

“THE ULTIMATUM BEFORE THE ASSAULT  
ON THE «STRONGHOLDS»” –  
A STUDY ON METAPHORS IN 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-11

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**Abstract:** The scenario of the assault on some strongholds, used in 2 Corinthians 10:1-11, attracted the attention and admiration of the readers of this Pauline Epistle, as it imprints a fast pace as well as a certain gravity to the whole section. By its means, the Apostle Paul announces a decisive intervention on his part in the community of Corinth where a series of tensions have arisen. However, the reader immediately remarks that the vocabulary used by the author is a metaphorical one. That is why it is all the more interesting to see what Paul wanted to express by its means. Therefore, taking into account the way in which the philosophy of language and linguistics define metaphor nowadays, I propose in this article to highlight the way in which the Apostle expresses his intention to defuse the situation in the community of Corinth.

**Keywords:** Military metaphor, 2Cor 10 – 13, knowledge of God, obedience, collect, Paul.

## Introduction

While doing some research on the military metaphorical language of the Bible, a research that materialized in a doctoral thesis published with the title of *Military Metaphor in the Bible...*<sup>2</sup>, one of the main concerns was this: Is metaphor just a figure of speech meant to “decorate” the delivery of a speech, or is it more than that? A foray into the field of linguistics and philosophy of language revealed that “metaphor is not an ornament of discourse: it conveys *new information*, in other words, metaphor says something new about reality”<sup>3</sup>. This perception

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<sup>2</sup> Șerban, T.H., *Metafora militară din Biblie – Aspecte lingvistice, teologice și etice*, Ed Universității “A.I. Cuza”, Iași, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> See *Metafora militară din Biblie*, p. 38.

crystallized from the analysis of works such as those of Ivor Amstrong Richards<sup>4</sup>, Max Black<sup>5</sup>, Paul Ricœur<sup>6</sup>, George Lakoff<sup>7</sup> or, more recently, those of Thibault Roy, Stéphane Ferrari, and Pierre Beust<sup>8</sup>. In their quest to define what metaphor is, all these authors reach formulations close to or inspired by Paul Ricœur's that "metaphor consists of talking about one thing in terms of something else that resembles it"<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, if the metaphor expresses "something" of God's Word, it means that it also has an important theological stake. More specifically, by appealing to images inspired by spheres of human life and activity (agricultural, pastoral, architectural, military, sports, etc.), several biblical authors, including the Apostle Paul, have expressed things related to divine revelation and/or aspects that concern divine Persons.

In this article I propose to make an exegetical analysis of the pericope of 2 Corinthians 10:1-11 to discover what the apostle Paul is trying to convey to the members of the Christian community in Corinth through the series of metaphors he uses. In their approach I will use the suggestions for analysis of biblical metaphor made by Daniel Bourguet in his book *Des métaphores de Jérémie*<sup>10</sup>, suggestions that I have systematized into a possible method of analysis<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Richards, I.A., *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1936,1971.

<sup>5</sup> Black, M., *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy*, Corenell University Press, Ithaca, 1962.

<sup>6</sup> Ricœur, P., *La métaphore vive*, Seuil, 1975.

<sup>7</sup> Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M., *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980; Lakoff, G., *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987; Lakoff, G., & Turner, M., *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> Thibault Roy, Stéphane Ferrari, and Pierre Beust, "Étude de métaphores conceptuelles à l'aide de vues globales et temporelles sur un corpus", in *Actes de la 13ème conférence sur le Traitement Automatique des Langues Naturelles. Posters*, Leuven, Belgium, 2006, pp. 580-589.

<sup>9</sup> Ricœur, P., *La métaphore vive*, Seuil, 1975, p. 250.

<sup>10</sup> Bourguet, D., *Des métaphores de Jérémie*, Gabalda, Paris, 1987.

<sup>11</sup> See "O definiție operațională și o metodă de analiză", in *Metafora militară din Biblie...*, pp. 43-49.

## 2 Corinthians 10:1-11<sup>12</sup>

### I. Identification of metaphors

#### a. Delimitation of the text

In the final part of 2 Corinthians, more precisely in chapters 10–13, the Apostle Paul develops an apology regarding his status and especially his authority within the Christian community he has founded (together with his collaborators, *cf. Acts 18:1-18a*).

A situation of conflict takes shape at the beginning of chapter 10 (vv. 1-11), when Paul, resuming the accusatory insinuations of certain people in the community of Corinth, feels compelled to put things in place. The way in which the Apostle intends to solve the latent conflict arising within the Christian community is expressed in terms of a scenario of siege and conquest of a city, followed by the submission of its inhabitants to the true Master.

