

INTRODUCTION

No student of the New Testament who wishes to come to grips with the nature of the Christian ministry can afford to neglect the second epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians. In this letter the apostle paints a remarkably candid picture of his own experience as a minister of Christ. His autobiographical sketch reaches a climax in 2 Corinthians 12:10, in the words 'When I am weak, then I am strong!'

At first glance Paul would seem to be indulging in a meaningless contradiction. How can he be both weak and strong? How can he sum up his vocation in terms which are normally thought to be mutually exclusive? Yet on further reflection we discover something very different: what appears on the surface to be a clear absurdity is for Paul a profound teaching. Over and over in this epistle he describes his ministry in terms of two completely different, yet overlapping, experiences. In chapter one he defines his vocation in terms of comfort experienced through suffering; in chapter three in terms of glory manifested through shame; in chapter four in terms of life working in death; in chapter six in terms of riches won through poverty; and in chapters twelve and thirteen in terms of power expressed through weakness. It is clear from this general overview that at the core of Paul's teaching in 2 Corinthians lies an important paradox – a paradox which finds expression in a number of different antitheses and which drives to the heart of what it means to Paul to be a minister of Christ. It will be the aim of this book to make sense of this paradox. We shall seek to discover what Paul means by the cryptic words *ὅταν γὰρ ἄσθενῶ, τότε δυνατός εἰμι*.

The problem

The task before us will be complicated by the fact that 2 Corinthians is an occasional epistle. Most of what Paul says in this letter represents a careful response to a very specific set of problems

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Excerpt

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within the Corinthian church. If we are to make sense of his teaching, we must reconstruct the situation which lies behind it. But here we encounter a problem. Paul never reveals the precise nature of the situation he is addressing. He merely alludes to the various issues and events which trouble him and assumes that his readers, the Corinthians, can fill in the details.¹ This leaves us with the delicate task of trying to piece together the 'background' of the epistle using only the scattered and oblique references to it which Paul himself provides. Such an endeavour is naturally fraught with difficulties, yet it is not without reward. With due care and diligence we can construct a fairly convincing picture of the situation which gave rise to Paul's teaching. We begin the process in what follows.

The situation at Corinth

Most scholars would agree that 2 Corinthians contemplates a different set of problems from that of 1 Corinthians. The sort of party strife and misuse of wisdom, knowledge and glossolalia which we find in the earlier epistle have largely disappeared from view in the latter.² Instead Paul turns his attention to an intruder (ὁ ἀδικήσας, 7:12), one who appears to be attacking him personally (cf. οὐκ ἐμέ λελύπηκεν, 2:5; ὁ κεχάρισμαι, 2:10). What troubles Paul is not so much that he is being assailed, but that his converts have not rallied to his support. For this reason, he addresses a harsh letter to the Corinthians and calls on them to punish the intruder (2 Corinthians 2:3–4; 7:12). To his great relief they quickly demonstrate both their 'innocence' in the matter (ἀγνοί, 7:11) and their loyalty to him (7:7) by bringing the offender to justice (2:6). Paul's joy is renewed (7:7, 16) and his confidence in his converts restored (7:14).

This, however, represents only part of the picture. One of the most puzzling features of 2 Corinthians is that in a space of a few verses Paul can both rejoice in the loyalty of his converts (7:7) and bemoan their lack of affection for him (στενοχωρεῖσθε δὲ ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ὑμῶν, 6:12), applaud their earnestness on his behalf (7:12) and wonder at their failure to make room for him in their

¹ Cf. Munck *Paul* 168: 'of all Paul's letters II Corinthians is probably the most difficult to understand in detail. He alludes again and again to events of which we otherwise know nothing'.

² Thus Barrett 'Christianity at Corinth' 286–87; 'Opponents' 236–37; Kümmel *Introduction* 284–85; Georgi *Gegner* 14; Oostendorp *Another Jesus* 5; pace Schmithals *Gnosis* 274–75 who envisages the same 'background' for both epistles.

hearts (cf. 6:13: *πλατύνθητε καὶ ὑμεῖς*; 7:2: *χωρήσατε ἡμᾶς*). It would seem that, despite their outward obedience, the Corinthians harbour reservations about their apostle (1:14).³ Indeed, according to 2 Corinthians 7:2, they feel betrayed by him. Paul suggests that this is because they understand him only in part (*ἐπέγνωτε ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ μέρους*, 1:14) and he spares no effort trying to redress this deficiency. Hopefully, on hearing his case, they will again have reason to be proud of him (*ἀφορμὴν διδόντες ὑμῖν καυχήματος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν*, 5:12).

