

# Comparison Kills

## 2 Corinthians 10:12-18

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#### I. Class or Compare v.12

##### a. Not Bold –

##### i. Bold - *bring oneself, presume*

1. This verse opens a new section that considers the ground of the allegation brought against Paul. The issue turns on “self-recommendation”
2. Paul’s saying that he himself does not dare to reckon himself among or equate himself with those who commend themselves (sc. as full apostles), 10:12
3. The play on words (ἐνκρίναι ἢ συγκρίναι) is as obvious here as in vv. 5, 6, and the meaning of ἐνκρίναι seems to be
4. ‘judge amongst,’ ‘estimate amongst,’ ‘class with,’ and it is stronger in meaning than συγκρίναι, so that ‘pair’ and ‘compare’ fairly well preserves the similarity of sound and change of meaning\
5. Paul deflates the boasts of his rivals as he insinuates, “Such a dwarf as I could not possibly compare with such giants.” “I hardly rank with such luminaries.” He therefore disparages their boasting with mock self-deprecation. Speaking tongue in cheek in this way also raises the question whether his rivals are comparable to him at all
6. In their scheme to undermine Paul’s influence in Corinth and promote their own, his rivals have accused him of having nerve in his letters but no boldness in person (10:10). Paul responds to this criticism with wry sarcasm that he lacks the nerve to classify or compare himself with those who commend themselves. “Daring” (*tolman*) is related to the assurance that leads one “to push oneself forward.

##### ii. Class

1. Class- **to make a judgment about something and classify it in a specific group**
2. “to reckon or count in, to number with, to elect or admit to, a series, party or fellowship

3. His tactic is to adopt a stance of mock humility: I really cannot rise to the level of these people so that I can rightly join myself to them (ἐγκρίνω) or compare myself with them (συγκρίνω). With an obvious play on words, which may owe something to an anti-rhetorical and anti-sophistic posture—opposing comparison (σύγκρισις) with a denial of superiority

iii. Compare

1. **Compare - to draw a conclusion by comparing, evaluate,**
  - a. Paul is ironically rejecting the idea that he can even be compared with the arrogant pseudo-apostles in Corinth (11:13). He alleges that they compare themselves only with themselves and measure themselves only by themselves, so that they are not aware of their own poverty
  - b. comparison” (*sygkrisis*) was a common “rhetorical exercise practiced in schools,” and comparing oneself with other teachers was a common tactic for a teacher to attract students and their fees
  - c. In a “comparison” one would amplify one’s good deeds and another’s bad deeds to show superiority. Such topics as a person’s race, upbringing, education, status, physique, pursuits, and positions held were all fair game in sizing up their relative merits and standing
  - d. Second, he rules out this fundamental rhetorical tool of showing superiority through comparison as something completely illegitimate for ministers of God. Only fools dare to use self-comparison with others to commend themselves to others. Even when he so “foolishly” joins the fray of comparison, “Are they servants of Christ?”
  - e. Boasting about one’s status and achievements and comparing oneself favorably against others were routine tactics for those who aimed at gaining a following for themselves
  - f. In the cutthroat competition for plaudits and pupils, one had to advertise oneself publicly with audacious praise while impugning the qualities of other contenders for honor. People were constantly vying with others to attain elusive glory and engaged in a constant game of one-upmanship. This race for honor “encouraged outward expressions of pride and arrogance
2. Commend themselves **-to bring together as friends or in a trusting relationship by commending/recommending, present, introduce/recommend someone to someone else**

- a. St Paul had been accused of singing his own praises (3:1); he here intimates that this is just what his critics are fond of doing.
- b. He will also “dare” to join those others who “dare to boast” but admits that it is the daring of a fool (11:21), not because he cannot back up this boasting with performance equal to his words but because God does not back up such foolish boasting. God humbles the proud so they will not try to take credit for what God alone has done.
- c. Stansbury points out that in the political arena Greek *hybris*, pride, combines with Roman *inimicitia*, enmity, to produce vicious smear tactics against rivals. People in this society assumed that honors were as limited as material wealth. Since there was only a limited amount of honor to go around, one resented and envied others for having it. “Political enemies were targets of exaggerated character assassination designed to make them symbols of shame or of political subversion

b. Measure

i. Measure and Compare

1. Measure –

- a. **immeasurable** εἰς τὰ ἄ. καυχᾶσθαι *boast beyond limits, illimitably*
- b. in rejection of immoderate boasting.
- c. Third, he challenges their criteria: “They have set themselves up as the measure of their ministry.” There were no clear-cut biblical criteria to decide the spiritual legitimacy of Paul or his rivals, and the opponents and the Corinthians apparently reverted to the standards they were accustomed to from their culture. They judged themselves and Paul according to their commanding presence (10:1, 10), concrete displays of power and authority (11:19–20), impressive speech (11:20–21), worthiness to accept full compensation (11:7–11), Jewish pedigree (11:21b–22), endurance of hardships (11:23–29), and mystical visions (12:1–6). According to these criteria, they passed with flying colors and Paul failed. But Paul would insist that they not only have usurped God’s role as the one who appraises ministry (1 Cor 4:4),
- d. ‘But they themselves measuring themselves by themselves.’ They are a “mutual admiration and self-admiration society” (Waite). They set up their own conduct

- as a standard of excellence, and find their conformity to it eminently satisfactory and admirable.
- e. “they,” refers to the opponents who use as the measuring rod (μέτρον) of their service their own self-judgment, and set up their own standards of conduct as the criterion (ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοὺς μετροῦντες). The result is a foregone conclusion: they find themselves well-qualified and praiseworthy. Paul’s verdict on them is exactly to the contrary: “they are without understanding
2. With Themselves
  3. Without Understanding
    - a. Are without understanding’; they are ἄφρονες (Eph 5:17), who are not intelligent enough to put two and two together. These self-satisfied critics, who have no external standard, but judge everything by comparison with their own practice, come very far short of wisdom

## II. Not Boast v.13-16

- a. Not Boast 13-14
  - i. Boast
    1. He writes in Rom 15:17–18 that in the things pertaining to God—his work—he has a boast in Christ Jesus. The NIV translates “have a boast” as “glory”:
    2. The reason for this negative assessment will be seen in some contrasts Paul draws later; on his part he has not “overreached” himself (V 14) but has submitted to the limits of service God appointed him, and his boasting (καυχάομαι [V 15]) is not in himself but in the Lord who commends (συνίστησιν, repeating the verb of V 12) him (V 18).
  - ii. Beyond our Measure
    1. Beyond
      - a. But *we* will not glory beyond our measure’. He does not fix his own standard, and he does not exceed the limits fixed for him; moreover, he has a settled determination never to exceed these limits. Εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα is indefinite; it may refer to the excessive self—admiration of his opponents
      - b. So he disavows any attempt to put himself forward “beyond the limit
    2. Measure
      - a. Paul insists that his boasting in his authority over them (10:8) is not out of bounds but is based on the work that he

has done in Christ in the region that God assigned him. Corinth is God's field (1 Cor 3:9), and God assigned him to work there as God's servant. He planted; God gave the growth (1 Cor 3:6). Therefore, Paul appeals to the indisputable fact that he founded the church in Corinth.

- b. Which *God* apportioned to us as our measure.' St Paul did not determine his own province any more than his own standard of excellence. God did that. Cf. 1 Cor. 7:17; Rom. 12:3; Heb. 7:2.

### iii. Within Our measure

#### 1. Sphere

- a. of the mission assignment given to Paul, which included directions about geographical area
- b. The measure given to Paul is not, then, a sphere marked out in space in which he alone is to work. It is the orientation laid upon him, the χάρις granted to him (Gl. 2:9; R. 15:15 ff.) and the blessing which God has caused to rest on his missionary activity
- c. an area of activity, defined geographically and functionally—'area, sphere, territory.' οὐκ ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα καυχῆσασθαι 'and shall not have to boast of work already done in another person's area' 2 Cor 10:16
- d. a specified sphere, definitely marked out, is the meaning required, and 'province' expresses this very well. But κανὼν is generally used of *length*, and τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος would mean 'the length of one's tether,' the length of the radius from one's centre. In this case it would mean the distance which God told the Apostle to go in his missionary work. But seeing that κανὼν means (1) the rod which measures, and (2) the amount which is measured, and seeing that fixing the bounds of territory may require measuring rods
- e. *kanōn* was a measuring rod, authoritative standard, or norm (Gal 6:16; see also 4 Macc 7:21); but it could also apply to a measured field or jurisdiction Neither Paul nor the Corinthians are talking about some arbitrary division of territory. It is best to retain the meaning "standard of judgment" or "norm" for *kanōn*.

#### 2. God Apportioned

- a. Apportioned - *deal out, assign, apportion* measure of the limit (or area) that God has assigned us

- i. One might have expected “God gave us [ἔδωκεν] our service,” but μερίζω, “allot, apportion,” is evidently chosen to denote the assignment of a sphere of ministry according to God’s purpose (cf. 1 Cor 7:17; Rom 12:3); hence the tautological and seemingly unnecessary piling up of ἄμετρα ... μέτρον ... ἐμέρισεν ... μέτρον, “beyond proper limits ... sphere ... has assigned ... sphere,” to emphasize strongly the single point that Paul has not transgressed his allocated area of service that has been apportioned to him by God. Hence he can “boast” since the object of his καυχάομαι, “boast”—his “missionary field”—
- b. Reach as Far as You
- c. First to Get to you
  - i. This was what God intended; that his line should ‘reach as far as even you’; *pertingendi usque advos*. This was indisputable. St Paul was the first to preach the Gospel in Corinth, and it was God who had turned him from a persecutor into a preacher
  - ii. The proper norm for evaluating Paul’s claims of authority is that he was the founder of the church. He argues that Corinth belongs to the sphere assigned him by God by virtue of the fact that he got there first and God blessed his work with growth. His complaint with the rivals is not simply that they have wrongfully invaded turf assigned to him but that they have tried to discredit his influence where he rightfully deserves influence and to take credit for what God has done through him
  - iii. His boast is the result of his fulfilling God’s commission. The results, the founding of the church in Corinth, are God’s work. His boasting is therefore boasting in the Lord: “Paul has not exceeded his legitimate measure and he has not taken credit for what others have done
- d. Overextending - ***stretch out beyond*** ὑπερεκτείνομεν ἑαυτούς *we are overextending ourselves* (beyond the limits set by God)
  - i. His journeys are acts by which he is to be measured if a standard is sought for the authenticity of his words or epistles

- ii. the word is used negatively. Paul's opponents arrogantly magnify themselves according to their own standards. Paul is not guilty of exaggeration even when he takes his own achievement as the measure
- iii. For are we overstretching ourselves, as if we did not reach unto you'? 'Are we exceeding our commission in claiming authority in Corinth'? Facts speak for themselves; he founded the Church there.

b. But Boasting v.15-16

i. In Other Men's Labors

- 1. The Judaizing teachers had intruded into his province and taken credit for what was his work, and he aims at showing that he himself has done nothing of the kind.
- 2. Paul does not boast in another's labors because he does not work in fields already tilled by others. He expresses his sensitivity about working where others have already established churches in Rom 15:20, "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation."
- 3. We know that St Paul on principle avoided centres where other missionaries had been working (Rom. 15:20); he was commissioned to be always a pioneer, and he regarded his extraordinary success as a proof that he was commissioned by God. It was never his desire to find things ready to his hand, still less to claim the merit for what had been already done

ii. Hope that Your Faith Grows

1. Within our Sphere

a.

