticipate the new exodus traditions found in the 6.14–7.1 fragment' (Webb 1993:145).²⁷

Second, Webb sees Paul's exhortation to receive God's grace, (homecoming) acceptance, and (new exodus) salvation (6:1–2) to be underscored by Paul's drawing on the tenets of 'return theology', namely, removal of stumbling blocks ('we are putting no obstacles [*προσκοπήν*] in anyone's way', 6:3a),²⁸ and by his commending himself as a servant of God²⁹ 'in everything' (6:4a; 4b–10: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, etc. ...) (Webb 1993:145–147).

Third, Webb argues that the contextual continuum of return theology is suggested in 6:11–13 through the scenario of Paul as father, waiting with an

²⁶ However, see also the slightly less elaborate Adewuya (2001).

²⁷ Though Webb does not utilize this term explicitly, one might designate Paul's use of the Old Testament traditions at this point as *typological*, since Webb makes clear that this return has deep roots in the movements of salvation-history (Webb 1993:145).

²⁸ Webb refers to Isaiah 8:14; 26:7; 40:3–4; 42:16; 49:10–11; 57:14; 59:9–10; 63:12–13; Jeremiah 31:8–9; Ezekiel 18:30–31; Psalm 105:37–38 (Webb 1993:147–149).

²⁹ See Webb (1993:150, 155) referring to the parallels of 2 Corinthians 3:1–6; 4:2, 5–6; 6:1–4 with Isaiah 49:8–9. Cf. Beale (1989b:579–581).

'enlarged heart' to receive his children. This establishes an immediate parallel with 6:14–7:1, where Yahweh is presented as in a father-child relationship with the Corinthians. Webb mentions that the idiom 'our heart is wide open' (6:11) is never found elsewhere in Paul or the New Testament. In the Hebrew Bible, however, the idiom is used either (1) negatively of a proud person, with an enlarged or puffed up heart (Dt 11:16), or (2) positively of a receptive person with an open heart towards something or someone (Ps 118[119]:32; Is 60:5). Webb suggests that Isaiah 60:4–5 should be favored over Deuteronomy 11:16 as the source for Paul's 'widening the heart' idiom.³⁰ Not only does Isaiah 60:4–5 have the advantage of a positive use of the idiom, but it also merges better with the father-child imagery in 6:13, provides a stronger contextual tie with the return traditions developed in 6:1–2, and closely parallels the concepts found in 6:14–7:1 (especially the quotations in 6:17d ['and I will receive you'] and 6:18). Therefore, Webb concludes that as Paul is prepared to receive with an enlarged heart the returning Corinthians as his children, so will God receive them (patterned after the exilic return) as his sons and daughters (6:18; cf. Is 60:4: 'your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried ...') (Webb 1993:151–157).

Webb's carefully argued thesis needs to be commended, particularly for engaging seriously with Paul's utilization of the Jewish Scriptures in his line of argumentation. Generally speaking, Webb's approach agrees with Watson's description of Paul's scriptural hermeneutic as aiming 'to show how the true meaning of scripture is its testimony to God's unconditional saving action, now realized in Christ' (Watson 2004:514; cf. 529–530). More specifically, however, the question that arises is whether Paul as a rule pays heed to the literary contexts of his references to the Hebrew Bible and uses such passages accordingly. Space forbids an attempt to provide an adequate answer to this comprehensive question. Pauline scholarship, however, largely agrees that, although his exegetical methods are not those of modern critical scholarship, Paul was not an exploiter of proof-texts, but read the Scriptures as a whole (Watson 2004:519–520).³¹

Webb's case for the integration of 6:14–7:1 into its cotext via the second exodus theology inherent in Paul's quotations seems plausible and has been

³⁰ Webb takes issue in particular with Thrall (1977:146) and Murphy-O'Connor (1987:237–238) (Webb 1993:170, building on Beale 1989b:576–577).

³¹ Cf. also the views of Ellis (1957:112); Longenecker (1970:16); Longenecker (1975:206); Hanson (1983:61–62); Kaiser (1985:226); Beale (1989a:89–96); Hays (1989:161). With specific reference to 6:14–7:1, see Olley (1998:207–208); Garland (1999:339 fn. 981).

well-received,³² though not very broadly.³³ Yet, one can still question whether Paul had the particular Old Testament texts specified by Webb in mind (and whether he expected his Corinthian readers to know and take into consideration the various contexts of utterance and reference³⁴). For example, the third pillar on which Webb's model of co-textual integration rests, is built on the foundation that Paul received his phrase 'our heart is wide open' (ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν πεπλάτνται, 6:11) from the Hebrew Bible. However, as there was no pressing reason for Paul to use a specific text as his *Vorlage* at all (Barnett 1997:335 n. 5), the foundation seems far from solid. Moreover, the pillar may even start shaking when one realizes that Webb's proposed source, Isaiah 60:5, does not evidence Paul's idiom but says 'you shall be amazed in your heart' (ἐκστήση τῆ καρδίᾳ [LXX]).³⁵ Yet, the pillar may not come down because the Hebrew text does prove parallel to 2 Corinthians 6:11 (הַכֶּלֶל בְּחַיִּי [MT]) and is even translated elsewhere in the Septuagint (Ps 118:32) and by post-Pauline authors with the very verb employed by Paul (πλατύνω) (Webb 1993:153–154).

Other scholars suppose that Psalm 118:32 LXX or Deuteronomy 11:16 was the source of 6:11.³⁶ The issue remains debatable, as does Webb's assertion that Paul employs Old Testament 'return theology' (Ezk 20:34 in 2 Cor 6:17d) in order to welcome the Corinthians 'home' after their coming out from idolatrous relationships. Paul does not seem to suggest either that he is removing stumbling blocks (6:3) so that the Corinthians are returning to any specific point such as 'home' (in fact, Paul explicates the immediate purpose of his removing of obstacles as 'so that no fault may be found with our ministry') or that he himself represents 'home' (Harris 2005:23 n. 47).³⁷ Nonetheless, we can conclude that Webb's approach has helpfully demonstrated that new exodus theology forms a conceptual link with the cotext of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1.