This is the situation as it is implied in chapters 1–7. In chapters 10–13, which probably comprise a separate epistle written shortly after chapters 1–9 (see the appendix below), everything becomes more explicit. It is clear, for instance, that Paul is indeed coming under intense criticism. Not only is his character impugned, but his entire position as a minister of Christ is openly disputed as well (10:10; 13:3). The Corinthians seem more reluctant than ever to embrace him (cf. 11:1) and instead show deference to his more impressive rivals, the so-called opponents (11:4, 18–20). It appears that the factors which led the Corinthians initially to tolerate the person referred to as *ὁ ἀδικήσας* and not to rally to Paul's defence have now caused them to embrace a number of such rivals, and to the almost complete exclusion of their own apostle Paul.

It is of cardinal importance to identify the factors which have caused the Corinthians to express dissatisfaction with Paul, for it is in response to their criticisms that Paul sketches the paradoxical picture of his ministry. In other words, if we are to understand what Paul means when he describes his ministry in terms of power through weakness we must identify the criticisms which evoked that teaching.

1 The opponents: a survey of recent scholarship

It has been a reflex of modern scholarship to attribute the criticisms levelled against Paul to his opponents. This is probably due to the fact that the opponents emerge as such a prominent force in 2 Corinthians and serve as the object of some of Paul's most scathing attacks.⁴ It is natural to assume that much of what Paul writes in

³ Cf. Barrett 'Titus' 13–14.

⁴ There are more references to opponents in 2 Cor. than in any other Pauline epistle, both explicit – *ψευδαπόστολοι, ἐργάται δόλιοι* (11:13) and *οἱ διάκονοι αὐτοῦ* (where αὐτοῦ refers to Satan, 11:15) – and implicit – *οἱ τοιοῦτοι* (11:13), *οἱ πολλοί*

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this epistle represents a direct response to his rivals. It is thus incumbent on the interpreter to discover both the identity of the opponents and the nature of their criticisms.⁵

Much energy has been invested in this pursuit, but little consensus has been reached.⁶ There are no less than 13 different views of the nature of Paul's opposition in 2 Corinthians alone.⁷ These may be grouped conveniently into three categories.

a. Palestinian Jewish Christians. Many scholars believe that the opponents were Jews who came from Palestine. This view is based largely on 2 Corinthians 11:22 where Paul implies that his rivals are 'Hebrews'. Here the term Ἑβραῖοι is thought to denote not only the Jewish nationality of the opponents, but also their Palestinian origin.⁸ Allegedly this finds confirmation in 2 Corinthians 5:16 where Paul seems to be defending himself against the charge that he never knew the earthly Jesus, a charge which presumably could have been levelled only by those who *did* know Jesus and thus who hailed from Palestine.⁹ The position is well summarised by W. Kümmel: 'Er ergibt sich aus diesem Sinn von Ἑβραῖοι, dass die Gegner des Paulus in Korinth palästinische Juden waren, die dem Paulus auch das Fehlen persönlicher Kenntnis des irdischen Jesus vorwarfen (5:16)'. ('It is clear from the sense of the term Ἑβραῖοι that the opponents of Paul in Corinth were Palestinian Jews who reproached Paul also for his lack of personal knowledge of the earthly Jesus.').¹⁰ Those who adopt this view may be divided further into two schools.

(2:17; 11:18) and τινες (3:1; 10:2, 12); and cf. the singular τις (10:7), ὁ τοιοῦτος (10:11), ὁ ἐρχόμενος (11:4), which may refer to a ring-leader among the opponents (thus Barrett 260) or perhaps to 'anyone' of the rivals.

⁵ Barrett 'Opponents' 233 even claims that 'a full understanding of both New Testament history and New Testament Theology waits on the right answering of the question [of the identity of the opponents]'.
⁶ Cf. Fascher 'Korintherbriefe' 291: 'Die Frage der Gegner des Paulus in Korinth bleibt . . . umstritten' ('The question of the opponents of Paul in Corinth remains . . . disputed').

⁷ See the list in Gunther *Opponents* 1.

