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The “Bookends” for the Passage in Verses 2 and 16/17a

We have labelled the opening and closing verses of our passage as X and X'. These verses describe “the traditions” and “a custom” respectively, and in this chapter, I will try to show that they also have a sort of chiasmic thematic structure in which X leads into the main body of the passage and X' leads out of the main body of the passage. Also, X has a “positive” aspect, and X' a “negative” aspect, so, if the above is correct, the thematic aspects correspond, but in an “inverse” way.

The five opening words at the start of v. 17 can also be linked with verse 16—so it is not immediately clear whether X' should really also include these words. In this present chapter, I will be suggesting that these opening five words of v. 17 constitute a “Janus” expression since, whilst they undoubtedly belong with Paul’s teaching in verses 17-34, it will be argued that they also, simultaneously, belong with verse 16. They are thus an example of the “chain linking” technique (so described by Bruce Longenecker) in which two passages are linked together by means of a shorter section of text that belongs to both passages. In the present case, I will attempt to show that the chain linking in this instance has chiasmic aspects both “forwards” and “backwards”.

Let’s start off then with a discussion of the five words of v. 17a, and then later in the chapter we can analyse X and X' both separately and together. The chapter will also briefly include some other approaches to understanding and interpreting verses 16 and 17a that can be found in commentaries and articles.

Here are the verses we will be discussing in this chapter:

Verse 2:

I praise but you brothers because all things of me you (pl.) remembered
and as I delivered (*paradidomi*) to you (pl.), the traditions (*paradosis*)
you (pl.) hold fast (*katecho*)

(15 words)

Verse 16:

If but anyone thinks contentious to be, we such a custom do not have (*echo*), neither the churches of God.

(16 words)

Start of verse 17:

This but (my) enjoining (*paraggello*), not I praise

(5 words)

We also note that the same expressions “I praise you” (v. 2) and “not I praise” (v. 17) both occur in 1 Corinthians 11:22b:

“What to you do I say? Shall I praise you in this? Not I praise”.

We will refer to the expression in v. 22 “not I praise” below, but the interesting possibility that the occurrences of “I praise you” in verses 2 and 22 perhaps serve as structural markers for another different structure in this section of Corinthians, is not pursued further here.

Discussion of Verse 17a and its Forwards and Backwards connections.

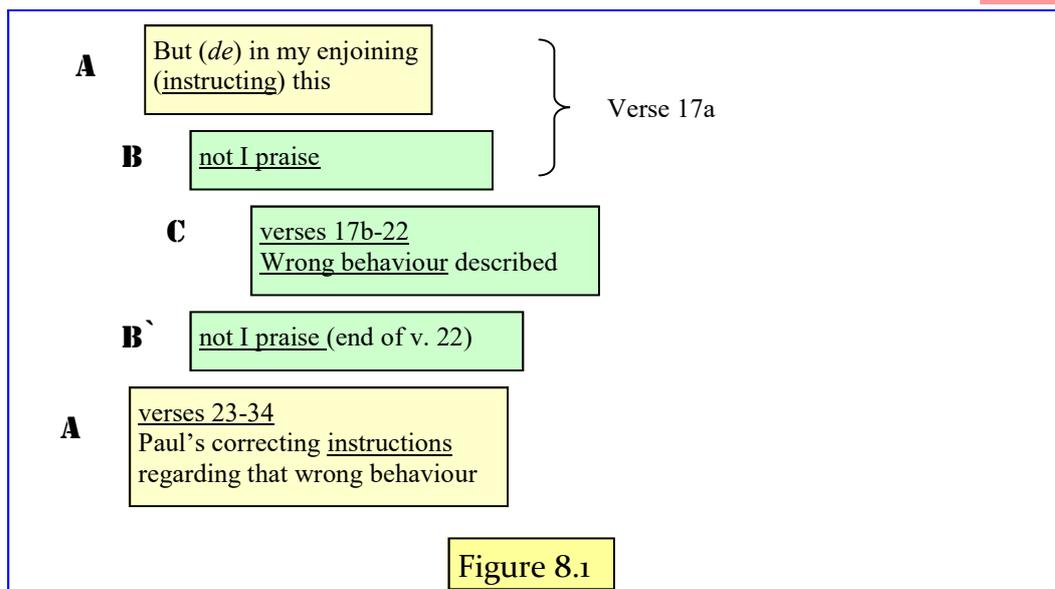
We can classify the contents of this part of Corinthians into i) Paul’s description of the behaviour of the Corinthians, (whether good or bad), and ii) Paul’s teaching based upon that behaviour. In the case of bad behaviour, Paul’s “doctrinal” teaching is aimed at correcting that behaviour. In the case of good behaviour, Paul’s doctrinal teaching builds on that good behaviour. We see the former clearly in verses 17b-34: in verses 17b-22 the bad behaviour is described; in verses 23-34, Paul gives the corrective teaching on the topic in question.