³² See, e.g., Scott (1994:84); Scott (1998:151–158).

³³ E.g. Balla arrives at similar conclusions although he appears to be unaware of Webb (Balla 2008:769–775).

³⁴ On the differentiation of these linguistic terms, see Fowler (1996:110–116). Olley (1998:206) and Schmeller (2010:376) think that the precise sources of the Old Testament references cited by the author are unclear.

³⁵ Apart from that, one could argue on grammatical grounds that the reason for amazement in Isaiah 60:5 is not the return of the sons and daughters (60:4), but the fact that 'the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you' (60:4), as this is connected to ἐκστήση τῆ καρδίᾳ via a causal conjunction (ὅτι). Cf. Watts (1987:295) on the Hebrew text.

³⁶ This position is taken, e.g., by Witherington III (1995:403) and Gräßer (2002:254); more tentatively by Harris (2005:489 n. 12). However, Thrall (1994:470) supports Webb.

³⁷ Pace Webb (1993:158, 178); however, see Webb's discussion on pp. 47–48. Additionally, Garland (1999:339) points out that Ezekiel 20:34 and its cotext (esp. 20:38) indicate that the phrase 'I will receive you' contains a note of warning rather than welcome.

Webb's model can be complemented from the perspective of the strategic rhetorical placement of the passage in the train of thought of 2 Corinthians. To this we now briefly turn.

Hughes (1962:244), Saß (1993:48–52), Lambrecht (1999:122–125), and others³⁸ have elucidated the integration of 6:14–7:1 into its cotext from a rhetorical perspective. Three major points can be distinguished:

1. Both 6:13 and 6:14a have verbs in the second person plural imperative: the transition between them is not so abrupt after all.
2. 7:2–4 is not only the continuation, but also the resumption of 6:11–13. This seems to indicate that there was always an interruption after 6:13.
3. If we admit that it was Paul himself who was responsible for the interruption in 6:14–7:1, then the clause 'I have (already) said' (7:3), which refers back to 6:11–12, becomes perfectly understandable (Lambrecht 1999:122).

Lambrecht further notes that, in a similar manner to many other authors, Paul (consciously or subconsciously) takes up in 6:14–7:1 and its cotext a number of words used shortly before (σάρξ and φόβος in 7:5, possibly influenced by 7:1; δικαιοσύνη in 5:21, 6:7 and 6:14; φόβος κυρίου in 5:11 and φόβος θεοῦ in 7:1). Lambrecht (1999:122; cf. Saß 1993:50) contends that this is yet another indication that 6:14–7:1 can hardly be separated from its cotext.

As far as the argumentative structure of 6:14–7:1 and its cotext is concerned, Saß points out that 6:12–13 and 7:1 have a 'framing function': while the statements 'you are restricted in your affections' and 'I speak as to children' prepare for the drastic dualism of 6:14–15, the 'beloved' (ἀγαπητοί) in 7:1 anticipates the conciliatory tone of 7:2–4 (Saß 1993:49). Furthermore, we may add that 6:14–7:1 appears to contain the explanation of *how* the Corinthians are to open their 'heart' for Paul and his co-workers (6:12–13), namely, by doing what the latter ask for (Scott 1994:96; Lambrecht 1999:122).³⁹

Saß seems to find it difficult to give sufficient explanation for why Paul takes up the subject of apostolic suffering in 6:3–10.⁴⁰ At this point, however, it is possible to develop an interconnection of the rhetorical approach of Lambrecht and Saß, and Webb's thesis. Webb demonstrates how

³⁸ Cf., e.g., Thrall (1977:111); Zeilinger (1993:71–80); Garland (1999:327–328).

³⁹ Saß (1993:52) argues that if 6:14–7:1 did not have its present place in the argument, 6:1 would stand in isolation, and it would at least be striking that 2 Corinthians 1–9 would miss 'jede allgemeinere Ausführung zum Imperativ, der sich aus dem Evangelium ergibt'. However, this reasoning appears vague, especially since one can find 'imperatives' in 5:20; 6:1, 13; 7:2; 8:8–11; 9:6–7, 13.

⁴⁰ Consequently, he appears to see 6:3–10 as a digression in the development of Paul's argument; see Saß (1993:51).

Paul's commendation in his sufferings as servant of God (θεοῦ διάκονος) in 6:3–10 is determined by his identification with the Suffering Servant, who proclaimed the "Come out!"-message' to the Israelites (Is 49:9; 52:11; cited in 2 Cor 6:17).⁴¹ This notion of suffering is also connected to Paul's relationship with the Corinthians, which Saß understands to be the thematic net of the cotext of 6:14–7:1 (Saß 1993:62). As Paul's authority as an apostle was at stake in Corinth,⁴² he implicitly claims in the catalogue of tribulation that the sufferings of Christ are reproduced in an apostle who is true to him (cf. 2 Cor 1:5; chs. 11–12). Against the background of this defense of his apostolic authority, Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to be separate from the world becomes even stronger, because 'to the extent that they distance themselves from the apostolic word they are slipping back into the world' (Schlatter 1962:576).

Although the new exodus (Webb) and the rhetorical (Lambrecht, Saß, *et al.*) proposals discussed in this excursus are not capable of explaining every detail of the perplexing position of 6:14–7:1 in 2 Corinthians, they nevertheless have provided sufficient grounds for arguing for a contextual integration of 6:14–7:1. Therefore, in agreement with these two approaches, we conclude with Saß that 'Paulus macht mit diesem in sich abgerundeten, aber doch zugleich auch kunstvoll in seinen Kontext eingewobenen Text den Korinthern deutlich: Mit ihrem Verhältnis zu ihm, dem Apostel, und seinem Evangelium steht zugleich ihr ganzes Leben vor Gott und in der Welt auf dem Spiel' (Saß 1993:63).