2. Enlarged by You

a. Regions beyond you

b. At present Corinth is the Western limit of his sphere of missionary work. When the Corinthian Church is more firmly established, he hopes to extend his labours still farther into Europe. The words are amphibolous, but they have more point if they are taken with μεγαλυνθῆναι. They are almost superfluous if taken with αὐξανομένης (Luther, Calvin); if their faith increases, it must increase in them and among them; but it is not superfluous to remind them that it lies in their power to make it quickly possible for him to extend his sphere of work.

### III. Boast 17-18

- a. Boast in the Lord
  - i. Boast- **to take pride in** *boast, glory, pride oneself, brag* to express an unusually high degree of confidence in someone or something being exceptionally noteworthy
  - ii. For the second time in his correspondence with the Corinthians Paul alludes to an adaptation of Jer 9:23–24, “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord”
  - iii. that is the only safe principle. If faith has been planted and made to grow, it is God who gives the increase
  - iv. This boast in the Lord has nothing to do with Paul’s own pedigree or prowess. It has to do with what the Lord has accomplished through him. Artificial comparisons with others based on human criteria hardly compare with the work that Christ has done in and through him. His boasting is not inappropriate because it is based on what God has done in his life
- b. Commending Oneself
  - i. Not Approved
  - ii. The Lord Commends
    - 1. All human boasting is groundless because it is based on appearances, not reality. It is also mercurial. When mortals die, their praise usually dies with them. By contrast, the Lord’s glory is eternal. The Lord’s scrutiny is also far more exacting. Paul knows that he might preach to others and find himself disqualified as unapproved by God (1 Cor 9:27). He constantly examines himself and urges the Corinthians to do the same (13:5).
    - 2. For it is not the man who commends himself that is the one to be accepted’ (δέχομαι) as of sterling character. See on 1 Cor. 9:27, 11:19; ἐκεῖνος as in Rom. 14:14. St Paul had been forced by the attacks made on him to glory about himself, but it was not on this self-praise that he relied. The Corinthian Church was his letter of commendation, and over and above this there was the manifest blessing which God both in Corinth and elsewhere bestowed upon his work. His assailants had no such confirmation of the praise which they bestowed on themselves



## Word Studies

Bold - *bring oneself, presume* Completely ironical is Paul's saying that he himself does not dare to reckon himself among or equate himself with those who commend themselves (sc. as full apostles), 10:12.<sup>19</sup> Finally we have d. "to be bold, insolent." Paul thinks it quite inappropriate and an offence against the new position of the saints, who shall judge the world,<sup>20</sup> that one of them who has a dispute against another should presume to seek judgment

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<sup>19</sup> Wnd. 2 K., *ad loc.*

<sup>20</sup> Joh. W. 1 K., *ad loc.* τολμᾶ is called a strong term, and Bengel, *ad loc.* is quoted: *grandi verbo notatur laesa maiestas Christianorum.*

from unbelievers instead of the saints, 1 C. 6:1. Conversely, Paul says from the midst of the new awareness of a man to whom grace has been given by God: “I will not dare to speak of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me ... by word and deed<sup>1</sup>

Class- **to make a judgment about someth. and classify it in a specific group, to class** τινά τινα *someone w. someone* (Synes., Ep. 105 p. 250c) **2 Cor 10:12**<sup>2</sup> In the NT it is found only at 2 C. 10:12: “to reckon or count in, to number with, to elect or admit to, a series, party or fellowship<sup>3</sup>

Compare - **to draw a conclusion by comparing, compare**<sup>4</sup>

In the NT the derivatives do not occur and the word itself is found only at 1 C. 2:13 and 2 C, 10:12. συγκρίνω is the antonym of διακρίνω (“to separate”). It is used in various

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<sup>1</sup> Gottfried Fitzer, [“Τολμάω, Αποτολμάω, Τολμητής, Τολμηρός,”](#) in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 185.

**someth. someth.** = something

w. **w.** = with

Synes **Synes** , IV–V A.D.—List 5

Ep. **Ep.** = Epistola/Epistula, when applied to letters mostly pseudonymous; various dates—List 5

**ep.** = epistle

<sup>2</sup> William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 274.

NT New Testament.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Büchsel and Volkmar Herntrich, [“Κρίνω, Κρίσις, Κρίμα, Κριτής, Κριτήριο, Κριτικός, Ανακρίνω, Ανάκρισις, Αποκρίνω, Ανταποκρίνομαι, Απόκριμα, Απόκρισις, Διακρίνω, Διάκρισις, Αδιάκριτος, Εγκρίνω, Κατακρίνω, Κατάκριμα, Κατάκρισις, Ακατάκριτος, Αυτοκατάκριτος, Πρόκριμα, Συγκρίνω,”](#) in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 951.

<sup>4</sup> William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 953.

NT New Testament.

ways: a. “to unite,” “to compound”; b. “to compare”; c. “to measure,” “to evaluate”; d. “to interpret.”<sup>1</sup> At 2 C. 10:12 it means “to compare” with the suggestion that what is to be compared is in some sense of equal value.<sup>2</sup> Paul is ironically rejecting the idea that he can even be compared with the arrogant pseudo-apostles in Corinth (11:13). He alleges that they compare themselves only with themselves and measure themselves only by themselves, so that they are not aware of their own poverty. The detached words πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες in 1 C. 2:13 are difficult to construe. They develop in some way the thought that Paul proclaims revelations given by the Spirit in words taught by the Spirit. The sense “to unite” (a.): “uniting Spirit-given content with Spirit given form,” is not very likely, since the word “unite” is too weak. The sense “to compare” (b.): “comparing spiritual gifts and revelations (which we already have) with spiritual gifts and revelations (which we receive ...), and evaluating and understanding them accordingly,”<sup>3</sup> introduces an alien thought. There is no reference [V 3, p 954](#) here to comparison of different revelations, or to different revelations at all. Hence it is best to accept the meaning “to interpret,” “to expound,” “to explain” (d.), which is predominant in the LXX:<sup>4</sup> “expounding revelations of the Spirit.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Examples in Pape and → n. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. CIG, 5002: ὁ πατήρ τῶν ἱερέων ... ὃ οὐδεὶς τῶν ἱερέων συγκρίνεται.

<sup>3</sup> Reitzenstein Hell. Myst., 336, followed with qualifications by Ltzm.

<sup>4</sup> Gn. 40:8, 16, 22; 41:12, 13, 15; Δα. LXX 5:7; Θ 5:12, 16, always with ref. to the interpretation of divine revelations through dreams. The LXX also uses σύγκρισις and σύγκριμα in a similar sense. “Theodorus, too, knows this interpretation, though he does not accept it here: οὐκ ἀντὶ τοῦ παρεξέταζοντες λέγει, Cramer Cat., 45, 14” (Ltzm. K., *ad loc.*)

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Büchsel and Volkmar Hertrich, “[Κρίνω, Κρίσις, Κρίμα, Κριτής, Κριτήριον, Κριτικός, Ἀνακρίνω, Ἀνάκρισις, Ἀποκρίνω, Ἀνταποκρίνομαι, Ἀπόκριμα, Ἀπόκρισις, Διακρίνω, Διάκρισις, Ἀδιάκριτος, Εὔκρίνω, Κατακρίνω, Κατάκριμα, Κατάκρισις, Ἀκατάκριτος, Αὐτοκατάκριτος, Πρόκριμα, Συγκρίνω,](#)” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 953–954.

Commend - **to bring together as friends or in a trusting relationship by commending/recommending, present, introduce/recommend someone to someone else**<sup>6</sup>

Measure - **immeasurable** εἰς τὰ ἄ. καυχᾶσθαι *boast beyond limits, illimitably*<sup>7</sup>

given him the measure of faith"; 2 C. 10:13: ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος οὗ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρου, "we would not boast beyond measure, but acc. to the measure of the territory which God has assigned to us as a measure"; Eph. 4:7: ἐνὶ δὲ ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, "to each of us was grace given acc. to the measure as Christ granted it to him"; Eph. 4:13: μέχρι καταστήσωμεν οἱ πάντες ... εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Ἐριστοῦ, "until we all come ... to a perfect man, to the measure of the age of maturity of Christ"<sup>3</sup> (cf. the expression ἥβης μέτρον ἰκνέομαι in Hom. Il., 11,225; Od., 11,317; 18, 217; 19, 532: "to reach the full measure of youth," i.e., the maturity of youth); Eph. 4:16: κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου μέρους, "acc. to the power which corresponds to the measure of each part."

ἄμετρος, "without measure," "immeasurable," "incommensurable," "immoderate," "extravagant," in the latter sense twice in the NT at 2 C. 10:13 (→ *supra*), 15 in rejection of immoderate boasting.

μετρέω occurs in the NT in sense a. in Rev. 11:1, to measure the temple of God; 11:2: not to measure the outer court; 21:15, 16, 17, to measure the city, its gates and walls.

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<sup>6</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 972.

<sup>7</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 53.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Pr.-Bauer<sup>3</sup>, s.v.

Hom. Homer, of Chios (?), the classical Greek epic poet, around whose name were grouped the older epics of the Ionians in the 9th and 8th centuries B.C., ed. G. Monro and T. W. Allen, 1908 ff.

Il. *Iliad*.

Od. *Odyssey*.

NT New Testament.

NT New Testament.

A fig. use of a. is found in 2 C. 10:12: αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοὺς μετροῦντες, “they measure themselves by themselves, i.e., by human, self-established measures, I by the measure which God has given me.”<sup>48</sup>

Sphere - of the mission assignment given to Paul, which included directions about geographical area **2 Cor 10:13**,<sup>9</sup>

Less unambiguous is the meaning of the term in 2 C. 10:13–16, where Paul uses it three times in a linguistically difficult passage.<sup>11</sup> Paul defends his apostolic authority at Corinth against those who have come later to an already flourishing community and tried to oust Paul from the leadership by producing letters of commendation, perhaps from Jerusalem. Paul describes their claim as self-vaunting and irregular, whereas he himself judges his own κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνης<sup>12</sup> οἷ ἑμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρου, ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν. He thus has a canon or standard for his work and for the associated claim to apostolic validity which he has not conferred on himself but received from God. In what does this canon consist? Its content is indicated by the ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν, which is dependent on ἑμέρισεν μέτρον. He is given the standard that he needs by the fact that it was given to him to press forward to Corinth and to establish the community there. On this ground some commentators have tried to explain κανὼν in terms of the sense of measuring line. It is the “space defined by the measuring line of God,”<sup>13</sup> i.e., the sphere of work assigned to Paul,<sup>14</sup> the “delimitation of his work, a line on the map.”<sup>15</sup> If we accept this geographical understanding, the question naturally arises when God gave to Paul this allotted sphere on the map.

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<sup>4</sup> Ltzm. K., *ad loc.*

<sup>8</sup> Kurt Deissner, “Μέτρον, Ἀμετρος, Μετρέω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 633.

<sup>9</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 508.

<sup>11</sup> “Hacked fragments of sentences,” Ltzm. 2 K., *ad loc.*. The text is “remarkably difficult, intolerable, almost untranslatable,” Wnd. 2 K., *ad loc.*

<sup>12</sup> Sub. gen.: “The measure determined by the norm.”

<sup>13</sup> Heinr. 2 K., 336.

<sup>14</sup> Pr.-Bauer, s.v.

<sup>15</sup> Wnd. 2 K., 310.

Heinrici<sup>16</sup> and Windisch<sup>17</sup> suggest that Paul was appointed the ἀπόστολος εἰς τὰ ἔθνη outside Damascus, and that this was then recognised at Jerusalem. But it is quite impossible that Paul should have deduced from this a claim to exclusive authority in the Gentile world, that the temporal sphere assigned to him should have been the whole world outside Palestine. A geographical distinction of this kind was in any case impossible because almost everywhere in the world there was also περιτομή.<sup>18</sup> In 2 C. 10:13 ff. Paul does not appeal to an exclusive right to come to Corinth as a missionary, but to the historical fact that it was granted to him to do this.<sup>19</sup> And he has the right to extend his work further only when the faith of the Corinthians has become strong, i.e., only when his missionary work has been successful.