We shall therefore refer to that pericope for at least two reasons:

1. In this literary subunit Paul brings up the challenge coming from some members of the community, shaped as an irony; in fact, ironies open and close the section (v. 11 being a conclusive comment of such an irony): *I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold to you when I am away!* (v. 1b) and *His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account* (v. 10).

2. In order to indicate how he intends to respond to such accusations, the Apostle appeals to a metaphorical ensemble of military and architectural isotopies, respectively.

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<sup>12</sup> See similar articles written before: “Pentru o nouă înțelegere a metaforelor biblice – Studiu de caz, Ier 1:17-19” in *Globalizare și Comunicare*, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington & Institutul Teologic Romano-Catolic “Sfânta Tereza”, București, 2004, pp. 148-179; “Când metaforele sunt o șansă de convertire – Studiu asupra metaforelor din Ier 9:1-8”, in *Caietele Institutului Catolic* (8), Ed ARCB, Bucharest, 2005, pp. 63-73; “Funcționalitatea metaforei militare în textele Bibliei”, in *Studia Hebraica* (8), The Goldstein Goren Center for Hebrew Studies, 2008, pp. 206-214; “O teofanie inedită: Is 59,15b-20”, in *Studia in honorem – Ioan Robu, cu ocazia împlinirii vârstei de 75 de ani*, Ed ARCB, Bucharest, 2019, pp. 419-432.

## b. The text

10<sup>1</sup> Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς διὰ τῆς πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπεικειᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀπὼν δὲ θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς· <sup>2</sup>δέομαι δὲ τὸ μὴ παρῶν θαρρῆσαι τῇ πεποιθήσει ἢ λογιζομαι τολμῆσαι ἐπὶ τινὰς τοὺς λογιζομένους ἡμᾶς ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας. <sup>3</sup>Ἐν σαρκὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦντες οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατευόμεθα, <sup>4</sup>τὰ γὰρ ὄπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν οὐ σαρκικὰ ἀλλὰ δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων, λογισμοὺς καθαιροῦντες <sup>5</sup>καὶ πᾶν ὕψωμα ἐπαιρόμενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντες πᾶν νόημα εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, <sup>6</sup>καὶ ἐν ἐτοίμῳ ἔχοντες ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν παρακοήν, ὅταν πληρωθῇ ὑμῶν ἡ ὑπακοή.

<sup>7</sup>Τὰ κατὰ πρόσωπον βλέπετε. εἴ τις πέποιθεν ἑαυτῷ Χριστοῦ εἶναι, τοῦτο λογιζέσθω ἄλιν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ, ὅτι καθὼς αὐτὸς Χριστοῦ, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς. <sup>8</sup>Ἐάν [τε] γὰρ περισσώτερόν τι καυχῆσωμαι περὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας ἡμῶν ἢς ἔδωκεν ὁ κύριος εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν ὑμῶν, οὐκ αἰσχυνηθήσομαι. <sup>9</sup>ἵνα μὴ δόξω ὡς ἂν ἐκφοβεῖν ὑμᾶς διὰ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν. <sup>10</sup>ὅτι αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ μὲν, φησί, βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραί, ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενῆς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος. <sup>11</sup>τοῦτο λογιζέσθω ὁ τοιοῦτος, ὅτι οἰοί ἔσμεν τῷ λόγῳ δι' ἐπιστολῶν ἀπόντες, τοιοῦτοι καὶ παρόντες τῷ ἔργῳ.<sup>13</sup>

10<sup>1</sup> I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – who am humble when face to face with you but bold toward you when I am away! – <sup>2</sup>I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards. <sup>3</sup> Indeed, we live as humans but do not wage war according to human standards, <sup>4</sup> for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments <sup>5</sup> and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. <sup>6</sup> We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.