As indicated in the introduction and the excursus above, there are good reasons for understanding the appeal 'do not put yourselves into an unsuitable yoke'⁴³ (μὴ γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις, 6:14) not to be directed against casual contact. Rather, Paul is speaking against forming covenant-like relationships with pagans which in turn violate the church's existing covenant with God. This is supported by the fact that the meaning of ἑτεροζυγέω as relating to covenant-forming relationships is clearly established by the synonyms which follow in the series of rhetorical contrasts (μετοχή, κοινωνία, συμφώνησις, μερίς, and συγκατάθεσις, 6:14–16) and the two covenant formulas within the Old Testament catena (6:16, 18) (Webb 1993:201).⁴⁴ On this basis we can agree with Harris (2005:501;

⁴¹ On Paul's identification with the Isaianic servant, see further Rabens (2012b:221–225).

⁴² In the Corinthians' eyes, Paul did not match up to the/their marks of true apostleship, namely signs, wonders and mighty works (2 Cor 12:12).

⁴³ This translation is suggested by Winer (1872:221), as quoted by Harris (2005:499).

⁴⁴ That more than casual contact is in view is further suggested by Paul's Old Testament source, namely the *kil'ayim* law against crossbreeding (Lv 19:19; cf. Dt 22:10; Philo, *Spec.* 4.203).

cf. Belleville 1996:181) who concludes that ‘the Corinthians were to avoid any public or private relationship with unbelievers that was incompatible or that would compromise Christian standards, Christian adherence to monotheism, and Christian witness’.

Perhaps, however, we can be slightly more specific than that. Taking into account that the last rhetorical contrast (i.e. ‘What agreement has the temple of God with idols?’, 6:16) is probably climactic and thus significant for the interpretation of the whole passage, the activity referent of ‘do not be unequally yoked’ may have included in particular the following forms of physical-literal and metonymical idolatry:⁴⁵ maintaining membership at a local pagan cult (Harris 2005:501), attending ceremonies performed in pagan temples, pagan worship in the home (Hughes 1962:245; Barrett 1982:196; Martin 1986:197), joining with pagans in temple feasts (Lietzmann 1969:129; Fee 1977:140–161; Webb 1993:209–211; Saß 1993:54), and visiting sacred temple prostitutes (Kruse 1987:139–140; Webb 1993:204).⁴⁶ Such interactions may be classified not only as metonymical idolatry but also as severe violations of one’s covenant with God. This is because the interactions result in lasting and bonding relationships with unbelievers, and for that matter, with ‘Belial’, ‘darkness’, ‘lawlessness’ (6:14–15), and, of

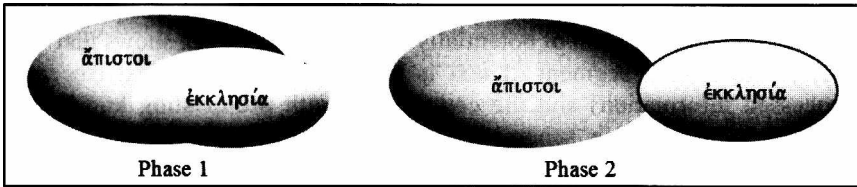
⁴⁵ As argued above, there is suggestive evidence for understanding εἰδωλον as a reference to literal idols, so that for the interpretation of ἑτεροζυγέω those options which embrace either direct worship or bowing down to literal idols (physical-literal idolatry) or indirect worship of literal idols through related activities at pagan temples (metonymical idolatry) (as differentiated by Webb 1993:202) come into particular consideration. A yoking purely associated with doctrine, as proposed by Fitzmyer (1961:271–280), may hence not be the primary reference of the fragment. Woyke (2005:299–300, cf. 301, 320–321) argues that ‘der Fokus eher auf der Rede vom Tempel als auf den εἰδωλα liegt, das operative Konzept der Paränese mithin nicht Idolatrie, sondern Verunreinigung ist’. However, even if the focus of 6:16a were the ‘defilement of body and of spirit’ (7:1), the most natural application of Paul’s command not to be mismatched with unbelievers (6:14a) in its present context in the fragment seems to be the prevention of lasting covenant-forming relationships in the context of the *cultic* life of the city. Cf. Barnett (1997:345); Garland (1999:343). On defilement, see further n. 54 below.

⁴⁶ However, the existence of sacred prostitution (at Corinth) has recently been demythologized by publications like Lanci (2005:205–220); *et al.* Cf. the discussion in Fee (1987:2–3); Hartmann (2001:451–454). Though on its own too narrow, it is possible that entering into marriage with pagans may also be an *indirect* activity referent of Paul’s command. Cf. Hughes (1962:245); Martin (1986:197); Webb (1993:209); Belleville (1996:178); Garland (1999:331). See Webb (1993:205–209), for a thoroughgoing discussion of this interpretative option. Starling (2013:60): ‘the principal issue over which Paul is here urging the Corinthians to separate from the ἄπιστοι to whom he refers within these verses is not the cultic or sexual entanglements he addresses elsewhere but the “fleshly” thinking that has distorted their assessments of Paul and the ψευδοδόστολοι’.

course, 'idols' (6:16) (Webb 1993:214).⁴⁷ Thus, when Paul calls the Corinthians to 'come out from them' (6:17), we suggest that he wants them to leave all covenant-forming alliances with unbelievers outside the church in a cultic and 'defiling' (7:1)⁴⁸ context.

The notion of demarcation from ἄπιστοι that is suggested by our first reading of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 can be illustrated with the following diagram:

Diagram 1: Demarcation from Unbelievers Outside the Church



Phase 1 depicts the state of affairs of the church in Corinth at the time when Paul writes 2 Corinthians. The Corinthians, or at least a number of them, have entertained covenant-forming relationships with idolatrous people outside the church. (It is uncertain whether there was a previous phase in which the members of the church did not engage in such relationships.) Phase 2 depicts the action that Paul requires of his audience. They need to come out and be separate from these types of interactions. In other words, they are to develop their group boundaries (signified by the stronger contours of the ἐκκλησία oval). However, as indicated by the overlap of the two ovals, the demarcation that Paul is asking for does not mean that the church has to avoid any kind of contact and relationship with outsiders. Otherwise they would indeed need to leave the world (1 Cor 5:10b). Rather, Paul encourages a selective demarcation from idolatrous people outside the church – the believers are to avoid covenant-forming relationships with them.