The measure given to Paul is not, then, a sphere marked out in space in which he alone is to work. It is the orientation laid upon him, the χάρις granted to him (Gl. 2:9; R. 15:15 ff.) and the blessing which God has caused to rest on his missionary activity.<sup>20</sup> V 3, p 600

God has given the apostle his mission and brought him to Corinth before any other disciple of Christ ever conceived of this possibility. He has also granted success to his preaching. This is for Paul τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνα. If his work in Corinth ends when the community becomes inwardly strong in faith, then the canon which he is given will lead him further. His task is that of mission, not of caring for the self-developing life of the community. When he found out in Corinth that the faith of the community had increased, there was no further place for Paul in the Orient, and he directed his gaze to Spain. He planned to visit Rome only in transit. For the Gospel was already known there, and it would be for him boasting ἐν ἄλλοτρίῳ κανόνι (2 C. 10:16) if he tried to gain any credit for this community as his opponents did for Corinth when he had already evangelised it. He found in Is. 52:15b the law of the canon which had been given him. He expounds this in R. 15:20 f.: “I did not

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<sup>16</sup> Heinr. Sendschr., II, 432 f.

<sup>17</sup> Wnd. 2 K., 310 refers to Gl. 2:9; R. 1:5, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. my exposition of Gl. 2:9 in NT Deutsch<sup>2</sup>, II (1935), 453 f.

<sup>19</sup> It makes no difference if we accept the view of Heinr. 2 K., 337 that the correct translation of ὥς μὴ ἐφικνούμενοι is not (with Luther, Beza etc.): *ut si non pereenissemus*, but: “as though we were among those for whom attaining to you had not taken place.” Wnd. 2 K., 310 suggests that ἐφικνεῖσθαι might mean “to come to someone with right and authority,” but this is not very convincing.

<sup>20</sup> Wnd. 2 K., 310 takes a different view: “Charismatic endowment is included, but it is a secondary element.” Moult.-Mill. are right when they say (320) that there is no strict parallel to this sense of an assigned sphere at 2 C. 10:13. The fact is that κανὼν never bears this sense.

seek my glory by preaching the Gospel where Christ was already named, lest I should build upon the foundation of another.”<sup>10</sup>

an area of activity, defined geographically and functionally—‘area, sphere, territory.’ οὐκ ἐν ἄλλοτρίῳ κανόνι εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα καυχῆσασθαι ‘and shall not have to boast of work already done in another person’s area’ 2 Cor 10:16.<sup>11</sup>

Apportioned - **deal out, assign, apportion** τί τινι *someth. to someone* (Polyb. 11, 28, 9; Diod S 13, 22, 8 μ. τινὶ τὸν ἔλεον; UPZ 19, 20 [163 B.C.]; 146, 38; Sb 8139, 19f [ins I B.C., of Isis] πᾶσι μερίζεις, οἷσι θέλεις, ζωὴν παντοδαπῶν ἀγαθῶν; PGM 13, 635 μέρισόν μοι ἀγαθὰ; Sir 45:20; ApcMos 15; EpArist 224 [θεός]) ἐκάστῳ μέτρον πίστεως **Ro 12:3**.

- κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος οὗ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρου *according to the measure of the limit (or area) that God has assigned us* **2 Cor 10:13**.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, “[Κανὼν](#),” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 599–600.

<sup>11</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 706.

*someth. someth.* = something

Polyb **Polyb**, III–II B.C.—List 5

Diod S **Diod S**, I B.C.—List 5

UPZ **UPZ** = Urkunden der Ptolemäerzeit—Lists 4, 6

Sb **Sb** = Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten—Lists 3, 4

ins **Ins, ins** = Inscription, Inschrift, inscription(s). Without a period, esp. in lists, as at the beginning of entries; the capitalized form is used in titles. In conjunction with literary works this abbr. refers to the title or description of contents.

PGM **PGM** = Papyri Graecae Magicae—List 4

ApcMos **ApcMos** = Apocalypse of Moses—List 2

EpArist **EpArist** = Epistle of Aristaeas, II B.C.—List 5

<sup>12</sup> William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 632.

Overextending - **stretch out beyond** ὑπερεκτείνομεν ἑαυτούς *we are overextending ourselves* (beyond the limits set by God) **2 Cor 10:14**.<sup>13</sup>

In 2 C. 10:14<sup>3</sup> the word is used negatively. Paul's opponents arrogantly magnify themselves according to their own standards. Paul is not guilty of exaggeration even when he takes his own achievement as the measure. For he has come where he should, i.e., to Corinth. His journeys are acts by which he is to be measured if a standard is sought for the authenticity of his words or epistles (cf. 1 C. 15:10).<sup>14</sup>

Boast - **to take pride in someth., boast, glory, pride oneself, brag**<sup>15</sup> to express an unusually high degree of confidence in someone or something being exceptionally noteworthy—'to boast'<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1033.

<sup>3</sup> V. Ltz. K., *ad loc.*

<sup>14</sup> Ernst Fuchs, [“Ἐκτείνω, Ἐκτενής \(ἐκτενέστερον\), Ἐκτένεια, Ὑπερεκτείνω.”](#) in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 465.

**someth. someth.** = something

<sup>15</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 536.

<sup>16</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [\*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains\*](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 430.



## Commentary Studies

**12. οὐ γὰρ τολμῶμεν ἐνκρίναι ἢ συνκρίναι ἑαυτοῖς.** One suspects that for the sake of a play upon words the Apostle has used an expression which might otherwise have been clearer. 'For we have not the boldness (v. 2) to pair or to compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves.' The play on words (ἐνκρίναι ἢ συνκρίναι) is as obvious here as in vv. 5, 6, and the meaning of ἐνκρίναι seems to be 'judge amongst,' 'estimate amongst,' 'class with,' and it is stronger in meaning than συνκρίναι, so that 'pair' and 'compare' fairly well preserves the similarity of sound and change of meaning. 'I could not venture to put myself in the same class with, or even compare myself with,' is the sarcastic declaration. Vulg. gives the sense, without preserving any play of words; *non enim audemus inserere aut comparare nos*. Beza has *nos adjungere ved conjungere*, which sacrifices the sense in order to preserve the play. Bengel's *aequiparare aut comparare* is better than either this or *inserere aut conserere*. Cf. Wisd. 7:29; 1 Macc. 10:71. St Paul had been accused of singing his own praises (3:1); he here intimates that this is just what his critics are fond of doing.

**ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοὺς μετροῦντες.** If we retain ἡμεῖς δέ in v. 13, and it is best to do so, the αὐτοί must refer to the hostile critics; 'But they themselves measuring themselves by themselves.' They are a "mutual admiration and self-admiration society" (Waite). They set up their own conduct as a standard of excellence, and find their conformity to it eminently satisfactory and admirable. They are a community of Pecksniffs. Calvin takes the monks of his own time as an illustration; *sibi enim intus plaudebant, non considerantes quibus virtutibus constaret vera laus*.

**οὐ συνιᾶσιν.** 'Are without understanding'; they are ἄφρονες (Eph 5:17), who are not intelligent enough to put two and two together. These self-satisfied critics, who have no external standard, but judge everything by comparison with their own practice, come very far short of wisdom. *Non intelligent*, says Augustine, adding *neque quae loquuntur neque de quibus affirmant*

(from 1 Tim. 1:7). Others supply, 'how ridiculous they are,' or 'what they are talking about,' or 'what are the marks of a true Apostle.' But οὐ συνιᾶσιν needs no supplement. Cf. οὐπω νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε; (Mk. 8:17).

The spelling ἐνκπι. and συνκπι is supported by B \* D \*; for the former G has κρῖναι. Naber's suspicion of dittography is not needed; the play on words is thoroughly Pauline. D E add ἐαυτούς after

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B B (Fourth century). Codex Vaticanus.

\* information respecting the commentator is to be found in the volume on the First Epistle, pp. lxvi f.

D D (Sixth century). Codex Claromontanus; now at Paris. A Graeco-Latin MS. The Latin (d) is akin to the Old Latin. Many subsequent hands (sixth to ninth centuries) have corrected the MS.

\* information respecting the commentator is to be found in the volume on the First Epistle, pp. lxvi f.

G G (Late ninth century). Codex Boernerianus; at Dresden. Interlined with the Latin (in minuscules). The Greek text is almost the same as that of F, but the Latin (G) shows Old Latin elements.

D D (Sixth century). Codex Claromontanus; now at Paris. A Graeco-Latin MS. The Latin (d) is akin to the Old Latin. Many subsequent hands (sixth to ninth centuries) have corrected the MS.

E E (Ninth century). At Petrograd. A copy of D, and unimportant

the first verb, while  $\aleph$  omits ἐαυτούς before μετροῦντες. συνιᾶσιν ( $\aleph^1$  B 17) rather than συνιοῦσιν (D<sub>3</sub> D K L P or συνίσασιν ( $\aleph^*$ ) D FG, d e f G omit οὐ συν. ἡμεῖς δὲ, but the words should be retained with  $\aleph$  B D<sup>3</sup> E K L P, 1 Syrr. Copt. Arm. Aeth. Goth.

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$\aleph$   $\aleph$  (Fourth century). Codex Sinaiticus; now at Petrograd, the only uncial MS. containing the whole N.T.

$\aleph$   $\aleph$  (Fourth century). Codex Sinaiticus; now at Petrograd, the only uncial MS. containing the whole N.T.

B B (Fourth century). Codex Vaticanus.

17 17. (Evan. 33, Acts 13. Ninth century). Now at Paris. “The queen of the cursives” and the best for the Pauline Epistles; more than any other it preserves Pre-Syrian readings and agrees with B D L.

D D (Sixth century). Codex Claromontanus; now at Paris. A Graeco-Latin MS. The Latin (d) is akin to the Old Latin. Many subsequent hands (sixth to ninth centuries) have corrected the MS.

D D (Sixth century). Codex Claromontanus; now at Paris. A Graeco-Latin MS. The Latin (d) is akin to the Old Latin. Many subsequent hands (sixth to ninth centuries) have corrected the MS.

K K (Ninth century). Codex Mosquensis; now at Moscow.

L L (Ninth century). Codex Angelicus; now in the Angelica Library at Rome.

P P (Ninth century). Codex Porfirianus Chiovensis, formerly possessed by Bishop Porfiri of Kiev, and now at Petrograd.

$\aleph$   $\aleph$  (Fourth century). Codex Sinaiticus; now at Petrograd, the only uncial MS. containing the whole N.T.

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F F (Late ninth century). Codex Augiensis (from Reichenau); now at Trinity College, Cambridge.

**13. ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα.** 'But *we* will not glory beyond our measure'. He does not fix his own standard, and he does not exceed the limits fixed for him; moreover, he has a settled determination never to exceed these limits. Εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα is indefinite; it may refer to the excessive self—admiration of his opponents, or it may mean 'in respect of things beyond our scope'; but this is less probable. Cf. εἰς τὰ μάλιστα.

**ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος κ.τ.λ.** 'But according to the measure of the length which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach as far as even you.' RV. and other authorities render κανών 'province,' and the rendering is so suitable to the context that we may perhaps regard it as admissible; a specified sphere, definitely marked out, is the meaning required, and 'province' expresses this very well. But κανών is generally used of *length*, and τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος would mean 'the length of one's tether,' the length of the radius from one's centre. In this case it would mean the distance which God told the Apostle to go in his missionary work. But seeing that κανών means (1) the rod which measures, and (2) the amount which is measured, and seeing that fixing

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G G (Late ninth century). Codex Boernerianus; at Dresden. Interlined with the Latin (in minuscules). The Greek text is almost the same as that of F, but the Latin (G) shows Old Latin elements.

d d The Latin companion of D

e d The Latin companion of E

f d The Latin companion of F

G G (Late ninth century). Codex Boernerianus; at Dresden. Interlined with the Latin (in minuscules). The Greek text is almost the same as that of F, but the Latin (G) shows Old Latin elements.