<sup>7</sup> Look at what is before your eyes. If you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself of this, that just as you belong to Christ, so also do we. <sup>8</sup> Now, even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be

<sup>13</sup> This text is taken from *The Greek New Testament*, K. Aland, M. Black, B. Metzger, A. Wikgren, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft / United Bible Societies, Stuttgart, 1966, 1968, 1975, 1983, 1993.

ashamed of it.<sup>9</sup> I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you with my letters.<sup>10</sup> For someone says, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible.”<sup>11</sup> Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent we will also do when present.<sup>14</sup>

### c. Clues to the presence of metaphors

Several phrases in our text belong to the military and architectural isotopies, respectively. Thus in:

10:3b: οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατευόμεθα – *do not wage war according to human standards*

10:4a: ὄπλα τῆς στρατείας – *the weapons of our warfare*

10:4b: καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων – *to destroy strongholds*

10:4c-5aα: λογισμοὺς καθαιροῦντες καὶ πᾶν ὑψωμα ἐπαιρόμενον – *we destroy arguments and every proud obstacle*

10:5aβ: κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ – *against the knowledge of God*

10:5c: αἰχμαλωτίζοντες πᾶν νόημα – *take every thought captive*

10:5d: εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ – *to obey Christ*

10:6a: ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν παρακοὴν – *to punish every disobedience*

10:8b: εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν ὑμῶν – *for building you up and not for tearing you down*

### d Metaphorical topics and the process of metaphorization

At the heart of this metaphorical ensemble are the images of *the destruction of strongholds* and *the conquest of a city*.

The noun καθαίρεσις (*tearing down, destroying*) accompanied, in v. 4b, by the genitival attribute ὀχυρωμάτων (*strongholds*) appear as a generic presentation of an action that the Apostle and his collaborators undertake, using, according to v. 4a, the ὄπλα τῆς στρατείας (*weapons of our warfare*). The clarifications added in vv. 4c-5 indicate what they are aiming to destroy with these weapons: λογισμοὺς... καὶ πᾶν ὑψωμα ἐπαιρόμενον (*arguments... and every proud obstacle*). In other

<sup>14</sup> This translation is taken from a *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* published in 1989.

words, referring to *the strongholds* they seek to destroy, the author metaphorically identifies them in the following sentence (by simple juxtaposition), with the *arguments and every proud*. This means that the *strongholds* they seek to destroy are nothing other but the “concoctions of the mind” and “any conceit” of some of the members of the Community of Corinth.

The Resistance / Opposition of these *arguments and every proud...* is expressed by the participle form of the verb ἐπαίρω (*to stand up / to prevent*), more precisely ἐπαιρόμενον (*obstacle*), of v. 5a α, and manifests itself towards τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ (*the knowledge of God*), of v. 5aβ. In other words, the members targeted by the author tend to oppose *their arguments and every proud obstacle* to the *knowledge of God*.

The whole approach of the Apostle and his collaborators is expressed, in v. 4b as στρατευόμεθα (*warfare*). It follows, in principle, an unfolding expressed through the present participle of the verb περιπατέω, more precisely περιπατοῦντες (*we walk / live*), fully ἐν σαρκί (*as humans*), that is, having an approach related to the human way of behaving (the analysis of the metaphorized statement will give us further details in this regard). Speaking, however, in v. 4aα, about ὄπλα τῆς στρατείας (*the weapons of warfare*) we understand that “the combatants” appeal to “means” which, although they retain the human form, have a special nature, more precisely οὐ κατὰ σάρκα (*not merely human*), where it is used, according to v. 4aβ, of ὄπλα... οὐ σαρκικά (*the weapons... not merely human*).

The presence of the verb αἰχμαλωτίζω (*to take captive*), in its present participle form αἰχμαλωτίζοντες next to the noun νόημα (*the thought*), of v. 5 c, suggests the existence of a metaphorical construction (in which two terms of different isotopies are joined) that creates a second stage of the approach of the “fighters”. The finality of this new approach is expressed metaphorically, in v. 5d, by the phrase εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ in which the noun τὴν ὑπακοὴν is related to the action evoked in the previous sentence that suggests *bringing under obedience to Christ those whose “strongholds” have been destroyed*. In addition, a second purpose of this approach is expressed as an eventuality, in v. 6a, in the phrase ἐν ἐτοιμίῳ ἔχοντες ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν παρακοὴν (*being ready to punish every disobedience*), where the infinitive verb ἐκδικῆσαι (*to punish*) expresses the treatment applied to those who, even if the submission of the whole community has been completed, manifest any act of disobedience. After all, the whole v. 6 suggests that the established order does not admit any deviation from *obedience to Christ*.

The noun καθαίρεισις (*tearing down*) reappears, in v. 8b, accompanied by its antonym οικοδομή (*building up*) to provide a key to understanding the Pauline approach towards the members of the Corinth community: εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεισιν ὑμῶν (*for building you up and not for tearing you down*). Using the term καθαίρεισις (to which he joins its antonym οικοδομή), the author makes a link with the metaphorical set of vv. 3-6, with a view to clarify his intervention in the community.