⁸ Cf. Käsemann 'Legitimität' 36; Barrett 'Opponents' 235–36; Ellis 'Opponents' 289–90; Gutbrod 'Ἰσραήλ' 391–94; Kümmel *Introduction* 285; Gunther *Opponents* 76; Theissen 'Legitimation' 212–13.

⁹ So Käsemann 'Legitimität' 49; Oostendorp *Another Jesus* 17; Lietzmann 125; Strachan 110; Héring 42.

¹⁰ Kümmel 211. The seminal work on the Palestinian origin of the opponents was done by Baur *Paulus* 259–332, see esp. 294; other scholars taking this position include Thrall 'Super-Apostles' 42–57; Héring 109; Windisch 23–26; and cf.

i. Judaizers. Some scholars draw a further implication from 2 Corinthians 11:22. By claiming to be 'Hebrews' and 'Israelites', the opponents inevitably declare their loyalty to the religious traditions of Judaism, and especially to the Law. It would seem to follow that they are Judaizing Jews, perhaps in the mould of the opponents in Galatia. If so, they are probably accusing Paul of failing to uphold the law.¹¹

The difficulty with this view is the lack of explicit evidence in 2 Corinthians to indicate that the law was ever an issue between Paul and his rivals in Corinth. Unlike the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, the matter of circumcision is never even mentioned.¹² Although it is not impossible that Paul was dealing with a brand of Judaism in which circumcision played only a minor role,¹³ the complete absence in 2 Corinthians of the word νόμος itself would suggest that he was not dealing with Judaism at all.¹⁴

ii. A Delegation from the Jerusalem Apostolate. According to E. Käsemann, the opponents were not legalistic Jews but a delegation sent ostensibly from the pillar apostles to discover whether Paul was a legitimate apostle.¹⁵ In particular, they sought to determine whether he had properly subordinated himself to the Jerusalem apostolate – a regulation already established as a *Traditionsprinzip* ('principle of tradition') – for only then could he rightly claim to possess apostolic authority. The outward marks of a true apostle included a personal commission from Jesus, evidence of the signs of an apostle and acceptance of monetary support. Since Paul was deficient in each of these respects, his relation to Jerusalem, and hence his authority as an apostle, was open to question. Accordingly, his opponents accused him of being 'no legitimate apostle'.¹⁶

Georgi *Gegner* 58 who regards the opponents as hellenistic Jews with Palestinian roots (see below pp. 8–9).

¹¹ Cf. Barrett 'Opponents' 251: 'the intruders were Jews, Jerusalem Jews, Judaizing Jews'; and 'ΦΕΥΔΑΠΙΟΣΤΟΛΟΙ' 396: 'there is a close relation between 2 Corinthians and Galatians'; see also Baur *Paulus* 278, *et passim*; Gunther *Opponents* 63–64, 211, 299–302; Oostendorp *Another Jesus* 82–83, *et passim*; Barnett 'Opposition' 9–11; Schoeps *Paul* 80–82; Lietzmann 108–9; Héring 79; Plummer 296; and cf. Borse *Galaterbriefes* 84–91.

¹² Thus the criticism by Lütger *Freiheitspredigt* 62–68.

¹³ Thus Barrett 'Christianity at Corinth' 296; 'Opponents' 238, 251.

¹⁴ So Friedrich 'Gegner' 192–93; Munck *Paul* 172–84; Kümmel *Introduction* 285; Furnish 53.

¹⁵ Cf. Käsemann 'Legitimität' 34–52.

¹⁶ Thus Käsemann 'Legitimität' 35: 'Die mangelnde apostolische Autorität verrät die pseudoapostolische Existenz.' ('The absence of apostolic authority betrays his pseudo-apostolic existence.')

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R. Bultmann has rightly challenged the view of Käsemann. There is no evidence to suggest that the right of Jerusalem to confer apostolic authority had been established as a *Traditionsprinzip*,¹⁷ nor that the marks of a true apostle had been set out in any codified form.¹⁸ More importantly, there is no explicit evidence in the text of 2 Corinthians to confirm that the opponents were specifically disputing Paul's office as an apostle, nor that they were drawing a link between that office and his authority.¹⁹ Indeed, for all the emphasis on apostleship in scholarly work on 2 Corinthians, the notion itself plays a relatively minor role in the epistle. The word ἀπόστολος occurs only four times in 2 Corinthians 10–13 (the passage where we should most expect to find criticisms of Paul's 'apostleship'), twice in reference to the 'superlative apostles' (11:5; 12:11), once in reference to the false apostles (11:13) and once in reference to the 'signs of an apostle' (12:12). In none of these instances are we compelled to infer that Paul is responding to charges that he is not a true apostle. Any suggestion that it is specifically Paul's 'apostleship' that is being disputed rests on slim evidence.