Ⲭ Ⲭ (Fourth century). Codex Sinaiticus; now at Petrograd, the only uncial MS. containing the whole N.T.

B B (Fourth century). Codex Vaticanus.

D D (Sixth century). Codex Claromontanus; now at Paris. A Graeco-Latin MS. The Latin (d) is akin to the Old Latin. Many subsequent hands (sixth to ninth centuries) have corrected the MS.

E E (Ninth century). At Petrograd. A copy of D, and unimportant

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P P (Ninth century). Codex Porfirianus Chiovensis, formerly possessed by Bishop Porfiri of Kiev, and now at Petrograd.

the bounds of territory may require measuring rods, it is possible that κανών may be used of the territory thus measured. Lightfoot on Gal. 6:16, the only other place in N.T. in which the word occurs, seems to take this as certain. There, however, the term is used of *line*, and not of *surface*; 'all those who shall guide their steps by this rule.'<sup>\*</sup> In Judith 13:6 it seems to, mean a bedpole. More akin to the use here is 4 Macc. 7:21, πρὸς ὅλον τὸν τῆς φιλοσοφίας κανόνα εὐσεβῶς φιλοσοφῶν, where κανόνα might be rendered 'sphere,' or 'province,' although 'rule' may be better. Westcott, *Canon of N.T.*, App. A, gives a history of the word.

**οὗ ἑμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρου.** 'Which *God* apportioned to us as our measure.' St Paul did not determine his own province any more than his own standard of excellence. God did that. Cf. 1 Cor. 7:17; Rom. 12:3; Heb. 7:2. Some editors bracket μέτρου as probably as gloss, but ἑμέρισεν μέτρου is another alliteration, and St Paul is harping on the idea of 'measure.' Vulg. omits; *quam mensus est nobis Deus*. Both οὗ and μέτρου are attracted in case to τοῦ κανόνα.

**ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν.** This was what God intended; that his line should 'reach as far as even you'; *pertingendi usque advos*. This was indisputable. St Paul was the first to preach the Gospel in Corinth, and it was God who had turned him from a persecutor into a preacher. The verb is common enough in class. Grk., but it is found nowhere else in N.T., and perhaps nowhere in LXX.

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<sup>\*</sup> We use 'line' in a similar sense. To be the Apostle of the Gentiles was St Paul's 'line,' and it extended to Corinth.

οὐκ (x B D\* G K L P) rather than οὐχι D<sub>3</sub> E). εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα (x B D<sub>3</sub> K L P) rather than εἰς τὸ ἄμετρον (D \* G) *in immensum* (Latt.). ἐφικέσθαι (x B G K L P) rather than ἀφικέσθαι (D E F).

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**14.** We again have several doubtful points to consider; text, arrangement, and punctuation are all uncertain. At the outset all these must be regarded as tentative.

**οὐ γὰρ ὥς μή.** Adopting this reading, we will treat the verse as not a mere parenthesis to explain v.13, and will connect v.15 with v. 14; moreover, we will regard no part of v. 14 as interrogative. 'For we are not overstretching ourselves, as (we should be doing) if we did not

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reach unto you, for as far as even you we were the first to come in the Gospel (8:18; Rom. 1:9) of the Christ, not glorying beyond our measure, etc.’ Or, without supplying anything, we may take the first part of v. 14 thus; ‘For we are not, as if we did not reach unto you, overstretching ourselves.’ If the reading ὡς γὰρ μή is adopted, then the first part must be a question; ‘For are we overstretching ourselves, as if we did not reach unto you?’ ‘Are we exceeding our commission in claiming authority in Corinth?’ Facts speak for themselves; he founded the Church there.

It is not certain that φθάνω here, as in 1 Thess. 4:15, retains its class. signification of ‘come first,’ ‘precede,’ ‘anticipate.’ In later Greek it commonly means simply ‘come’ (1 Thess. 2:16; Rom. 9:31; Phil. 3:16); so in papyri and perhaps here (RV). Nevertheless, the fact that he not only came as far as Corinth with the Glad-tidings, but was the first to do so, has point.

Unless v. 14 is treated as a parenthetical explanation of v. 13 (WH.), we need only a comma at the end of it.

οὐ γὰρ ὡς μή (Ξ D F G K L M, Latt.) rather than ὡς γὰρ μή (B and two cursives).

**15, 16.** These verses are connected with v. 14 rather than with v. 13. The clumsiness of expression is due to dictation, in which the sentence has become unduly prolonged. The Judaizing teachers had intruded into his province and taken credit for what was his work, and he aims at showing that he himself has done nothing of the kind.

**οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα κ.τ.λ.** ‘Not glorying beyond our measure in other men’s labours, but having hope that, as your faith grows, we shall be magnified in you according to our province unto still

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Ξ Ξ (Fourth century). Codex Sinaiticus; now at Petrograd, the only uncial MS. containing the whole N.T.

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L L (Ninth century). Codex Angelicus; now in the Angelica Library at Rome.

M M (Ninth century). Codex Ruber, in bright red letters; two leaves in the British Museum contain 2 Cor. 10:13–12:5.

B B (Fourth century). Codex Vaticanus.



greater abundance, so as to preach the Gospel unto the regions beyond you, and not to glory in another man's province in respect of things ready to our hand.' At present Corinth is the Western limit of his sphere of missionary work. When the Corinthian Church is more firmly established, he hopes to extend his labours still farther into Europe.

**15. ἐν ὑμῖν.** The words are amphibolous, but they have more point if they are taken with μεγαλυνθῆναι. They are almost superfluous if taken with αὐξανομένης (Luther, Calvin); if their faith increases, it must increase in them and among them; but it is not superfluous to remind them that it lies in their power to make it quickly possible for him to extend his sphere of work. Both καυχώμενοι and ἔχοντες are *participiabsoluta*, of which St Paul makes freq. use. See on 8:20. With μεγαλυνθῆναι comp. Phil. 1:20, with περισσεῖαν, 8:2.

**16. εἰς τὰ ὑπερέκεινα ὑμῶν.** The expression may be coined for the occasion, for ὑπερέκεινα has been found nowhere else.\* It may have been a current popular word which has not found its way into literature; ἐπέκεινα (Acts 7:43 and LXX) is classical. A little later St Paul had intentions of going to Rome and Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28), and such ideas may have been in his mind when he wrote this letter. Regarding Antioch as his original centre, he *might* vaguely describe such regions as τὰ ὑπερέκεινα in reference to Corinth. But, *if these chapters are part of the severe letter written at Ephesus*, 'the parts beyond Corinth' would be a natural expression for Rome and Spain. See Introduction, p. xxxiii.

**εὐαγγελίσασθαι.** In these verses (14–16) we have εὐαγγέλιον and εὐαγγελίζομαι, expressions and ideas which are in a high degree Pauline. The former occurs in all groups of the Epistles, 60 times in all, and indeed in every Epistle, excepting that to Titus. The latter is found chiefly in this group, but also in 1 Thess. and Eph., 20 times in all, and its usual meaning is 'preach the Gospel,' whether εὐαγγέλιον be added (11:7) or not; but in a few passages it means simply 'preach,' and hardly differs from κηρύσσω (Gal. 1:23; Eph. 2:17, 3:8; 1 Thess. 3:6). Εὐαγγέλιον more often than not has no defining adjective or genitive, as here and 8:18; contrast 2:12, 4:4, 9:13, 11:7; and seeing that the verb is a technical word to indicate the work of a Christian missionary, the noun indicates the substance or contents of mission preaching. In other words, it is "God's plan of salvation, contained in the O.T. as a promise, and realized through Jesus Christ" (Harnack, *Constitution and Law of the Church*, pp. 292 f.).

**εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα καυχήσασθαι.** 'To glory in respect of things ready to our hand,' *i.e.* 'done by other persons before we came on the scene and claimed the credit of it,' a condensed expression, the meaning of which would be obscure without the context. The constr. κανχ. εἰς is found in Arist. *Pol.* v. x. 16. We know that St Paul on principle avoided centres where other missionaries had been working (Rom. 15:20); he was commissioned to be always a pioneer, and he regarded his extraordinary success as a proof that he was commissioned by God. It was never his desire to find things ready to his hand, still less to claim the merit for what had been already done. Indeed there was no merit to be claimed even when, in the province apportioned to him, great results were produced. Therefore he again quotes (see on 1 Cor. 1:31) an adaptation of Jer. 9:24.

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\* Thomas Magister condemns it as a vulgarism used only by οἱ σύρφακες.

**17. ὁ δὲ καυχώμενος.** ‘But he that glorieth, in the Lord let him glory’; that is the only safe principle. If faith has been planted and made to grow, it is God who gives the increase. It is probable that ὁ κύριος here means God rather than Christ. But it is remarkable with what readiness N.T. writers transfer what in O.T. is said of Jehovah to Jesus Christ, and this may be a case in point. See on 1 Cor. 15:10; Rom. 15:17; Eph. 3:7; and cf. Gal. 2:8: in all these passages St Paul carefully disclaims merit for what he has been enabled to accomplish.

**18. οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἑαυτὸν συνιστάνων, ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν δόκιμος.** ‘For it is not the man who commends himself that is the one to be accepted’ (δέχομαι) as of sterling character. See on 1 Cor. 9:27, 11:19; ἐκεῖνος as in Rom. 14:14. St Paul had been forced by the attacks made on him to glory about himself, but it was not on this self-praise that he relied. The Corinthian Church was his letter of commendation, and over and above this there was the manifest blessing which God both in Corinth and elsewhere bestowed upon his work. His assailants had no such confirmation of the praise which they bestowed on themselves. Cf. ἐγκωμιάζω σε ὁ πέλας καὶ μὴ τὸ σὸν στόμα, ἀλλότριος καὶ μὴ τὰ σὰ χεῖλη (Prov. 27:2). Augustine (*in Ps. cxliv. n. 7*) says, *Ecce inventum est, quomodo et te laudare possis et arrogans non sis. Deum in te lauda, non te; non quia te es talis, sed quia ille fecit te; non quia tu aliquid potes, sed quia potest ille in te et per te.*<sup>\*17</sup>

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\* “Two feelings are compounded all through this passage; an intense sympathy with the purpose of God that the Gospel should be preached to every creature; and an intense scorn for the spirit that sneaks and poaches on another’s ground, and is more anxious that some men should be good sectarians than that all men should be good disciples” (Denney, p.309)

<sup>17</sup> Alfred Plummer, [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians.\*](#), International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark, 1915), 286–291.

**10:12** In their scheme to undermine Paul's influence in Corinth and promote their own, his rivals have accused him of having nerve in his letters but no boldness in person (10:10). Paul responds to this criticism with wry sarcasm that he lacks the nerve to classify or compare himself with those who commend themselves. "Daring" (*tolman*) is related to the assurance that leads one "to push oneself forward."<sup>121</sup> He plays on this perception that he lacked that obligatory assurance to undermine the presumption of these braggarts. He has warned them, however, that he will "dare" to oppose those who think that he operates according to the world's standards (10:2). He will also "dare" to join those others who "dare to boast" but admits that it is the daring of a fool (11:21), not because he cannot back up this boasting with performance equal to his words but because God does not back up such foolish boasting. God humbles the proud so they will not try to take credit for what God alone has done.