⁴⁷ Webb believes that joining with pagans in temple feasts and visiting sacred temple prostitutes have 'a sufficiently high emotive impact to account for the intensity of the fragment'. At the same time, Woyke (2005:321) is right to caution that one should be wary of trying to generalize 'aus dem Fragenkatalog eine systematische Sicht des Paulus über den Zusammenhang des dämonischen Gegenspielers Christi, Beliar, mit den von Heiden in Kultbildern verehrten Gottheiten' (pace Fee 1977:152–60; *et al.*).

⁴⁸ Cf. the prohibition of an 'ontic' participation in idolatrous relationships in 1 Corinthians 10:14–18. The New Testament *hapax legomenon* μολυσμός denotes something that makes a person ceremonially or morally unclean and therefore unfit for worship. In each of its three LXX occurrences it is linked with the defilement of idolatry (Jr 23:15; 1 Esd 8:80; 2 Macc 5:27; cf. the cognate verb μολύνω, 'defile', in 1 Cor 8:7) (Harris 2005:512; cf. Garland 1999:343).

II. Demarcation from 'Idolatrous' People Inside the Church (= 'Unbelievers'/'Outsiders')

Thus far, scholars who interpret ἄπιστοι in 2 Corinthians 6:14 as a reference to unbelievers outside the church (cf. 2.1 above) have argued against the interpretation that the passage refers to Paul's opponents in the Corinthian congregation. For instance, Harris (2005:499) writes: 'Now it is true that *later* in the letter the false apostles are portrayed as Satan's minions and as people masquerading as agents of light and righteousness (11:13–15), descriptions reminiscent of 6:14–15, but Paul's readers could not yet be expected to make those associations'. And indeed, linguistic research on the cognitive comprehension of potentially ambiguous language shows that 'the interpretation of a segment of text is based on current context (recently processed information) and the connections with pre-existing knowledge structures (for example, schemata). This information coordination problem must somehow be managed within a limited-capacity information processing system' (Whitney & Clark 1989:249–250). Therefore, Harris may be right that the parallels between Paul's portrayal of the unbelieving outsiders in 6:14–7:1 and the characterization of his opponents in chapters 10–12 appear too late in the epistle, that is, outside the 'current context (recently processed information)'. It could even be argued that 'the connections with pre-existing knowledge structures' also point in this direction: Paul's usual referent of ἄπιστοι is unbelievers outside the church. I will argue below, however, that there are some indications in the preceding and immediate context of our passage which could have suggested to the recipients upon their first reading/hearing of the epistle that Paul had the Corinthian 'false apostles' (ψευδαπόστολοι, 11:13) in the back of his mind as a secondary reference when he placed 6:14–7:1 into its present context. Also, the Corinthian 'pre-existing knowledge structures' with respect to Paul's usual rhetoric regarding his opponents may have pointed towards this interpretative option. Moreover, I contend that at least upon a second reading of the letter, that is, with chapters 10–12 in one's memory, the fragment rhetorically encourages the Corinthians (by means of a double entendre) to avoid partnership with the false apostles.

It has been mentioned several times that our new reading of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 as referring to both idolatrous people outside and inside the church interprets ἄπιστοι as a *double entendre*. Double entendre literally means 'double hearing/understanding' (from the French, originally *double entente*). It is a figure of speech in which a spoken or written phrase is devised to be understood in either of two ways. Often the first (more obvious) meaning is straightforward, while the second meaning is less so. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines double entendre as 'double understanding, ambiguity. A double meaning; a word or phrase having a double sense, esp. as

used to convey an indelicate meaning' (Simpson and Weiner 1989:980).⁴⁹ The double entendre in 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 is that on a first (more obvious) reading, the text can be understood as a straightforward reference to idolatrous people outside the church; however, the double sense that conveys a somewhat indelicate meaning is that Paul refers to his opponents as being 'outside the camp', that is, as lawless unbelievers who belong to the darkness, to the devil (Beliar), to idols and uncleanness, and who are not part of the temple of the living God. This double entendre corresponds to Empson's third category of ambiguity in which two meanings are fitted into one word, which takes effect only when the reader is attending to the fact that they have been fitted into one word (Empson 1977:102).⁵⁰ In the case of our text the double entendre concentrates on ἄπιστοι but is transported by the entire fragment.

In order to establish that this second meaning is evident in the text, we will first turn to the above mentioned passage which appears later on in the epistle, namely 11:13–15, for it is here that we find the clearest echoes of 6:14–7:1:

For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! Even *Satan* disguises himself as an angel of *light*. So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of *righteousness*. Their end will match their deeds. (11:13–15)

By the time the readers of Paul's epistle have reached chapters 10–12, they realize that their association with the false apostles is a major issue for Paul in this letter (whereas covenant-forming activities with outsiders only plays a minor role throughout the epistle). In 11:13–15 Paul overtly returns to the language of 6:14–7:1 by associating his opponents with Satan, darkness, and unrighteousness – terminology also used in the fragment. Zeilinger (1993: 79) writes with respect to 6:14–7:1 that 'durch die Einbeziehung dualistisch-apokalyptischer Begriffe, durch welche die Gegner in den Bereich des endzeitlichen Gegenspielers verwiesen, Paulus und seine Hörer aber als eschatologischer Tempel Gottes anhand des atl. Gotteswortes ausgewiesen werden, erscheint die *indignatio* wie ein ausgebautes Anathema (cf. 1 Cor 16:22b)'.⁵¹ Through the rhetorical device of double entendre Paul is able to

⁴⁹ It should be noted that this indelicate meaning can imply a sexual reference, but it is clearly not limited to this usage. It can likewise refer to something unexpected or unacceptable.

⁵⁰ On double entendre in biblical studies, see particularly the very helpful van der Watt (2005:463–482); see further Resseguie (2005:64–65); Martin (2010:*passim*). Semantic ambiguity was already discussed among the ancient philosophers. See, e.g., Edlow (1977) and Atherton (2007).