However, I would like to suggest that here, we have a little chiasm as shown in Figure 8.1 on the next page.

Here in this suggested chiasm, the word “this” near the start of v. 17 refers “forwards” to verses 23-34. This interpretation is followed by a number of commentaries and bible translations. For example,

“But in the following [my underlining S. F.] instructions I do not commend you . . .”(ESV)

Other translations do not specify the referent of the word “this” in v. 17. Here are a couple of representative examples:



And this declaring, I give no praise (Young's Literal Translation)

Now in this that I declare *unto you* I praise *you* not (KJV)

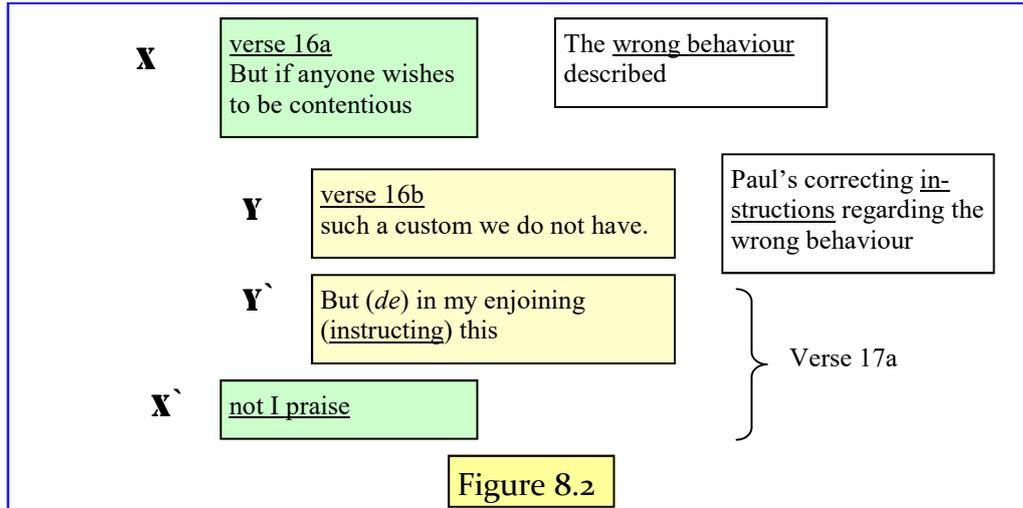
One commentator, C. K. Barrett believes, on linguistic grounds, that the “this” of v. 17a does not have a forwards reference. Nevertheless, we will for now, allow that this forwards reference may be a possibility.

But is there also a backwards reference to something Paul has just been discussing? I suggest here that there is indeed such a backwards reference—namely to what Paul has just spoken about in verse 16. (This view is not found, in this form, so far as I am aware, in the commentaries. The latter however, often allow that there is a “wider” backwards reference to the headcovering teaching generally.)

Figure 8.2 on the next page illustrates the suggested backwards reference to v. 16.

Once again, we see that Paul's words in vs. 16-17a can be divided into describing i) a wrong behaviour (X) and its censure (X') and ii) his instructions regarding that wrong behaviour (Y and Y').