In the ancient world "comparison" (*sygkrisis*) was a common "rhetorical exercise practiced in schools," and comparing oneself with other teachers was a common tactic for a teacher to attract students and their fees.<sup>122</sup> Stansbury points out that in the political arena Greek *hybris*, pride, combines with Roman *inimicitia*, enmity, to produce vicious smear tactics against rivals. People in this society assumed that honors were as limited as material wealth. Since there was only a limited amount of honor to go around, one resented and envied others for having it. "Political enemies were targets of exaggerated character assassination designed to make them symbols of shame or of political subversion."<sup>123</sup> In the cutthroat competition for plaudits and pupils, one had to advertise oneself publicly with audacious praise while impugning the qualities of other contenders for honor. People were constantly vying with others to attain elusive glory and engaged in a constant game of one-upmanship. This race for honor "encouraged outward expressions of pride and arrogance."<sup>124</sup> Self-boasting was considered an act of honor. Savage observes that "an individual's worth and consequently his respect in the community was dependent on the status he was able to project."<sup>125</sup> Boasting about one's status and achievements and comparing oneself favorably against others were routine tactics for those who aimed at gaining a following for themselves.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 319.

<sup>122</sup> Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 53.

<sup>123</sup> Stansbury, *Corinthians Honor, Corinthian Conflict: A Social History of Early Roman Corinth and Its Pauline Community*, 278; noting also B. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981) 71–93; and P. Walcott, "The Funeral Speech, A Study of Values," *Greece and Rome* 20 (1973) 117.

<sup>124</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 23.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Savage makes the following helpful observations about status in the ancient world: "All people belonged to one of two classes: the *honestiores* or the *humiliores*, the high or the low. The former was made up of the nobility—senators, equestrians and, away from Rome

In a “comparison” one would amplify one’s good deeds and another’s bad deeds to show superiority. Such topics as a person’s race, upbringing, education, status, physique, pursuits, and positions held were all fair game in sizing up their relative merits and standing.<sup>127</sup> Dio Chrysostom derides the sophists of Corinth for craving the esteem of the crowd, wanting “to be looked up to and thought that they knew more than other men.”<sup>128</sup> Winter notes that sophists fanned strife and jealousy, and intense rivalry “seemed to arise wherever two or three were gathered together.”<sup>129</sup> Lucian, the great satirist, pokes fun at the popular teachers who compared themselves with others to exalt themselves. In his *Professor of Public Speaking* a wily veteran instructs the novice on how to achieve popular success: “make marvelous assertions about yourself, be extravagant in your self-praise, and make yourself a nuisance to him. What was Demosthenes beside me?”<sup>130</sup> Such extravagant self-regard was considered characteristic of sham philosophers who were frequently lampooned by other more serious philosophers. By implication, then, Paul lumps his opponents in with this crowd of frauds who can be identified by their extravagant self-regard and self-commendation.

Paul deflates the boasts of his rivals as he insinuates, “Such a dwarf as I could not possibly compare with such giants.” “I hardly rank with such luminaries.” He therefore disparages their boasting with mock self-deprecation. Speaking tongue in cheek in this way also raises the

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itself, the decurions. These were men who, together with their womenfolk, were esteemed for their *dignitas* and often possessed great power and fortune. The *humiliores*—plebs, freedmen and slaves—lacked *dignitas* and were held in no honour by the nobility. Since rank was hereditary, movement from one class to the other was virtually impossible” (*Power through Weakness*, 20; see further P. Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1970] 221–280). The nobility comprised one percent of the population; slaves and indigents the bottom third. The middle two thirds were consumed with improving their status which was achieved primarily by attaining wealth. But even wealth did not always confer the honor that so many people craved (see the account of Trimalchio’s dinner in Petronius’ *Satyricon*). Since attaining wealth was impossible for most people, noble philosophers argued that one could also achieve honor through virtuous living. But most chose other routes and sought honor from their occupations, neighborhoods, talents, education, religion, or athletic accomplishments (Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 21–22). Paul’s Corinthian rivals have chosen religion as the field in which they will compete for the honor and status they so covet.

<sup>127</sup> See the manual of rhetoric discussing the use of comparison by Aelius Theon, cited by Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony,” 6. See also Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 54.

<sup>128</sup> Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 6.21.

<sup>129</sup> Winter, *Paul and Philo among the Sophists*, 132.

<sup>130</sup> Cited by Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony,” 8.

question whether his rivals are comparable to him at all.<sup>131</sup> No comparison can be made where no similarity exists.<sup>132</sup> In all their boasting they presume to be Paul's equal, but in his view they are false apostles (11:12–13). If he is going to stoop to compare himself with them, it will be only as a fool (11:21–12:11). They claim to be in a different league than Paul; and Paul would readily agree—they are in league with Satan. They may have won status in the eyes of some Corinthians with their boastfulness, but they have won God's judgment in the process.

Second, he rules out this fundamental rhetorical tool of showing superiority through comparison as something completely illegitimate for ministers of God.<sup>133</sup> Only fools dare to use self-comparison with others to commend themselves to others. Even when he so “foolishly” joins the fray of comparison, “Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this) I am more” (11:22), he ends up only boasting in his weakness, the very things that they think should oust him from the contest. He thereby changes the ground rules of how to play the boasting game.<sup>134</sup>

Third, he challenges their criteria: “They have set themselves up as the measure of their ministry.” There were no clear-cut biblical criteria to decide the spiritual legitimacy of Paul or his

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<sup>131</sup> Dio Chrysostom uses a similar tack in his oration to the Alexandrians. He refuses “to range himself beside” others who have flattered them, “For they are clever persons, mighty sophists, wonder-workers; but I am quite ordinary and prosaic in my utterance, though not ordinary in my theme” (*Orations* 32.39, noted by Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony,” 4).

<sup>132</sup> Forbes points out: “For Philo, comparisons require a basis of similarity before they can be legitimate comparisons. Comparisons can be made between things which are very different, such as kings and commoners, but only on the basis of their common humanity. Where there is no real similarity, no comparison can be made” (“Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony,” 4). Theon's manual of rhetoric laid down the principle “that comparisons are not drawn between things which are vastly different from each other. It would be ridiculous to debate whether Achilles is more courageous than Thersites” (“Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony,” 6). We can infer from this backdrop that if the rivals compared themselves to Paul to exalt themselves, then they *do not* question Paul's apostolic calling or legitimacy because they would not want to consider themselves equal to (11:12) or to compare themselves with someone whom they regarded as a fraud or as illegitimate. Marshall is correct. The issue in dispute is not apostolic status but who is the apostle of the Corinthians. “It is a question of authority rather than legitimacy” (Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 335).

<sup>133</sup> Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony,” 3.

<sup>134</sup> Furnish finds lying behind this principle “the familiar Pauline distinction between one's own righteousness, based on personal achievements and credentials, and the righteousness from God “which is through faith in Christ” (Phil. 3:9)” (*II Corinthians*, 482).

rivals, and the opponents and the Corinthians apparently reverted to the standards they were accustomed to from their culture.<sup>135</sup> They judged themselves and Paul according to their commanding presence (10:1, 10), concrete displays of power and authority (11:19–20), impressive speech (11:20–21), worthiness to accept full compensation (11:7–11), Jewish pedigree (11:21b–22), endurance of hardships (11:23–29), and mystical visions (12:1–6). According to these criteria, they passed with flying colors and Paul failed. But Paul would insist that they not only have usurped God’s role as the one who appraises ministry (1 Cor 4:4), but they have used false criteria and ignored the only measure that counts—what God has done in and through the minister. The statement “they are not wise” is an understatement. In chap. 11 he will be more direct: they are fools who deceive themselves and others. He concludes in 10:18 that if one is not commended by the Lord using the Lord’s standard of judgment then one is not approved.

**10:13–15a** Paul insists that his boasting in his authority over them (10:8) is not out of bounds but is based on the work that he has done in Christ in the region that God assigned him. Corinth is God’s field (1 Cor 3:9), and God assigned him to work there as God’s servant. He planted; God gave the growth (1 Cor 3:6). Therefore, Paul appeals to the indisputable fact that he founded the church in Corinth. His rivals could not claim this. In fulfilling this divine assignment as apostle to the Gentiles he came to Corinth, “and the success there of his missionary work in calling a church into being was proof that God had approved of his work.”<sup>136</sup> He writes in Rom 15:17–18 that in the things pertaining to God—his work—he has a boast in Christ Jesus. The NIV translates “have a boast” as “glory”: “Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done.” The reason he can boast is that his ministry to the Gentiles and its success is not his own doing but “the work of God’s grace in his life.”<sup>137</sup> The rivals might point to their letters of commendation and exhibitions of spiritual power and rhetorical wizardry to corroborate their claims to divine authority. Paul appeals to the incontrovertible

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<sup>135</sup> The church has always struggled with this problem of establishing standards for discerning spiritual leadership as seen in the attempt to ascertain whether or not an itinerant teacher was a bona fide prophet. In the *Didache* we find the criteria that the true apostle will not tarry more than two days, will not ask for money except enough to reach his next night’s lodging, and will not order, when they claim to be speaking in the Spirit, a meal (11:1–9). A more helpful criterion is the assertion that a true prophet does what he teaches (*Did.* 11:10–11; see Matt 7:15–20).

<sup>136</sup> Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 266.

NIV New International Version

<sup>137</sup> D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 891.

existence of the church in Corinthians, a church founded by his missionary preaching.<sup>138</sup> Their boasts are based on evidence manufactured from their own fantasies about themselves. What objectivity is there when they simply cite their own accomplishments as the norm? Paul's boast is based on undeniable fact.

The NIV chooses to translate the phrase in 10:13 that reads literally "according to the measure of the canon (*kanōn*) which measure God assigned to us," as "the field God has assigned us." A *kanōn* was a measuring rod, authoritative standard, or norm (Gal 6:16; see also 4 Macc 7:21); but it could also apply to a measured field or jurisdiction.<sup>139</sup> Martin claims it relates to the geographical area assigned to apostolic leaders.<sup>140</sup> But he goes beyond the evidence in saying that Paul's opponents have claimed that he has no jurisdiction at Corinth, that it was, for example, Peter's bailiwick.<sup>141</sup> Neither Paul nor the Corinthians are talking about some arbitrary division of territory. It is best to retain the meaning "standard of judgment" or "norm" for *kanōn*.

The proper norm for evaluating Paul's claims of authority is that he was the founder of the church.<sup>142</sup> He argues that Corinth belongs to the sphere assigned him by God by virtue of the fact that he got there first and God blessed his work with growth. His complaint with the rivals is not simply that they have wrongfully invaded turf assigned to him but that they have tried to discredit his influence where he rightfully deserves influence and to take credit for what God has done

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<sup>138</sup> The phrase the "gospel of Christ" implies a well-articulated kerygma about Jesus (J. H. Neyrey, "Witchcraft Accusations in 2 Cor 10–13: Paul in Social Science Perspective," *Listening* 21 (1986) 165). See 11:4, "another Jesus ... a different gospel."

NIV New International Version

<sup>139</sup> See E. A. Judge, who cites evidence that the word is used to refer to a measured area or a limited domain of service ("The Regional *kanon* for the Requisitioned Transport, in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* 1, ed. G. H. R. Horsley [North Ryde: Macquarie University, 1989] 36–45). See also J. F. Strange, "2 Corinthians 10:13–16 Illuminated by a Recently Published Inscription," *BA* 46 (1983) 167–68.

<sup>140</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 316.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 321. Paul's protest is unrelated to any imagined violation of some territorial agreement hammered out between Paul and the pillar apostles, James, Cephas, and John (Gal 2:6–10), as F. F. Bruce (*I and II Corinthians*, 34) and Martin (*2 Corinthians*, 316) contend.