⁵¹ Zeilinger (1993:74) offers further insights on the rhetorical position of the fragment.

go a step further than his usual polemic, namely, in 6:14–7:1 he (hyperbolically) places his opponents into the group of idolatrous unbelievers.⁵² However, as he makes this move via the literary technique of double entendre, he can avoid making this indelicate reference by a straightforward reading of his text. This way Paul's opponents (and those attracted by them) cannot accuse the apostle for his fierce language in 6:14–7:1 (which exceeds that of 11:13–15), although Paul rhetorically excludes them from the realm of salvation and the community of faith.

Paul's strong rhetoric of demarcation from his opponents is well-known from his other epistles. While his words in 2 Corinthians 11:13–15 are particularly strong (and those of 6:14–7:1 even stronger), Paul also implicitly groups his opponents with Satan in Romans 16:17–20:⁵³

I urge you, brothers and sisters, to keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offenses, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned; avoid them. For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded. For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I want you to be wise in what is good and guileless in what is evil. The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. (Rm 16:17–20a)

Likewise, in Philippians 3:2–3 Paul counters the potential destabilization of his concord with the Philippians by establishing both a distinct self-understanding as well as a clear notion of 'otherness': 'Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh ...' (cf. Gl 5:7–12; 1:8–9: ἀνάθεμα ἔστω). As this kind of drastic language of differentiation and division into in-group and out-group was characteristic of Paul's rhetorical strategy when he was dealing with destabilization and factions (cf. 1 Cor 1–4), it may actually have been part of the 'pre-existing knowledge structures' of the recipients of 2 Corinthians. Against this background it is possible that the Corinthians detected the double entendre in Paul's rhetoric of demarcation in 6:14–7:1 even before they proceeded to chapters 10–12.

Moreover, the likelihood of this probability (i.e. the comprehension of the double entendre at the first reading) is increased when one looks at the preceding as well as at the immediate context of the fragment. Paul uses

⁵² Both in Romans 16:17–20 as well as 2 Corinthians 11:13–15 Paul comes close to suggesting that his opponents are (literal) *idolaters* – they do not serve Christ but themselves. However, as they do not bow down to actual idols, one can speak of them as people who practice *metaphorical idolatry*. Cf. Philippians 3:19: 'their god is the belly'.

⁵³ This association of Paul's opponents with Satan is evident from the close proximity of both entities in this section, as well as from the contrast with those who bring dissensions and offence (associated with Satan) and the God of *peace*. Cf. Stuhlmacher (1998:223); Schlier (2002:449); *pace* Cranfield (1979:803).

polemic against the false apostles on several occasions before 6:14–7:1, *inter alia* in 2:17, 3:1, 4:5, and 5:12. Even at the beginning of chapter 6, the Pauline narrative is characterized by an apology directed against his opponents: 'We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships ...' (6:3–4). When the readers then arrive at the immediate context of 6:14–7:1, the ambiguity of Paul's rhetoric reaches its first peak (the climax still being a re-reading of 6:14–7:1 in the light of chs. 10–12): Paul pleads for the Corinthians to open their hearts as his is open for them; to make room for him means not to be mismatched with 'unbelievers', that is, his opponents (6:11–14). This reading actually almost appears to follow better from the immediate context than the straightforward reading of the fragment (which, nonetheless, has significant points in its favor, as pointed out in 2.1. above).

Some scholars have suggested that the immediate co-text succeeding the fragment does not support the false-apostles interpretation of the text because 7:1 mentions ethical purification, whereas 7:2 references the apostle-church relationship (Rensberger 1978:31). Indeed, the injunction to cleanse oneself from every defilement of *body* and spirit (7:1) seems to favor the straightforward reading of the passage as a reference to idolatrous people outside the church, because the potential joining with pagans in temple feasts and visiting of (temple) prostitutes does have a physical dimension (cf. 1 Cor. 6:18). However, against the background of Paul's holistic anthropology it is doubtful that 7:1 implies a differentiation between bodily and spiritual defilement. Rather, defilement of body-and-spirit appears to be used as a hendiadys for any kind of defilement. Moreover, in the case of the double entendre reading we are looking for a second-level or *transferred* meaning of defilement. The notion of cultic defilement through intimate relationships with the unclean thus needs to be transferred to the double entendre referent of the text, namely, (alliances with) false apostles. This transferred sense does not require a physical aspect of defilement.⁵⁴ Hence, 7:2 fits with both readings of 7:1 (for the interpretation of 7:2 on the straightforward reading, see the excursus above), although its coherence with the second-level reading of the fragment is slightly more obvious:

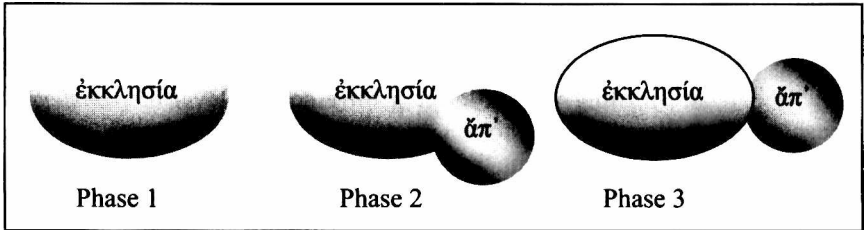
⁵⁴ Covenant-forming relationships to idolatrous people within the congregation ('unbelievers') will have been predominantly non-sexual. Nonetheless, even on the straightforward reading of 7:1 not all of the activities that are discouraged by Paul include sexual contact (cf. our list of potential covenant-forming enterprises at the end of 2.1.). For example, maintaining membership in a local pagan cult may not have involved defilement of the body because the ceremonies did not necessitate sexual contact.

cleansing from defilement as demarcation from Paul's opponents is a way of opening one's heart to the apostle.