## II. Delimitation and study of the metaphorized statement

In trying to restore the reality to which the metaphorizing statement gives meaning, we will essentially have to reconstruct the situation in the community at Corinth as it results from the context of the epistles addressed to them. More specifically, in addition to the elements provided by the immediate context of the pericope, we will also need to appeal to the broader context of the 2 Corinthians and even to that of 1 Corinthians. The approach will be a rather synchronic one.

So, in the first two verses of chapter 10, Paul brings to the attention of the members of the community the malicious ironies that circulate in their midst, according to which he would be *humble when face to face with you, but bold towards you when I am away* (v. 1). Against such insinuations that indirectly undermined his authority (13:10), the Apostle feels compelled to take an energetic attitude, an attitude that he considers that he must nevertheless reserve for those in the community who suspect him and his collaborators<sup>15</sup> that *they act according to human standards* (v. 2b).

In fact, those who formulate such insinuations would most likely be members of a faction within the community, grouped around those whom the Apostle calls *super-apostles* (11:5; 12:11) and who show an increasingly aggressive hostility towards him. Their hostility may have been generated by suspicions<sup>16</sup> about the organization of the collection for the Jerusalem community (Ga. 2:9-10), since Paul and his collaborators never asked to be paid for their work (11:7b), as did

<sup>15</sup> The use of the personal pronoun, the first person plural, suggests that the accusations are directed at the entire founding missionary team.

<sup>16</sup> It would not be excluded that these suspicions were awakened and fuelled by the *very super-apostles* who are, according to the Apostle, *false apostles, the deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ... disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness* (11:13.15b)

*the super-apostles*. That is why the Apostle and his collaborators are suspected of cunning (12:16), more precisely that they intend to appropriate the entire collection. However, the other members of the community know very well how Paul organized this collection (1Cor 16:1-4) and how it took place: *I urged Titus to go and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves with the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same footsteps?* (12:18; see also 8:6.18.23). Moreover, they know very well how the Apostle and his collaborators obtained the necessary for everyday life: *I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for my needs were supplied by the brothers who came from Macedonia. So I refrained and will continue to refrain from burdening you in any way* (11:8-9). But the most explicit statement of good intention towards his recipients is expressed by the Apostle in 12:14 where he states: *I do not want what is yours but you*.

As for the accusation from his detractors that his behaviour and that of his collaborators is *according to human standards* (v. 2b), it would like to suggest that they, unlike the super-apostles<sup>17</sup>, are purely human beings, devoid of the power and, above all, of the knowledge of God.

To this accusation, the author believes that he must respond by making a distinction beforehand: *we live as humans but do not wage war according to human standards* (v. 3). In other words, the Apostle recognizes, in the first part of the sentence, that he and his collaborators *live as humans* (ἐν σαρκὶ περιπατοῦντες) – words by which he recognizes and assumes the condition of human weakness. However, this statement must be understood in the logic of the theology of the cross to which the author often refers in the epistles addressed to the Corinthians (see already 1Co 2:1-5 in 1Co 1:17-3:4)<sup>18</sup>. According to this Pauline theology, the

<sup>17</sup> What would have impressed the few members of the Community of Corinth who were on the side of the *super-apostles* would be their science and eloquence (11:6) as well as the accounts of their amazing miracles (12:11). And yet, the Apostle's performance is nothing less than that of his opponents. The community itself is a brilliant proof: *The signs of an apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works. How have you been worse off than the other churches* (12:12-13a).

<sup>18</sup> It should be emphasized, however, that the explicit reference to the cross is missing in 2 Corinthians (see in this regard M. A. Chevallier, "L'argumentation de Paul dans II Corinthiens 10 à 13", especially p. 12, referring to article of E. Käsemann: "Die Legitimität des Apostels. Eine Untersuchung zu II Korinther 10 – 13", especially pp. 53-55).



liberating power of God’s grace is revealed in the Apostle’s weakness<sup>19</sup>. More precisely, the Apostle’s weakness is but the means by which God reveals the liberating power of apostolic preaching<sup>20</sup>. Therefore, if Paul were to claim any merit or reason for praise for the deliverance brought by him to the Christians in Corinth by preaching the gospel, they can only come from the Crucified One.