<sup>142</sup> S. Hafemann argues that the "unexpressed premise" behind Paul's boast is that his function as the founder of the church "is the only appropriate, divinely appointed 'canon' according to which apostolic authority in a particular church can be determined" (" 'Self-commendation' and Apostolic Legitimacy in 2 Corinthians: A Pauline Dialectic?" *NTS* 36 [1990] 80).

through him. Paul counters their criticism of him by saying that he does not “meddle in other people’s territory and then compare our performance with theirs.”<sup>143</sup> This, according to Lambrecht, explains why Paul can boast. His boast is the result of his fulfilling God’s commission. The results, the founding of the church in Corinth, are God’s work. His boasting is therefore boasting in the Lord: “Paul has not exceeded his legitimate measure and he has not taken credit for what others have done.”<sup>144</sup>

What follows in 10:14–15a basically repeats what Paul says in 10:13 but takes it a step further by making it more specific.<sup>145</sup> He does not overextend himself because he was the first to come to them with the gospel (10:14). He does not boast beyond measure because he does not boast in the labors of others (10:15a).<sup>146</sup> What he boasts about is work that he did under God’s commission.

**10:15b–16** Paul does not boast in another’s labors because he does not work in fields already tilled by others. He expresses his sensitivity about working where others have already established churches in Rom 15:20, “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.” His opponents, however, have no qualms about building on another’s foundation or claiming an equal, if not greater authority over a congregation that they did not found.<sup>147</sup> They have conferred no benefits on the Corinthians and have done nothing to expand the field of God’s work. This is hardly surprising. Heretics always make inroads among believers, not unbelievers.

Even now Paul has set his sights on new areas of mission. The text is difficult and reads literally “but having hope [that] as your faith increases to be magnified among you [or by you] according to our *kanōn* for abundance.” The NIV translation suggests that Paul wants his work to expand among them. But he states in 10:16 that his goal is to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you.<sup>148</sup> In Rom 15:24 we learn that he intends to go to Rome and then on to Spain. Clearly, he wants to settle the problems with the Corinthians so that he can concentrate on missionary

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<sup>143</sup> F. W. Danker, *II Corinthians*, ACNT (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989) 158.

<sup>144</sup> Lambrecht, “Dangerous Boasting: Paul’s Self-Commendation in 2 Corinthians 10–13,” 332–33.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>146</sup> The word “labors” (κόποι) implies that his missionary work was arduous, involving toil (see 1 Cor 3:8; 2 Cor 6:5; 11:23, 27; 1 Thess 2:9; 3:5; see also 1 Cor 15:10).

<sup>147</sup> Aristotle states, “And to speak at great length about oneself and to make all kinds of professions, and to take the credit for what another has done; for this is a sign of boastfulness” (*Rhetoric* 1348a,7).

NIV New International Version

<sup>148</sup> Since Paul lived in a premap culture, one should not try to figure out where Paul is writing from the statement “beyond you.”



endeavors elsewhere with their support. If Paul constantly has to be putting out back fires, he cannot move on to new work. But he expresses confidence that the Corinthians' faith will indeed grow. This will allow his area of activity to expand, not in Corinth, but in territory beyond them.

**10:17–18** For the second time in his correspondence with the Corinthians Paul alludes to an adaptation of Jer 9:23–24, “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord” (LXX Jer 9:22–23; see 1 Cor 1:31).<sup>149</sup> Paul boasts in the Lord, whose commendation is the only one that counts.<sup>150</sup> This boast in the Lord has nothing to do with Paul's own pedigree or prowess. It has to do with what the Lord has accomplished through him. Artificial comparisons with others based on human criteria hardly compare with the work that Christ has done in and through him. His boasting is not inappropriate because it is based on what God has done in his life. The results of his mission work are so self-evident that he need not trumpet his commendation as his rivals do. That is why he says that the Corinthians should be commending him (12:11); they are his letter of commendation, to be known and read by all (3:2).

All human boasting is groundless because it is based on appearances, not reality. It is also mercurial. When mortals die, their praise usually dies with them. By contrast, the Lord's glory is eternal. The Lord's scrutiny is also far more exacting. Paul knows that he might preach to others and find himself disqualified as unapproved by God (1 Cor 9:27). He constantly examines himself and urges the Corinthians to do the same (13:5). If they fall under the sway of chronic boasters, who self-assuredly commend themselves, they are liable to ignore God's measures and find themselves disqualified.<sup>18</sup>

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LXX Septuagint

<sup>149</sup> In 1 Cor 1:31 he introduces the quotation with “it is written” to underline its authority. See J. Schreiner, “Jeremia 9, 22.23 als Hintergrund des paulinischen ‘Sich-Rühmens,’” in *Neues Testament und Kirche*, ed. J. Gnilka (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1974) 530–42. Paul could also be alluding to 1 Sam 2:10.

<sup>150</sup> Grundmann states that Paul “lifts the whole question of attestation out of the hands of men and sets it in those of God. God alone decides the issue, which is not subject to human categories of judgment. This means, however, that the question what constitutes true attestation is posed the more urgently” (“δόκιμος ...,” *TDNT* 2:258).

<sup>18</sup> David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 451–457.

**12** οὐ γὰρ τολμῶμεν ἐγκρίναι ἢ συγκρίναι ἑαυτοὺς τισιν τῶν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστανόντων, “we do not have the effrontery to class or compare ourselves with some of those who recommend themselves.” This verse opens a new section that considers the ground of the allegation brought against Paul. The issue turns on “self-recommendation” (implied in the reflexive verb form ἑαυτοὺς συνιστανόντων), and the charge against the apostle is that he is too cowardly and weak (ἀσθενής [v 10]) to make any bold assertion regarding himself as an apostle and leader. He had earlier (v 11) remarked on his plan to deal strongly with the opponents at Corinth; to that extent v 12 is closely linked with the preceding. Now he seeks to ward off the accusation that he cannot make good on that threat because he is basically a flawed character. He refuses to boast (καυχᾶσθαι [v 13]) and to push himself forward—unlike his competitors whose claims he must now confront and answer.

His tactic is to adopt a stance of mock humility: I really cannot rise to the level of these people so that I can rightly join myself to them (ἐγκρίνω) or compare myself with them (συγκρίνω). With an obvious play on words, which may owe something to an anti-rhetorical and anti-sophistic posture—opposing comparison (σύγκρισις) with a denial of superiority (ὑπεροχή; cf. 1 Cor 2:1) adopted by popular philosophy,<sup>155</sup> Paul answers those who said that he was boastful (3:1; 10:1). In the game of self-praise, he retorts, I haven’t the skill to play (see 11:6: ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, “untrained in public speaking”).

The two verbs, linked by assonance (as we saw), are evidently chosen to silence this kind of folly—though Paul will be forced to shift his ground later in his debate (see 12:11, “you have compelled me to play the fool [in my boasting],” a theme begun in 11:10 and continued to 12:10; the occasion, we may suspect, was the presence of the teachers at Corinth spoken of in 11:4).

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v verse

v verse

v verse

v verse

<sup>155</sup> See Betz, *Apostel Paulus*, 119–20.

For the present, Paul will have none of this type of self-advertisement. The verb οὐ τολμῶμεν, “we do not have the effrontery,” will be resumed in 11:21: τολμῶ κἀγώ, “I do have the audacity to boast”—when I speak as a fool. The verb τολμάω, “be brave enough,” so “dare,” “presume,” has a wide range of meanings. The thought of a person pushing himself forward so that he does not hesitate to speak or act on his own behalf is well-attested.<sup>156</sup> Paul’s use of the term is ironic in 11:21, while here the charge of “effrontery” is plainly denied, with a link going back to 10:1, where Paul’s “boldness” (θαρρῆσαι) is held as a charge against him.

The precise point of the debate centers on συνίστημι ἑαυτόν, “self-commendation,” which is a practice Paul will not indulge in (a denial already registered in 5:12). Again, we must add, this is his stance until he is driven from it by the exigencies of his “apology” in subsequent chapters (cf. 11:21ff.). Then he will be compelled to boast, though paradoxically the object of his self-approbation will be his weakness (ἀσθένεια).

ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοὺς μετροῦντες καὶ συγκρίνοντες ἑαυτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς οὐ συνιᾶσιν, “rather, when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they appear as without understanding.” In this present section the topic is self-evaluation in terms of the scope of mission service. Paul has stated his aversion from self-advertised claims. The ἀλλά, “rather,” sets off his position from that of his rivals (αὐτοί), which hardly opens a new subject.<sup>157</sup> The αὐτοί, “they,” refers to the opponents who use as the measuring rod (μέτρον) of their service their own self-judgment, and set up their own standards of conduct as the criterion (ἑαυτοῖς ἑαυτοὺς μετροῦντες). The result is a foregone conclusion: they find themselves well-qualified and praiseworthy. Paul’s verdict on them is exactly to the contrary: “they are without understanding” (οὐ συνιᾶσιν; a negative verb used by Paul of human error in Rom 3:11; or as a noun of the human wisdom God rejects [1 Cor 1:19]).

The reason for this negative assessment will be seen in some contrasts Paul draws later; on his part he has not “overreached” himself (v 14) but has submitted to the limits of service God appointed him, and his boasting (καυχάομαι [v 15]) is not in himself but in the Lord who commends (συνίστησιν, repeating the verb of v 12) him (v 18).

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<sup>156</sup> Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.16.42; 3 Macc 3:21; Philo, *Dreams* 1.54; see Betz, *Apostel Paulus*, 67–69, for the data to show how τόλμα, “audacity,” “effrontery,” was part of the terminology of the philosopher-sophist debate.

ff. following verses

<sup>157</sup> As Lietzmann and Kümmel, 208, suggest; but Bultmann, 194, rightly disputes this.

v verse

v verse

v verse

v verse

13 ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχησόμεθα, “we, however, will not boast beyond proper limits.” The pronoun (ἡμεῖς) with δέ, “however,” sets out Paul’s own estimate of his ministry *ex professo*, “with due confidence.” But it seems<sup>158</sup> that we are intended to infer that “Paul’s rivals have boasted of their apostolic status”; and Paul is anxious to distance himself from any such self-originated claim. So he disavows any attempt to put himself forward “beyond the limit.” τὰ ἄμετρα could mean simply we will not boast “in any unmeasured way,” but we will temper our apostolic claims, having regard to the sphere God has assigned us, and not in any exaggerated way. Then the comparison with v 12 would be clear cut: they made exorbitant claims as apostolic figures; we moderate our “boast” so that it stays within the limits of our mission (Gal 2:7), given us by divine appointment.<sup>159</sup>

ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος οὗ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρου, ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν, “but only within the sphere of service that God has assigned to us as our sphere, a sphere that reaches as far as to you.” On the other hand, the way the sentence unfolds points to a more complicated train of thought and flow of ideas. A clue is found in the following verb, ἐμέρισεν ... ὁ θεός, “God has assigned,” with its complement, μέτρου, “as our sphere,” which in turn stands in agreement with τοῦ κανόνος, “of service.” One might have expected “God gave us [ἔδωκεν] our service,” but μερίζω, “allot, apportion,” is evidently chosen to denote the assignment of a sphere of ministry<sup>160</sup> according to God’s purpose (cf. 1 Cor 7:17; Rom 12:3); hence the tautological and seemingly unnecessary piling up of ἄμετρα ... μέτρον ... ἐμέρισεν ... μέτρου, “beyond proper limits ... sphere ... has assigned ... sphere,” to emphasize strongly the single point that Paul has not transgressed his allocated area of service that has been apportioned to him by God. Hence he can “boast” since the object of his καυχάομαι, “boast”—his “missionary field”—is not what he has chosen for himself, but rather it is what God has assigned to him (hence v 17).