This leads us to a consideration of the second interpretative issue of Paul's command 'Do not be mismatched with unbelievers' (6:14). We have established that the wider context (chs. 10–12), the 'pre-existing knowledge structures' (i.e. how Paul 'others' his opponents elsewhere) as well as the preceding and immediate co-text of the fragment suggest that our double entendre reading of 6:14–7:1 is plausible.⁵⁵ What, then, is the referent of *ἑτεροζυγοῦντες* on the second level reading? What kind of association with his opponents (i.e. 'unbelievers') does Paul discourage? It seems that the interpretation of 'do not be mismatched' which we have put forward on the straightforward reading of the fragment also applies to the second (double entendre) reading of the passage. That is, the Corinthians are asked to enact a selective demarcation from (covenant-forming relationships with) *ἄπιστοι*. However, as we are dealing with a second, *transferred* meaning of the text on this double entendre reading, the application of the details of the text appears to be more general.⁵⁶ It thus seems best to translate Paul's ethical imperative as the request to 'avoid partnership' (*μετοχή, κοινωνία, συμφώνησις, μερίς, συγκατάθεσις*, 6:14–16) with Paul's opponents, or, more generally speaking, to 'avoid them' (cf. *ἐκκλίνετε ἅπ' αὐτῶν*, Rm 16:17).

The results of our double entendre reading of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 can be illustrated with the diagram below.

Diagram 2: Demarcation from 'Unbelievers' Inside the Church



⁵⁵ Our reading of the passage appears to receive further support from the history of interpretation. Though the 'literal' reading of the fragment has found significant support, the transferred understanding of *ἄπιστοι* as a reference to the false apostles is a (second) major interpretative option in the history of research. See, e.g., Gnllka (1963:91); Collange (1972:305–306); Goulder (1994:47–57); Zeilinger (1993:79–80); Scott (1998:152–153); Baumert (2008:128–129). This may suggest that both readings present legitimate interpretations of the text. Cf. Nathan's hermeneutical considerations in interaction with Gadamer (2003) (Nathan 2013:226–28).

⁵⁶ It may hence be overambitious to try to identify precisely what kind of instances of *covenant-forming* relationships with the false apostles Paul may have had in mind (e.g. it is likely that this would have included Christian meals – on which, see esp. 1 Corinthians 10–11 and Taussig 2009).

The diagram initially depicts the state of affairs in the church at Corinth at the time before the emergence of the conflict that led to Paul's writing of 2 Corinthians. This is Phase 1 (by contrast, Diagram 1 started off by showing two intertwined ovals – the church had probably always made partnerships with unbelievers and had never severed itself from covenant-forming relationships with them). Phase 2 portrays Paul's opponents (*ἄπιστοι*) as having entered into the church or having emerged from within it. Although it is not clear where they have come from or where exactly they are to be located within the church, it is obvious that they have become part of the community. Paul is demanding Phase 3: demarcation from the false apostles. The rhetorical force of this second-level reading of the text is that Paul is warning of partnerships with his opponents, places them into a soteriological and sociological out-group, and provides positive identity formation and boundary markers for his in-group.

III. Further Observations on Demarcation and Identity Formation in 2 Corinthians

Paul is faced with a situation of destabilization in the church at Corinth and in his relationship with the recipients of his letters. In this chapter I have discussed a central element of his reaction to this scenario. Scholarship has thus far argued for either one of the two major interpretative options in trying to understand Paul's reaction as expressed in the debated passage 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1. However, in this essay I have put forward a new approach that moves beyond the previous either/or approaches to the text. Instead, I have provided a both/and reading of the passage: 6:14–7:1 can be read as a double entendre referring to demarcation both from idolatrous people outside the church (= unbelievers) and 'idolatrous' people inside the church (= 'unbelievers').

The first interpretation of *ἄπιστοι* as a reference to idolatrous people outside the church is suggested by a straightforward reading of the passage on which one can observe that second-exodus typology ties the fragment to its co-text. Paul, identifying with the Suffering Servant, calls the Corinthians to come out of their covenant-like bondage with pagans and their idols. Via the link of sufferings, which authenticate Paul as a true apostle of Christ, Paul ties the 'exodus-call' in 6:14–7:1 to the subject of apostolic ministry (the thematic net of the co-text of the passage). In the context of this contentious issue, 6:14–7:1 stresses that the church at Corinth 'konnte sich nicht mit Paulus einigen, wenn sie sich mit der Welt verbrüderm wollte' (Schlatter 1962:576).

The second level of the double entendre reading of the text conveys a somewhat indelicate message because at this level Paul characterizes his opponents as being 'outside the camp', that is, as lawless unbelievers who

belong to the darkness, to the devil (Beliar), to idols and uncleanness, and who are not part of the temple of the living God. Through the rhetorical device of double entendre, Paul can avoid making this indelicate reference by a straightforward reading of his text. This way Paul is less open to attack from his opponents (and those attracted by them). I have suggested that this secondary reference comes most clearly to the fore upon a second reading of the letter, that is, with the overt criticism of Paul's opponents in chapters 10–12 in one's mind. Further, the preceding and the immediate context supports this double entendre reading. Moreover, as drastic language of differentiation and division into in-group and out-group was characteristic of Paul's rhetorical strategy elsewhere when he was dealing with opposition and factions (e.g. 1 Cor 1–4), this kind of stereotyping⁵⁷ may actually have been part of the 'pre-existing knowledge structures' of the recipients of 2 Corinthians, thus enabling them to make the secondary link to Paul's opponents when being asked to separate from ἄπιστοι.

So, we have seen that in the situation of destabilization in Corinth, one of Paul's reactions is a call for *demarcation*.⁵⁸ The effect of this demarcation is the strengthening of the boundaries of the church (cf. Diagrams 1 and 2). On the first reading the boundaries on the outside are developed, on the second (double entendre) reading the boundaries towards a group on the inside (which is 'othered' and moved to the outside) are fortified. To be sure, Paul did not strive for a streamlined and monolithic community. Rather, Paul generally encouraged diversity, as is particularly evident from his treatment of unity in diversity in 1 Corinthians 12 (esp. 12:14–27: 'Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many ... If all were a single member, where would the body be?... But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another ...'). Nonetheless, in a situation where false teaching and practice leads the church to unite with idolatrous people of the world and 'idolatrous' people in the church,⁵⁹ Paul sees the need for drastic demarcation, so that the church as well as his relationship to it is kept from falling apart. The members of

⁵⁷ For a social identity perspective on self-categorization and stereotyping, see Esler (2003:21, 26).