That being the case, we better understand what the author meant in the second part of the verse: *do not wage war according to human standards* (v. 3b). After all, throughout the preaching activity of the Gospel, the Apostle and his collaborators are aware that the gospel is the power of God that makes one contemporary with the transforming power of the revelation of the cross. That is why the power of apostolic preaching lies not in their human power, but in the power of the gospel they transmit.

The conjunction γὰρ at the beginning of v. 4 prolongs the statements in the previous verse by providing further explanations regarding the activity that preoccupies the Apostle and his collaborators, an activity that he defines metaphorically with the term *warfare*. The author states that *for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds*.

It should be noted that, making use of the term *warfare*, the author of the epistle gives a combative profile to his intervention and that of his collaborators. In other words, the confrontation that is about to take place will aim to achieve a fundamental change of the present situation. To this end, they envisage the use of means adapted to the situation, means metaphorically defined with the term *weapons of warfare*. To understand what kind of *weapons* the apostle refers to, and especially what that *divine power* refers to that makes it different from *worldly weapons*, we will have to remember that in 6:4-7 he highlights an important aspect of their missionary activity. More precisely, they appear *as servants of God* who, in the most difficult situations of *great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger, count on truthful speech, and the power of God*, as well as on *the weapons of*

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<sup>19</sup> See, in this regard, C. Reynier, “Le langage de la croix dans le corpus paulinien”, especially, pp. 371-372.

<sup>20</sup> An important plea in this regard is given to us, for example, in chapter 12:9b-10: *I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

*righteousness*<sup>21</sup> to achieve the expected successes. The effectiveness of the means used in preaching the liberating gospel is also evoked in 1 Co 2:4-5. The author says: *And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my proclamation were made not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.* In other words, the condition of modesty and weakness of the Apostle and his collaborators, as well as the lack of a convincing rhetoric based on human wisdom, best allows the manifestation of the wisdom and power of God, a manifestation supported by the demonstration of the Spirit. It is only under these conditions that the truth and justice on which they rely prove to be formidable in the confrontation with the opponents.

Having, therefore, on their side the truth and justice supported by the power of God and the action of the Spirit, Paul and his collaborators know themselves in a position, according to vv. 4b-5a, to prove the falseness of the insinuations, the wickedness of the accusations and contestations, as well as the egotistical claims of superiority of the detractors, directed against them and through them against God, who acts in them. Moreover, the undeniable force of the arguments as well as the determination of the intervention of the Apostle and his collaborators are able, according to v. 5b, to convince their challengers in the community to obey Christ as it has been preached to them since the beginning of the evangelizing activity. In any case, this is Paul's main expectation. In this sense, we remember the insistence with which the Apostle drew the attention of the Corinthians regarding what exactly they should not lose from sight: *I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified* (1Co 2:2). Such a statement fits well into the logic of *God's wisdom* because it expresses how He chooses to reveal His liberating power and work.

Once things have been clarified and the submission within the community has been restored, the Apostle warns, in v. 6, that in the future he will sanction *every disobedience* (πᾶσαν παρακοήν) coming from any member. In other words, appealing to his authority as an Apostle, he will adopt the most resolute attitude to keep the community in a perfect state of obedience. And we know all too

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<sup>21</sup> Regarding those *weapons of righteousness*, the author specifies their role by saying that they are *for the right hand and for the left*, that is, they are attack and defence weapons knowing that, as a rule, the right hand wielded the sword, and the left hand held the defence shield.

well that such an attitude on Paul’s part is not just a timid threat. In the past, he did not hesitate to denounce and sanction the outrageous deed of one of the members who had committed the serious sin of incest and whom the community tolerated as something unimportant (see 1Co 5:1-5). Moreover, in 1Co 5:6-8, the author explains his attitude as a “purifying”, and therefore salutary, intervention on behalf of the whole community.

Therefore, even in our case, if the Apostle makes use of the authority that the Lord has given him, it is for at least two reasons:

1. According to v. 7, he sees himself an apostle of Christ as much as any of those who have disturbed the community (*If you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself of this, that just as you belong to Christ, so also do we*). Paul gained such a conviction both from his experience of receiving the revelation from the Son himself in order that he may announce Him to the heathen (Gal 1:15-16) and from having been recognized by those considered to be the pillars, who acknowledged that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been entrusted to him, thus recognizing for him the grace of the apostolate (Gal 2:7-9).
2. He is convinced that his intervention, according to v. 8b, relies on *the authority, which the Lord gave him, for building you up and not for tearing you down*.