The link-idea is the verb μετρέω, “measure,” in v 12: his competitors have a measuring rod (μέτρον), which they have used wrongly, since it has served only to inflate their pride and bolster their self-praise. They have failed to use the proper μέτρον, “measure”; for Paul the function of such a measure is to define and delimit one’s κανών, “specific sphere,” definitely marked out and open ended.<sup>161</sup> Note that Paul is slightly unfair in this use of terms since he denies to his opponents’ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος, “sphere of service,” the very aspect he wishes to insist on for

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<sup>158</sup> With Barrett, 263.

v verse

<sup>159</sup> A similar view is taken by Moule (*Idiom-Book*, 71).

<sup>160</sup> *Missionsgebiet* (Bultmann, 196).

v verse

v verse

<sup>161</sup> Plummer, 287; Schweizer, *Church Order*, 203, §24k, n. 779.

himself, namely, that he has legitimacy to move out to new territorial regions (v 16). But he could have justified this view on the ground that any “mission to the Hellenes” (Gal 2:7–8) must include an ever-expanding domain. κανών—as in the sense of “canon”—betokens a measured length and denotes distance in a linear way.<sup>162</sup> But it also tends to include the area thus measured: hence it means territory as well as boundary limit.<sup>163</sup> The English “line” has the same overlap of meanings (cf. Gal 6:16): a straight line, and a person’s “line,” e.g., line of business, interest, etc.<sup>164</sup>

Barrett rightly criticizes the understanding κανών as a “boundary” on several grounds:<sup>165</sup> (1) it cannot explain the (alleged) unnecessary repetition of words for measuring rod (μέτρον, κανών); and (2) ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν, “to reach even to you,” relates to Paul’s geographical outreach (cf. *1 Clem.* 41.1 for this meaning), not his success at Corinth, while he grants that Paul’s mission did include the foundation and growth of the church there.

Other meanings of κανών are (1) a synonym for “the gospel” of Paul, for which there is some evidence in the use of εὐαγγέλιον, “gospel,” in v 14;<sup>166</sup> and (2) the eschatological and juridical “right” of the creator God, corresponding to קָן (*qan*) with a setting in Jewish apocalyptic thought, which is in the background of Paul’s missionary calling to be the prophet of the end time.<sup>167</sup>

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v verse

<sup>162</sup> E.g., length of the radius from a circle’s center, or a race track; P. E. Hughes, 366, also finds an athletic metaphor in v 12 with ἐγκρίνω, “compete.”

<sup>163</sup> See, however, E. A. Judge in *NewDocs* 1, #9, for meaning of κανών as “assessment.”

<sup>164</sup> The interpretation of κανών as a “boundary” or “what is enclosed in a boundary perimeter” stands opposed to the view of Käsemann (*Legitimität*, 43–51), Georgi (*Gegner*, 229–30), and Lietzmann and Kümmel (209), for whom κανών means here a “standard of judgment” (*Beurteilungsmassstab*; H. W. Beyer’s designation in *TDNT* 3:598–600) and concerns the legitimacy (Käsemann’s term, *Legitimität*, 49) of Paul’s evangelism, which needed to be proved by tokens of success (held to be implied in v 15b: τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν ἐν ὑμῖν μεγαλυνθῆναι, “as your faith continues to grow,” and 1 Cor 9:2).

<sup>165</sup> “Christianity at Corinth,” 18.

*1 Clem. 1 Clement*

v verse

<sup>166</sup> So Lønning, “*Kanon im Kanon*,” 17–23, as cited by Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 46.

<sup>167</sup> Stuhlmacher, *EvT* 27 (1967) 6–7, appealing to various Jewish texts to do with measurement/measuring line: Job 38:5; *T. Naph.* 2:3; *1 En.* 61; 1QH I, 28; III, 27; X, 26.

Paul's allocation included Corinth: ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν, "to reach as far as to you." The infinitive expresses consequence<sup>168</sup> and the καί, "even," is emphatic: "even to you" our mission, under God, extends. So Paul concludes: you at Corinth belong to our area of competency (ικανότης; cf. 2:16; 3:4–6), and God's κανών, "boundary," was drawn to include you. The significance of this remark will be apparent (in v 14). But the main assertion is already established in the face of some rival claims: Paul was the first to preach the gospel in Corinth, and his commission emanated directly from God (1 Cor 9:1–3, 15–18; 15:8–11).

**14** οὐ γὰρ ὡς μὴ ἐφικνούμενοι εἰς ὑμᾶς ὑπερεκτείνομεν ἑαυτούς, ἄχρι γὰρ καὶ ὑμῶν ἐφθάσαμεν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, "for we are not overreaching our limit, as we should be doing if we had not [already] reached you, for we did come as far as to you with our preaching of Christ." The translation we have proposed attempts to see a defense of apostolic ministry based on the verb ἐφικνέομαι, "come to, reach" (a NT *hapax legomenon*, but common in classical Greek). The connection with v 13 is not as though v 14 explained the foregoing; rather, v 14 looks on to v 15;<sup>169</sup> there is more to v 14 than the expedient to treat it as parenthetical. The verb ὑπερεκτείνω, lit., "stretch out beyond," is unusual and quite rare,<sup>170</sup> and this fact suggests that it may derive from the opponents' armory. They allege that Paul had "overextended himself" and gone beyond the limit in his Corinthian mission, which he further took as a theme of boastful pride (οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχήσομεθα, "we will not boast beyond proper limits").<sup>171</sup> There may well be a trace of the charge that he had indicted himself as guilty of overweening pride (ὑβρις) by exalting his own mission service at the expense of a more sober estimate (σωφροσύνη, "restraint," "moderation"; μηδὲν ἄγαν, "nothing to excess"; acting κατὰ μέτρον, "according to measure"), and in the Greek tradition of the post-Homeric poets and playwrights, such an

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<sup>168</sup> See BDF §391(4).

v verse

NT New Testament

v verse

v verse

v verse

v verse

<sup>169</sup> Plummer, 288.

v verse

lit. literally

<sup>170</sup> See BDAG, 840; Bultmann, 197.

<sup>171</sup> Betz, *Apostel Paulus*, 130–31.

attitude invited the inevitable onset of ἄτη, “delusion, folly,” leading to punishment and divine retribution. Marshall argues suggestively that the ὑπέρ-, “beyond-,” prefix and the -λίαν, “-exceeding,” component as in ὑπερλίαν, “superlative” (11:5; 12:11), are examples of pejorative uses denoting excess, which “in various constructions, [produce] *hybris* [evidence in Euripides, Aristotle, Lysias]. So the apostles who have gone beyond the bounds and who have invidiously compared [cf. v 12] their rhetoric, knowledge, achievements, and other cultural qualities with his own, are shameful hybrists or ‘boasters.’”<sup>172</sup> He offers for οἱ ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι (11:5; 12:11) the rendering “the hybristic apostles.”

The Pauline defense is to deny that such a mission was an overreaching of his apostolic calling. The participial form ἐφικνούμενοι, “reaching,” implies this (RSV: “as though we did not reach [you]”; our translation tries to be more emphatic: “as we should be doing if we had not [already] reached [you]”). Indeed, he puts in the counterclaim that he was the pioneer missionary on the scene at Corinth. His evangelistic ministry (ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, “with our preaching of Christ”; cf. v 16: εὐαγγελίζεσθαι, “preach the gospel,” which is the corresponding verb) was an undisputed fact, and he could appeal confidently to the readers to endorse that “we did come” (ἐφθάσαμεν; φθάνω, “come first,” “anticipate”).<sup>173</sup> But the context requires the sense “we got to you first,” that is, before any rivals.<sup>174</sup>

The situation, moreover, requires such a response from Paul. It is undeniable that emissaries have made their presence felt at Corinth (see on 11:4). He must retort effectively that he arrived on the scene earlier, and so he claims to have staked out Corinth as his territory (κανών), since this strategy was his by design (Rom 15:17–20) and indeed by the concurrence of the “pillar” apostles in Jerusalem (Gal 2:6–7). In line with Barrett we regard this declaration as of fundamental significance in interpreting this verse and what follows.<sup>175</sup> Paul is saying no more than what is well known: he came to the city as to virgin soil. “His ideal is to be the first to plant the flag,”<sup>176</sup> and Corinth rightly belonged to his “sphere of service” as apostle to the Gentiles (1 Cor 2:1–5; 9:1–3), which fell to his lot as an integral part of his mission activity “in the gospel,” i.e., in his preaching ministry, as in 2:12; 8:18. And he is laying claim to no less: Corinth rightfully

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v verse

<sup>172</sup> “Hybrists Not Gnostics,” 275–87.

RSV Revised Standard Version

v verse

<sup>173</sup> This is the use in 1 Thess 4:15 and in classical usage, rather than as in later use, where it means simply “come” (Rom 11:31; Phil 3:16; 1 Thess 2:16), which Bultmann, 197, prefers.

<sup>174</sup> So Barrett, 266; Héring, 74, since it is this thought that is carried on to the next verse and forms the basis of Paul’s argumentation.

<sup>175</sup> Barrett, 267.

<sup>176</sup> Héring, 75.

belongs to his jurisdiction in which the rival preachers are properly to be seen as interlopers and usurpers of apostolic prerogative.

To this we may add one extra thought: it was evidently of vital concern for Paul to defend Corinth as his “home church” if he wished to have it as a base from which, in due course, to launch out on his westerly mission to Rome and beyond. More was at risk than just the disaffection of a local congregation; his present and future work “in the gospel” was in jeopardy by a situation that could develop into a renewed slide away from Paul and his mission on the part of the Corinthian believers.

**15** οὐκ εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα καυχώμενοι ἐν ἄλλοτρίοις κόποις, “we did not go beyond the proper limits by boasting of the work done by others.” The link-verb is again, as in v 14, a participle (καυχώμενοι, “boasting”), which does not make for smooth transition or easy comprehension, especially as the sequence of the argument takes the reader into v 16. The first part of v 15 is tolerably clear. Paul cannot be accused of poaching on the mission territory held by others, and certainly his alleged καυχώμενοι, “boasting,” which (it is said) he evinces, based on the limits he has transgressed (τὰ ἄμετρα), is categorically refused. Alternatively, as we observed with interpreting v 13 (see *Comment*), the τὰ ἄμετρα phrase may be construed adverbially; i.e., we will not boast “unfairly” or “in an exaggerated way” or “to an unwarranted degree.” The former view is preferable, because the term is an opponents’ watchword used as a weapon to attack the apostle. And he is simply retorting by denying it. The reason given, however, is what counts. It would be true that this allegation of *superbia*, “inordinate pride” (implied in καυχώμενοι, “boasting,” and also in the ὑπερέκειν-, “beyond-,” root in vv 14, 16), could stand if Paul has not respected the work of “others” and has taken some of the credit that belonged to another’s κανών, “sphere of mission” (v 16). Who such persons may have been is uncertain. We have the same conundrum in Rom 15:20: ἵνα μὴ ἐπ’ ἄλλότριον θεμέλιον οἰκοδομῶ, “lest I build on another person’s foundation.” The most we can say is that this phrase may well have been part of the emissaries’ charge against Paul’s work; and if so, then the reference will be to the claim made for the Jewish Christian leadership that they—especially Cephas (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5)—were the rightful founders of the Corinthian congregation. Barrett suggests that Peter himself may have headed the mission, but Paul politely and tactfully passes over him in an oblique reference to “such a person” (10:11) and to the singular ἐν ἄλλοτρίῳ κανόνι, “in another person’s sphere,”