⁵⁸ This call for demarcation needs to be read in the context of Paul's broader mission which welcomes everyone into the people of God, as we have seen in section A (cf. section C).

⁵⁹ If the opponents were libertines who sanctioned union with idolaters (cf. 1 Cor 8:4 and the discussion in 1 Cor 8 and 10), which is likely, avoiding partnership with unbelievers has the effect of avoiding partnership with 'unbelievers' (i.e. the false teachers). On the question of the identity of Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians and its relevance for 6:14–7:1, see further Rabens (2006:58–59).

the church appear to be 'blinded' by a significant set of overlapping characteristics between them and unbelievers (on which see esp. 1 Cor 8 and 10) and 'unbelievers'. With regard to the latter, Paul uncovers that his opponents indeed intend to blur the lines between themselves and him. He agrees on a comparison – but only 'in order to deny an opportunity to those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about' (2 Cor 11:12). However, in each point of comparison Paul draws out the differences (namely, his supersession of the false apostles: 11:5, 22–29; 12:11; etc.), and he even challenges the framework of comparison altogether (e.g. 10:13–18; 11:16–21). In order to highlight further differences between himself and the false apostles, as well as between believers and unbelievers outside the church, Paul employs dualistic language that places the church on the side of the in-group. Paul provides positive identity-formation by placing the church on the 'good' and stronger side ('Goodness is stronger than evil ... light is stronger than darkness ...'⁶⁰).

Demarcation thus also means *identity formation*. However, identity formation is more than demarcation because it has a stronger focus on the positive, on the inside/in-group than on the outside/out-group. As we have seen above, the two core aspects of identity singled out by Straub are people's relationships to themselves and to the world.⁶¹ Straub (Straub 1998:91) further explains,

Der qualitative Identitätsbegriff bezieht sich immer auf den Rahmen oder Horizont, der einem Menschen eine bestimmte Lebensführung ermöglicht, seinem Tun und Lassen Sinn und Bedeutung verleiht. Ebendadurch erscheint das Verhalten als orientiertes Handeln, als ein Handeln, das Prinzipien und Maximen folgt.⁶²

In 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 Paul offers identity formation to the Corinthian believers by asking them for selective separation from pagan groups outside and sectarian groups inside the church. Paul takes the 'orientation' and the 'principles' for this action that he demands from his Bible (Is 52:11; Jr 51:45). He reads the Scriptures in the light of the Christ event. They thus provide a decisive identity marker and point of reference for him as he determines the relationship of the church to competitive forces on the outside and the inside.

⁶⁰ Cf. Baumert (2008:129): 'Bei den ... in V 14b-16a folgenden Gegensätzen ist zu beachten, daß Paulus nie beide auf die gleiche Stufe stellt und dann etwa deren Gemeinsamkeit leugnet, sondern immer vom Guten ausgeht, das nicht mit dem Bösen gemeinsame Sache macht (während ja der Böse gern Böses mit Gutem mischt!) ... das Licht "vertreibt" die Dunkelheit'.

⁶¹ See n. 10 above; cf. Assmann (1992:137).

⁶² On early Christian identity formation, see further Dunn (2007:49–66); Holmberg (2008a); Holmberg (2008b).

This hermeneutic is also applied when Paul speaks to the second aspect of the Corinthians' identity, namely their self-understanding. In this respect, Paul treats the promises in 6:16–18 without distinction as promises that have found their 'Yes' in Christ (2 Cor 1:20).⁶³ Paul reveals that the new exodus has come to pass and that now the (formerly pagan) Corinthian Christians *are* the temple of the living God (of Israel): God dwells among them, YHWH is their God, they are his people, they are welcomed by him, God is a father to them, and they have become his sons and daughters.

This revised self-understanding provides a foundation for the ethical imperative to 'come out' (διὸ ἐξέλθατε ..., 6:17). However, it seems that for Paul, identity means much more than reflecting on one's relation to oneself (or one's group in the case of corporate identity) and to the world. Rather, Paul's identity-forming statements above relate a third dimension that comes into play. Namely, it is the new covenant relationship to God that is the primary factor in the Corinthians' identity formation. While it is important that the Corinthians *understand* themselves as God's temple, God's children, etc., the fundamental formative force in the Corinthians' lives is the *experience* of having individually and corporately entered into a loving family-relationship with their heavenly Father (6:18; cf. 1:2–4; Rm 8:15–17; Gl 4:6) and the reality of being indwelt by God as his people and his temple.⁶⁴ It is the experience of these *intimate relationships* (to God as father and to fellow church members as brothers and sisters) that transforms and empowers the lives of the church members in Corinth.⁶⁵

Accordingly, Paul's call for demarcation is based on the preceding new covenant relationship to the 'Lord Almighty', their 'Father' (6:18), which empowers and requires this action.⁶⁶ In line with Straub, the 'directed action' (*orientiertes Handeln*) of the Corinthians thus results from and is motivated by their new identity, and it receives further formation by their demarcation from lawlessness, darkness, idolatry, and defilement. In other words, the new being and belonging⁶⁷ of the Corinthians enables them for, finds

⁶³ Scott (1992:209) explains that for this reason, 'καὶ', in v. 17d does not have consecutive force ("then, I"). Since it is based on the continuative καί of the Septuagint *Vorlage* (Ezk 20:34), καὶ more likely resumes the promises in v. 16def which formally correspond to those in vv. 17d–18b'. Cf. Harris (2005:506).

⁶⁴ On the often overlooked dimension of religious experience in the formation of the early church, see, e.g., Berger (2003:203, 206); Rabens (2012a:138–155).

⁶⁵ On this, see more fully Rabens (2013c:123–144).

⁶⁶ Obedience to the call for separation is hence not the beginning of or entry into this relationship. Cf. Scott (1998:156); Harris (2005:507).

⁶⁷ They are the temple of God (6:16) and they belong to God as their father (6:18), to righteousness, light, Christ (6:14–15), and to one another as God's people and his dwelling place (6:16).

expression in, and is provided with further identity formation through selective demarcation from both unbelievers and 'unbelievers'.