Paul confesses, in v. 8a.c, that he would have no cause for shame for the sense of pride that he feels when he evokes his authority as an apostle, committed to restoring order in the community. He, however, does not offer any explanation for this “spurt” of pride, natural enough. We suspect, however, that such a feeling has to do with what he had told them earlier to clarify his unique and privileged position among the Corinthians: *For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I fathered you through the gospel* (1Co 4:15).

In order to conclude the idea of the tonality gap – *His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible* (v. 10) –, the Apostle wants to emphasize, given his status in the Corinthian community, that: *I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you* (v. 9). In addition, in v. 11, Paul assures the one who makes such speeches that, when he is present, he will prove in act the firm attitude he manifests in the letters.

### III. Delimitation and study of the metaphORIZING statement

With the help of the military and architectural isotopy vocabulary, the following metaphORIZING statement can be formed:

The phrase, *we live as humans but do not wage war according to human standards* suggests Paul and his collaborators' involvement in a combative action against his challengers in the community of Corinth (v. 3b). The Apostle's action aims *to destroy strongholds, to conquer the mind like a city, to take... captive to obey* and they are *ready to punish every disobedience* (vv. 5-6a). The combative action, however, has one peculiarity: it is not a *worldly war*. That's why *the weapons of warfare themselves are not merely human but have divine power, necessary to destroy particular strongholds* (v. 4b).

The statement in v. 8, which expresses in summary terms the meaning of the whole Pauline approach and the value of the authority with which he and his collaborators intend to carry it out, is a positive one, since the replacement of *the arguments and every proud* with that of *the knowledge of God* proves to be beneficial for the entire community as it makes it possible *to submit to Christ, the absolute Master*.

What emerges, as a characteristic "touch", from such a metaphORIZING statement is the fact that the mission that apostle Paul and his collaborators carry out acquires the features of a confrontation. The replacement of those beliefs that are the fruit of "the concoctions of the mind" and of "conceit" needs real confrontations. In these confrontations, missionaries enjoy the support they are given. It is divine support.

### Conclusions

The situation that comes to life in our pericope, corroborated by the details offered in the context of chapters 10 – 13, but also in that of both Epistles addressed to the Corinthians, seems to be a tension that requires an energetic attitude on the part of the Apostle. The situation seems to be generated by the arrival in the Christian community at Corinth of certain persons who, having legitimized themselves by letters of recommendation (3:1; 10:12) as "Jews, Israelites, descendants of Abraham" (11:22), apostles just like Paul and his collaborators (11:12), and "took greater pride" (10:13) in their knowledge and ability to perform marvelous deeds, they begin to criticize the gospel that has

been preached to them, replacing it with another (11:4), to arouse suspicions about the honesty related to the collection that the Apostle initiated (11:7-8 and 12:16-18) at the suggestion of “those considered to be pillars”, James, Chefa, and John (Gal 2:9-10), and even to challenge his authority (3:1). Now, since the unity of the community is endangered by challenging his authority, the gospel he preached and the honesty with which he intervenes in the life of the community he founded with all the love of a parent (11:11) and with the toil of the days and nights dedicated to each individual member (11:27-29), Paul feels compelled to intervene so that his performance / “praise” in Achaia should not be taken away from him (11:10). His intervention is all the more necessary because he had had several times to postpone his return to the community (1Cor 16:5-6; 2Cor 1:15 – 2:4) arousing disappointment among the members of the community and allowing his detractors to launch a series of malicious ironies meant to discredit him once and for all: *His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible* (10:10; see also 10:1).

So such a situation can no longer last. Its extension risks to seriously damage the entire performance of Paul and his collaborators. There is a need for the Apostle to intervene firmly – an intervention that the author does not want, according to v. 2, to be *boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards*. That is why the Apostle launches, through the pericope we deal with, a kind of *ultimatum* to the members of the community who have hastened to embrace the ideas, insinuations and accusations of his detractors that he considers as *arguments*, more precisely pretentious reasonings, and *proud obstacle*.

Since they rise up against *the knowledge of God*, the Apostle announces that he is ready “to conquer them”, that is to prove their falsehood and wickedness and to bring back those who profess them to submission to Christ. In this sense he relies on *the weapons that are not merely human, but have divine power to destroy strongholds* – referring to the indisputable truth and justice of God on which all his missionary activity as well as of the collect for the Christians in Jerusalem are founded. Therefore, with the restoration of obedience to Christ, Paul will reinstate his full authority as he will prove *that Christ is speaking in him* and that *He [Christ] is not weak in dealing with them, but is powerful among them* (13:3).

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