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v verse

v verse

v verse

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in v 16.<sup>177</sup> This veiled identity explains why Paul throughout 2 Cor 10–13 refrained from mentioning names. (See later for another reason.) A suggestive link with Peter is that, in the “division of apostolic labor” in Gal 2, the leadership of Peter on the Jewish Christian side is patent, and it was on the terms of this arrangement that Paul based his “apology” in 10:12–18.<sup>178</sup> So Barrett concludes: “yet Peter, in the hands of those who made use of him, was on the way to ruining Paul’s work at Corinth.”<sup>179</sup>

ἐλπίδα δὲ ἔχοντες αὐξανομένης τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν ἐν ὑμῖν μεγαλυνθῆναι κατὰ τὸν κανόνα ἡμῶν εἰς περισσεῖαν, “but we have the hope that as your faith continues to grow, so our work may, within the sphere we have, be greatly expanded among you.” So far—with the exception of the precise identity of the “other” person—the sentence is clear. It is the statement of Paul’s expectation (ἐλπίδα ... ἔχοντες, “have the hope”) that, once the situation at Corinth had clarified and the church there had reaffirmed its confidence in Paul, the way would be open for him to use Corinth as a launching pad for a mission westward (“we may preach the gospel in places beyond you”). Clearly Paul has several intentions by means of this involved, complex sentence:

(1) He is expressing his optimism that all will turn out well. ἐλπίς, “hope,” is invariably in the NT “good hope” that anticipates and articulates the Christian’s confidence in God’s good purpose.<sup>180</sup>

(2) He gives as the immediate object of the hope that the Corinthians’ faith will be enlarged. αὐξανομένης τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, “as your faith continues to grow,” is a genitive absolute. πίστις, however, may mean either their “faith” in Paul’s gospel or their “faithfulness” to his mission, which will act as a support to his future service, as in Rom 1:11–12: the Romans’ faith will strengthen Paul’s and encourage him to press on westward. Then, the increase may be related to an outreach of mission.

(3) The latter view in (2) is confirmed by the difficult phrase ἐν ὑμῖν ... κατὰ τὸν κανόνα ἡμῶν, lit., “among you—or in your eyes ... according to our sphere of mission service.”<sup>181</sup> What Paul sees as the result of the Corinthian loyalty is that they will recognize that he has worked at Corinth as part of his authentic bailiwick.

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v verse

<sup>177</sup> Barrett, “Cephas and Corinth,” 35–36.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 37; but was it Peter who preached a “different Jesus” (11:4)? Hardly.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 38; see for similar conclusion, Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 50; Gunther, *St. Paul’s Opponents*, 301–3.

NT New Testament

<sup>180</sup> See Moule, *Meaning of Hope*.

lit. literally

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Barrett, 267.

(4) This is the basis on which he wishes to launch out to a work with a further enlargement. εἰς περισσεΐαν, “greatly,” is a phrase to be attached to v 16, namely, to proclaim the gospel, i.e., the same gospel he brought originally to Corinth (v 14), “in places beyond you” (τὰ ὑπερέκεινα ὑμῶν εὐαγγελίσασθαι).<sup>182</sup> He does not pause to elaborate where such places may be. But from Rom 1:15; 15:23–29 we may, with some confidence, postulate a mission to Rome and Spain.

(5) The one negative assessment in this “grand strategy” is that thereby he will not have to answer the evident charge that is running through this entire section (vv 13, 14, 15). If Paul moves out to these regions outside the territorial limits in the eastern Mediterranean where his tasks are now at an end (Rom 15:19: πεπληρωκέναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, “[I] have fully preached the gospel of Christ”), he will have no need to justify any boasting (καυχάομαι), since “work already done in another’s sphere [of service]” (v 16) will certainly not include what he has projected as his next step in missionary endeavor.

**16** εἰς τὰ ὑπερέκεινα ὑμῶν εὐαγγελίσασθαι, οὐκ ἐν ἄλλοτρίῳ κανόνι εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα καυχήσασθαι, “The result is that we may preach the gospel in places beyond you. We do not wish to boast about what has already been done in another person’s sphere [of service].” The allusion to εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα, “about what has already been done,” matches εἰς τὰ ὑπερέκεινα ὑμῶν, “in places beyond you.”<sup>183</sup> Paul is opposing “preaching” (εὐαγγελίζομαι) directed to the lands (sc. μέρη) “beyond you” and a mission work already “prepared” (ἔτοιμος) by other person(s) before we came on the scene and claimed credit for it,<sup>184</sup> or done by other leader(s) who did stay within their assigned limits of service, e.g., Peter at Antioch.<sup>185</sup> Paul increasingly felt his isolation from Antioch,<sup>186</sup> but here he generously allows that his rivals do have a permitted and legitimate sphere; and this meaning would be helped if we take εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα, “about what has already been done,” and attach it to ἐν ἄλλοτρίῳ κανόνι, “in another person’s sphere [of service]”: there is for each (missionary group) a sphere, in view of what has been prepared for it, i.e., which

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v verse

v verse

<sup>182</sup> Héring, 75.

vv verses

v verse

<sup>183</sup> See BDF §184 on the genitive used with the adverb.

sc. scilicet, that is to say

<sup>184</sup> Plummer, 290.

<sup>185</sup> Or less probably Palestine, as Theissen, *Social Setting*, 50, n. 53, surmises.

<sup>186</sup> *Introduction, The Setting of 2 Corinthians in Paul’s Life*; Hengel, *Acts*, 123–26.

corresponds to what God has allocated to each. Yet the construction with εἰς τὰ, “in the [places beyond you],” followed by the infinitive εὐαγγελίσασθαι, “to preach,” is rough.<sup>187</sup>

**17–18** ὁ δὲ καυχώμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω· οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἑαυτὸν συνιστάνων, ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν δόκιμος, ἀλλὰ ὃν ὁ κύριος συνίστησιν, “but rather, ‘let the one who boasts boast only about the Lord.’ For it is not the person who recommends himself who is approved, but the person whom the Lord recommends.” In a typically Pauline mannerism, the writer clinches his point with an OT citation, followed (in v 18) with an explanatory comment, which in turn binds together the initial part of his discussion in v 12 with its conclusion in v 18 in a “ring composition.” The hook-word is συνίστημι, “commend/recommend.” The issue at stake is κανὼν, “sphere,” and its demarcation, whether it is (1) the product of human endeavor, thus deserving the praise or blame that a person seeks either to gain or avoid for the work done in mission service, or (2) an assignment from “the Lord,” who gives it validity and so is the only one who can rightly commend it as “approved” (δόκιμος).<sup>188</sup>

The biblical appeal is to Jer 9:22–23 LXX (ET: 9:23–24) at the heart of which is the line ἀλλ’ ἢ ἐν τούτῳ καυχάσθω ὁ καυχώμενος, “but in this let the boaster make his boast.” Paul’s adaptation is to enforce the point by including the divine name (ἐν κυρίῳ), which is then taken up in the succeeding verse: “not the one who commends [συνιστάνων] himself is approved [δόκιμος], but the person whom the Lord commends.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> So Windisch, 313, who pronounces it “intolerable”; see Héring, 75, for some discussion which goes into the syntactical tangle of vv 15–16.

OT Old Testament

v verse

v verse

v verse

<sup>188</sup> The prefiguring of 13:3–5 is apparent; Bultmann, 199.

LXX Septuagint

ET English translation

<sup>189</sup> Here κύριος, “Lord,” would be applied to the exalted Jesus; Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, §43a, n. 570; and “about the Lord” corresponds to the use of the verbal root ב הלל, *hālāl bē*, “boast in,” in v 17; *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, §50a, n. 651. On 10:17, see Wong, *LS* 17 (1992) 243–53. On the use of Jer 9:22–23 LXX, see Rusche, *BZ* 31 (1987) 116–19, and earlier Schreiner, “Jeremiah 9:22, 23,” 530–42. There is a similar use of Jeremiah in 1 Cor 1:31, which is explicated by C. D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture*, 186–88. Paul could also be using 1 Sam 2:10 LXX (Wolff, 207). On 10:18, see D. M. Stanley, *Boasting in the Lord*.

The conclusion drives home Paul's chief thrust: only a Christian enterprise, which is both originated from God's plan, according to the divine κανών, "sphere," and aims to promote his honor (of which the antithesis is self-praise) can stand ultimate scrutiny. This is a major affirmation in Paul's *apologia pro vita sua*, "defense of his life," when he regards his *vita*, "life," as caught up in the ongoing mission of God, at Corinth and further afield. Similar sentiments are given in Rom 15:17; 1 Cor 15:10; Gal 2:8 (cf. Eph 3:7–8).<sup>190</sup>

### *Explanation*

The apostle now takes the offensive and opens his "defense" (paradoxically) by charging his enemies with a false set of values (v 12). At the same time, he makes it clear that he has not trespassed on the limits that God has set for his missionary service. He is, par excellence, the apostle to the Gentiles, a vocation spelled out to him at his conversion and call (according to Acts 9:15; 22:21) and accepted by the "pillar" apostles as part of the comity agreement at Jerusalem (Gal 2:9). Indeed, the mission to the Gentiles is his peculiar province that God himself apportioned him (v 13)—and Corinth falls in that category as a largely non-Jewish community.

This reference is clearly intended as a side-look at the Jewish-Christian proselytizers who were molesting Gentile church members and endeavoring to impose the yoke of obedience and certain extraneous beliefs on them (11:3–4, 20). Paul replies that if any preacher is "out of bounds" at Corinth, it is not he himself but the interlopers who had gone beyond the limit assigned to them and failed to respect the proper "base of operations" to which they were entitled (see 11:12).

Paul most carefully justifies his integrity here (v 14), insisting that when he first came to Corinth he did so with clear conscience and intended in no way to "poach" on the missionary territory of other Christians (vv 15–16; cf. Rom 15:20).

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<sup>190</sup> On Paul's opponents, see *Introduction, Excursus: The Opponents of Paul in 2 Corinthians: An Old Issue Revisited* and *Comment* on 10:2. Savage (*Power through Weakness*, esp. 3–11) is a good starting point, who cites Fascher to the effect that the "issue of Paul's opponents in Corinth remains ... debated" ("Korintherbriefe," 291). See also Sumney (*Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 15–73). Stegman (*Character of Jesus*, 25–40) maintains that Paul's purpose in chaps. 10–13 is not to refute opponents but to urge that they should follow the character (or *ethos*) of Jesus. This is unlikely, given the fierce polemic in 11:13–15.

v verse

v verse

v verse

vv verses

At Corinth he may justifiably claim to be the human founder of the church (1 Cor 3:6: “I planted”). What right have the rival preachers to encroach on his work (1 Cor 9:1; 2 Cor 3:2)? Their mandate does not operate at Corinth.

Yet the final arbiter in this matter of evangelistic “division of labor” and territorial comity is no human committee, nor does an agreement, made between Christians, mean much unless it is the Lord who directs. True—and herein is the relevance for modern missionary service—he expects his servants to honor their arrangements and not to act irresponsibly in defiance of agreements as to mission fields; but it is his work and whatever success is given comes from him to whom alone the credit and glory belong (vv 17–18, quoting Jer 9:24).

Denney, as so often, applies the apostolic message in a timeless way:

Two feelings are compounded all through this passage: an intense sympathy with the purpose of God that the Gospel should be preached to every creature—Paul’s very soul melts into that; and an intense scorn for the spirit that sneaks and poaches on another’s ground, and is more anxious that some men should be good sectarians than that all men [and women] should be good disciples.<sup>19119</sup>

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vv verses

<sup>191</sup> Denney, 309.

<sup>19</sup> Ralph P. Martin, [2 Corinthians](#), ed. Ralph P. Martin, Lynn Allan Losie, and Peter H. Davids, Second Edition, vol. 40, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 501–510.