C. Conclusion: Inclusion of Outsiders – Now, and Not Yet

Paul's mission is the *missio Dei*: 'God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God' (2 Cor 5:20). Paul thus interprets his own work to be fully aligned with the purposes of God. This mission has the broadest foundation as well as the broadest aim possible: in Christ, God has reconciled the cosmos to himself (5:19; cf. Rom 5:10, 18). In Christ, all have died (2 Cor 5:14) and will in him 'become the righteousness of God' (5:21). However, how does this universal mission, which Paul names 'the ministry of reconciliation' (5:18), relate to the apostle's paraenesis of selective demarcation from outsiders (esp. in 6:14–7:1)? We saw in section A that in 2 Corinthians outsiders are invited in, that is, they are encouraged to accept the reconciliation with God which has already been achieved by God through Christ. The letter thus evidences a great sensitivity to outsiders from the perspective of Paul's approach to mission and soteriology. However, we observed in section B that the inclusiveness of Paul's ethics has limitations. There are out-groups from which the community of the reconciled needs to separate. Is this a flaw in Paul's logic, or is there a hidden rationale in 2 Corinthians that weaves these two lines together?

To begin with, it is important to appreciate that Paul's writings cannot be forced into a procrustean bed of modern logic. He is not illogical, but interpreting his writings is a complex task, not least because of their genre as occasional letters (cf. Hillert 1999). Even within a letter like 2 Corinthians itself we find statements and arguments that seem to stand in unresolved tension with one another (at least from the perspective of modern logic). One of the most obvious tensions that we have considered relates to Paul's comments concerning reconciliation. On the one hand, Paul says that reconciliation between God and the cosmos has already taken place in Christ. On the other hand, he invites people to accept this reconciliation by entreating them to 'be reconciled to God'. Paul does not seem to conceptualize reconciliation as a one-way street (as if it were only one party of a relationship that could determine a relationship as being 'reconciled'). It rather is a dynamic process which is part of God's relationship to the world. However, breaking down this dynamic so that it fits our logic by talking about reconciliation as a 'two-way street' would not be an accurate image of Paul's thought either. According to Paul, God is not merely inviting

outsiders to come in, but he has achieved reconciliation in Christ already – though it is not (yet?) fully realized for everyone.

The universality of Paul's theology of reconciliation is (temporarily?) limited by the fact that not everyone has 'turned to Lord' (3:16). Some are even said to be 'perishing' (2:15; 4:3). Moreover, Paul explicitly speaks against covenant-forming relationships with people who are 'unbelievers' (6:14–7:1). The rationale behind this limitation in his sensitivity to outsiders appears to rest on the nature of his mission too. While his general inclusiveness of outsiders is core to his mission and his apostleship because he wants to see everyone enter into the family of God (2:14; 4:15; 10:16; cf. Gl 6:10; Rm 15:18–24; etc.), Paul's command for selective demarcation from outsiders appears to be a necessary corollary of this ministry. This is most evident when it comes to 'unbelievers' – to 'false apostles' who oppose him and seek to undermine his ministry. It is essential for Paul's universal mission of the inclusion of all outsiders – particularly of 'Gentiles' (see, e.g., Rm 11:13; cf. Eph 2:17–18; etc.) – that certain 'in-groups' do not build up barriers that prevent outsiders from coming in. Such barriers for outsiders may concern matters of theology-and-practice (such as the role of the law; see, e.g., ch. 3)⁶⁸ as well as relationship-matters (such as openness and trust within the apostle-church relationship, see, e.g., 1:12; 4:2; 5:11). By asking his church for demarcation from his opponents, Paul thus pursues the goal of restoring his relationship with the Corinthians as well as safeguarding his overall mission to outsiders.

However, how does the inclusive nature of Paul's mission cohere with the first reading of the double *entendre* ἄπιστοι (6:14) as a reference to idolatrous people outside the church (cf. 2.1.)? In sub-section C.III (above), I have elucidated the significance of abstaining from covenant-forming relationships with this group of outsiders for the purpose of identity formation. And it is this aspect of Paul's mission that may lead us to at least a tentative answer to our question. Paul is concerned with the purity of his church lest its power and attraction (*Strahlkraft*) become minimized. The community of the reconciled lives in an intimate relationship with God as Father (1:2–4; 6:18; etc.) who gives identity to them as his children and his people (6:16, 18). This identity is superior and should have priority over alternative covenants, such as those with idolaters who have made different religious relationships their priority. Thus, although Paul undertakes identity-formation in Corinth with a broad perspective (the in-group is defined in 5:19 in the broadest possible way: ὁ κόσμος [cf. v. 14: οἱ πάντες]) and a positive focus (on their new identity and the experience of its reality:

⁶⁸ On the so-called Spirit/letter opposition in 2 Corinthians 3, see Maschmeier (2010:105–155) and the authors mentioned there.

see C.III, above), Paul's communities are not exempt from the rules of ordinary sociological dynamics which include processes of demarcation.

We can hence conclude that in 2 Corinthians God's universal action in Christ forms the basis of the inclusion of the entire world in the in-group of salvation, that is, in the community of the reconciled. This provides hope for the future (the 'not yet').⁶⁹ However, in the here and now of Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul only explicitly welcomes those outsiders in who let themselves in through the reconciliation offered by Paul on behalf of God.

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⁶⁹ Some see the hope for the full realization of the reconciliation of all (οἱ πάντες, 5:14–15) more clearly expressed elsewhere in Paul, especially in Romans 5:18, 11:26, and 1 Corinthians 15:24–28 (cf. Adam 2009). It seems, however, that the details regarding the future of the cosmos described in 1 Corinthians 15:24–28 fit better with the concept of annihilationism than with universalism because Paul specifies that God will first destroy all his enemies (and those who belong to them: 15:25–28a; 1 Thess 5:3; Phil 3:19; Gl 6:8; Rom 9:22; [2 Thess 1:9]; cf. 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15; 4:3) before he will be 'all in all' (ἵνα ἢ ὁ θεός [τὰ] πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν, 15:28c).

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