We are on much firmer ground if we acknowledge that it is his status as a *minister of Christ* that is being questioned. The term διάκονος and its cognates are used 19 times in 2 Corinthians, which represents half of their total occurrences in Paul.²⁰ Moreover, it is specifically his *ministry* which Paul defends (6:3–4), and seemingly in response to those who claim that they, not he, are true ministers of Christ (cf. 11:15, 23). The distinction between apostleship and ministry may seem to be over-subtle and doubtless Paul himself would have regarded the two as nearly the same. Nevertheless, when it comes to the matter of how Paul replies to his critics the distinction becomes important.

According to Käsemann, Paul responds to complaints against him by defending his apostleship, and specifically his *authority* as an

¹⁷ Thus Bultmann *Exegetische Probleme* 20–23.

¹⁸ Cf. Georgi *Gegner* 43: 'zur Zeit Paulus noch kein allgemeines, inhaltlich gefülltes Apostelverständnis vorhanden war, noch kein festes Apostelbild.' ('In the time of Paul there was not yet a full understanding of the content of an apostle, nor a firm picture of an apostle.')

¹⁹ Cf. Best 'Apostolic Authority?' 3–25 who argues that Paul never defends his 'apostolic authority': although he is an *apostle* and does exercise *authority*, he never appeals jointly to both. This represents a healthy corrective of the view which is almost axiomatic in Pauline studies – e.g. in Schütz *Apostolic Authority*; Käsemann 'Legitimität'; Holmberg *Paul and Power*; Shaw *Authority* 119–25.

²⁰ In 2 Cor. cf. διακονία (3:7, 8, 9 [2]; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; 8:4; 9:1, 12, 13; 11:8), διάκονος (3:6; 6:4; 11:15, 23) and διακονέω (3:3; 8:19, 20).

apostle.²¹ The problem with this view is the implication that Paul, like his opponents (cf. 11:18–20), is eager to project his *own* authority. Yet that, Paul argues, is precisely what he does not want to do (cf. 11:12).²² He will not defend *himself*, either his authority or his apostleship (11:19).²³ Instead it is specifically his ‘ministry’ which he defends (6:3–4), a term which is better suited to underscoring his humility, not his authority, his service, not his office. While he may commend himself, it is only as a minister of God (cf. 6:4: ἐν παντὶ συνιστάντες ἑαυτοῦς ὡς θεοῦ διάκονοι). His position thus differs markedly from his opponents: he does not seek to glorify himself, but God (4:15; 5:13).

Finally, even the general assumption that the opponents come from Palestine is based on dubious grounds. It is by no means certain that the term Ἑβραῖοι in 2 Corinthians 11:22 carries geographical significance. It may merely point to the Jewish heritage of the opponents.²⁴ In the same way, it is unnecessary to interpret Paul’s affirmation in 2 Corinthians 5:16 as though it were a response to a criticism which could have been uttered only by those of Palestinian origin. There is a more satisfactory way in which to take this verse (see below p. 143).²⁵ We may conclude, therefore, that there is no compelling reason to hold that Paul’s opponents came from Palestine.

b. Gnostic Jewish Christians. A second group of scholars identify the opponents with Gnosticism. They suggest that the intruders are Christian Jews of the diaspora who put great emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit – ecstatic speech, knowledge, signs and wonders, visions, etc. The opponents thus represent the same group that caused the problems in 1 Corinthians. They continue to criticise Paul for his failure to demonstrate the powerful signs of the Spirit. He is, they allege, no true πνευματικός.²⁶

²¹ Thus Käsemann ‘Legitimität’ 35–36; and cf. Kümmel 208: ‘Paulus in [2 Cor] 10–13 seine Autorität . . . verteidigt.’ (‘Paul in [2 Cor] 10–13 defends . . . his authority.’); see also Schütz *Apostolic Authority* 184–86; Furnish 37.

²² Cf. Best ‘Apostolic Authority?’ 11: ‘Paul does not assert his authority . . . but says he [is] too weak to do such a thing’.

²³ Cf. Barrett ‘Opponents’ 246: ‘One might have supposed that Paul was defending himself, his integrity and also his position and authority. This is not so’.

²⁴ Thus Munck *Paul* 174, 178; Friedrich ‘Gegner’ 182; Betz *Paulus* 97; Kee ‘Super-Apostles’ 66; Allo 271–72; Furnish 534.

²⁵ Cf. Barrett 171–72; Furnish 330–33.

²⁶ Cf. Lütgert *Freiheitspredigt* 62–70; Bultmann ‘γινώσκω’ 708–11; *Exegetische Probleme* 4–5, 23–30; Schmithals *Gnosis* 166–67, 184, *et passim*; Wilckens ‘σοφία’

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But this view neglects the fact that the difficulties which arose from a false conception of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians have largely receded from view in 2 Corinthians. The word πνεῦμα is infrequent in 2 Corinthians;²⁷ and in chapters 10–13, where evidence of the opponents' criticisms is most explicit, it hardly occurs at all.²⁸ In addition, each of the so-called 'gnostic' or 'spiritual' charges registered against Paul – his failure to manifest signs and wonders, visions and knowledge – must be inferred from positive affirmations which Paul makes of himself. Such affirmations may well represent Paul's own creative teaching and hence have no basis in the prior charges of the opponents at all. Finally, it must be conceded that there is little historical evidence to suggest that Gnosticism (or even 'gnosticism' with a small 'g') was ever a viable presence in the Mediterranean world of the first century.²⁹

c. *Hellenistic Jewish missionaries.* There is, finally, a third position. Some believe that the opponents were hellenistic Jews who imitated the methods of propaganda used by the itinerant prophets, magicians and saviours of their hellenistic environment.³⁰ This view takes two different forms.

i. θεῖοι ἄνδρες. According to D. Georgi, the opponents claimed to be θεῖοι ἄνδρες, a category of religious persons which Georgi alleges was common in hellenistic antiquity.³¹ These individuals sought to display their divine status by performing signs, accepting monetary support and presenting letters of commendation. Above all, they strove to emulate Moses and Jesus, the quintessential 'divine men'. In contrast, Paul did not cultivate a lofty or divine status, nor did he imitate the powerful and impressive Jesus of the

519–23; *Weisheit passim*; Güttgemanns *Apostel* 96, *et passim*; Dinkler 'Korintherbriefe' cols. 17–18; Bieder 'Gegner' 319–33; and see Windisch 23–26 who believes that the opponents were gnostics, but not hellenists; others hold that they were pneumatics, but not gnostics: thus Käsemann 'Legitimität' 35, 40; Georgi *Gegner* 288; Lührmann *Offenbarungsverständnis* 57, 64.

²⁷ It appears seventeen times in 2 Cor, less than half its occurrences in 1 Cor. and roughly the same as in Romans and Galatians.

²⁸ Cf. 11:4, 12:18 and 13:13 – where in 12:18 it is probably used non-theologically ('Did we not behave in the same spirit, walk in the same footsteps?') and in 13:13 as part of a benediction formula ('The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and participation in the Holy Spirit').

²⁹ Cf. the criticisms of Wilson 'How Gnostic were the Corinthians?' 65–74; 'Gnosis' 102–14; Nock 'Gnosticism' 277; MacMullen *Paganism* 68–69.

³⁰ Cf. Georgi *Gegner*; Friedrich 'Gegner'; Bornkamm *Paul* 169–72; Rissi *Studien* 42–44; Collange 18–20, 323–24; Kuhn 'Jesus bei Paulus' 295–320.

³¹ Cf. Georgi *Gegner* 145–82, 192–99.

opponents. It was because of his failure to measure up to the ideal of the 'divine man' that he incurred the abuse of his rivals.³²

In one sense the category of θεῖοι ἄνδρες makes good sense of the self-exalting tendencies of Paul's rivals in 2 Corinthians (cf. 11:20). In another sense, however, it goes beyond those tendencies. There is, for example, no suggestion in 2 Corinthians that the opponents consciously regarded themselves as *divine* men. Had they done so they would have had no need to present letters of commendation.³³ Another weakness of this view is the absence of historical attestation to θεῖοι ἄνδρες in Paul's day. The silence of the literary and archaeological sources would suggest that there was no such category of religious person in the first century.³⁴

ii. Adherents of Stephen. G. Friedrich is rightly critical of the view that the opponents regarded themselves as 'divine emissaries' (*göttliche Sendboten*),³⁵ yet he remains convinced that they were diaspora Jews influenced by their Greek environment. He suggests that they were members of the circle of hellenistic Jews surrounding Stephen in Acts 6 and 7. They performed signs and wonders (cf. Acts 6:8), indulged in inspired speech (6:10) and advocated a community of goods (6:1). It is because Paul did not do the same that he incurred their reproach.³⁶

The weaknesses of this position have been well exposed by C. K. Barrett. His most trenchant criticism is that it is by no means clear 'how disciples of Stephen found their way to Corinth, and why, if they did so, they should have formed an opposition to Paul'.³⁷ It seems unlikely, therefore, that the opponents were followers of Stephen.

d. A critique of the various positions. It is clear from the observations above that none of the traditional attempts to identify

³² Georgi *Gegner* 301–3.

³³ Cf. the criticism of Friedrich 'Gegner' 196; for further internal evidence against the position of Georgi see Theissen 'Legitimation' 213–14 n. 3.

³⁴ Cf. Smith 'Divine Men' 174–99, esp. 194–95; Judge 'Classical Society' 34; Holladay *Theios Aner* 235–42; Tiede *Charismatic Figure* 290; Moule 'Distinctiveness of Christ' 563; Barrett 276–77; 'Opponents' 235; Furnish 244; but see Betz 'Gott-mensch' 248–49.

³⁵ 'Gegner' 196; though see p. 212 where Friedrich comes close to viewing the opponents as θεῖοι ἄνδρες.

³⁶ Thus 'Gegner' 199–200, 205–8; see also Wolff 7–8 who argues that the opponents were hellenistic-pneumatic-charismatic-wandering missionaries after the model of Acts 13:1–3.

³⁷ Thus 'Opponents' 236; cf. Martin 340.

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Paul's opponents has been fully successful. Each puts accusations in the mouths of the opponents which the text cannot sustain. In short, there is simply too little evidence to suggest that Paul is being faulted on the grounds that he is not sufficiently legalistic or apostolic or pneumatic or ecstatic. The reason for this negative outcome is certainly not a lack of enterprise on the part of scholars. Probably no area of Pauline research has received more attention than the identity of the apostle's opposition.³⁸

What has hindered scholars is the paucity of explicit information on the opponents. All we *really* know is that they were Jewish (2 Corinthians 11:22) and outsiders (11:4). Beyond that we may infer that they preached a different Jesus from Paul (11:4), were intruding into his sphere of ministry (10:12–18), were receiving financial support (11:12) and were behaving in a heavy-handed manner (11:18–20). Much more we cannot say. We simply know too little about the opponents to construct an adequate background to Paul's teaching.³⁹

But this does not mean that our attempt to make sense of Paul's paradoxical language is bound to fail. For it is possible to reconstruct the background to his teaching without recourse to a full understanding of the opponents. The way forward will require some modification in the assumptions which have normally governed this area of research.⁴⁰ In particular:

- i. The assumption that the criticisms levelled against Paul originate with the opponents. If this were the case, our ability to understand Paul's teaching would indeed depend on whether we could reconstruct the identity of his rivals. But this assumption neglects the possibility that there may well have been discontent with Paul long before the opponents arrived on the scene. If so, the criticisms could go back to the Corinthians themselves, in which case the opponents would merely be exploiting a situation which had already turned against Paul. On this reckoning, it would be Paul's own converts who represent his chief opposition.⁴¹ Indeed it is certainly

³⁸ Cf. the survey of the vast history of research in Ellis 'Opponents' 264–92.

³⁹ Cf. the assessment of Hickling 'Second Epistle to the Corinthians' 287: 'we must be content to remain largely in ignorance of the doctrinal position or tendencies of Paul's rivals'; and Munck *Paul* 184: 'we know nothing at all of their doctrine'.

⁴⁰ For a helpful critique of the methods which have been used in this field of study see Berger 'Die impliziten Gegner' 373–400.

⁴¹ Thus McClelland 'Super-Apostles' 85: 'the true opponents of Paul are the misguided church members themselves'; and Munck *Paul* 186: 'the real opponents of Paul . . . are the Corinthians themselves'.