Perhaps I should at this point also comment on the little word “but” (*de*) in v. 17a. This is an “adversative particle”, and usually indicates a contrast with something that has preceded. Given that v. 17a includes the expression “I praise not”, the obvious “candidate” for the contrast would be



verse 2 (*et. seq.*) which also describes instruction in the form of “traditions” together with the words “I praise you”. Here we have the necessary contrast between i) instructions which have been “held fast” (i.e. good behaviour) by the Corinthians and for which praise is due (v. 2) and which are followed by further (headcovering) instructions which build on that good behaviour and ii) the wrong behaviour by the Corinthians *en bloc*, (vs. 17-22) or by a contentious individual (v. 16a), for which praise is not due and for which the instruction, in both cases, takes the form of correction of the wrong behaviour.

I will try to discuss further the role of this adversative particle *de*, and also the role of the “*de*” near the start of v. 16, later in the chapter when we have looked at the structure of verse 2 and considered some connections between the structures of v. 2 and vs. 16-17a.

In connection with the “forwards and backwards” approach taken to v. 17a, it is interesting that the expression “I praise not” in v. 17a does not include a direct object (even though the translators often add the word “you”). Paul’s “I praise not” in v. 17a can therefore apply both “backwards” to the contentious individual advocating wrong headcovering behaviour (i.e. “I praise *him* not”) and “forwards” to the erring Corinthians in their behaviour as regards the Lord’s Supper (i.e. I praise *you* (pl.) not)—as we have just suggested, and which, I also suggest, is possible indirect evidence for the correctness of the above “dual” interpretation of v. 17a.

Other Possible “Referents” for “this” and “I Praise Not” in v. 17a

The “forwards” and the “backwards” understandings of v. 17a for which I have been arguing have an important feature in common—namely that in

both cases, the referent of the word “this” is Paul’s teaching upon the same matter as that regarding which Paul withholds praise. Thus, Paul withholds praise from the contentious man because he is advocating a wrong headcovering “custom” which Paul corrects, and Paul withholds praise from the Corinthians with regard to their wrong behaviour at the Lord’s Supper—behaviour which Paul corrects.

However, another view regarding v. 17a which is sometimes put forwards in the commentaries is that the “this” in v. 17a refers *backwards* to the headcovering teaching (in verses 3-15 or verses 3-16), but that the “I praise not” refers forwards to the wrong behaviour described in verses 17b-22. (e.g. C. K. Barrett appears to support this understanding (on linguistic grounds)).

This view then requires requires a double contrast—first between a *teaching* regarding headcovering and a *behaviour* regarding the Lord’s Supper, and secondly between positive and negative—a basically positive teaching regarding the headcovering on the basis of (in general) obedience (it is assumed that correct headcovering behaviour is one of the traditions to which all, or (rather) almost all, the Corinthians have so far been holding fast as described in v. 2) and a uniformly negative description of wrong behaviour regarding the Lord’s Supper.

Regarding this, I would say the following: first, there is no indication that “this” and the “I praise not” are to be set in contrast at all—rather I would suggest that we would naturally expect that the teaching to correlate with to the behaviour which is being censured: corrective teaching (rather than “positive” teaching) being applied to change wrong behaviour.

Secondly, it is necessary to make a number of interpolations for this view to “make sense” - particularly with regard to the difficulty that the teaching refers to one topic and the behaviour being censured to a different topic. We would have to read v. 17a in something like the following way . .

“I have hitherto been able to teach/announce/enjoin (*paraggello*) regarding headcovering against a basically agreed behavioural consensus regarding this topic, but in teaching in this way, (and in contrast), I cannot praise you regarding your behaviour at the Lord’s Supper . . .”

This seems, as noted above, to me to require a “false contrast” between two different “categories” - teaching on the one hand, and behaviour on the other, as well as giving a (valid) contrast between something good (the headcovering teaching) and something bad (the Corinthian’s behav-

iour at the Lord’s Supper). However, the good teaching regarding headcovering actually ends on a slightly negative note regarding the likely presence of at least one individual at Corinth who may be inclined to reject Paul’s teaching—so the contrast is between “good” and “bad” is made somewhat more complicated by this.

Finally, by requiring that the “I praise not” must only “point forwards”, we lose the possibility of the chiasmic cohesiveness that obtains when “I praise not” can also be part of the headcovering teaching and correspond to “I praise you” in v. 2.

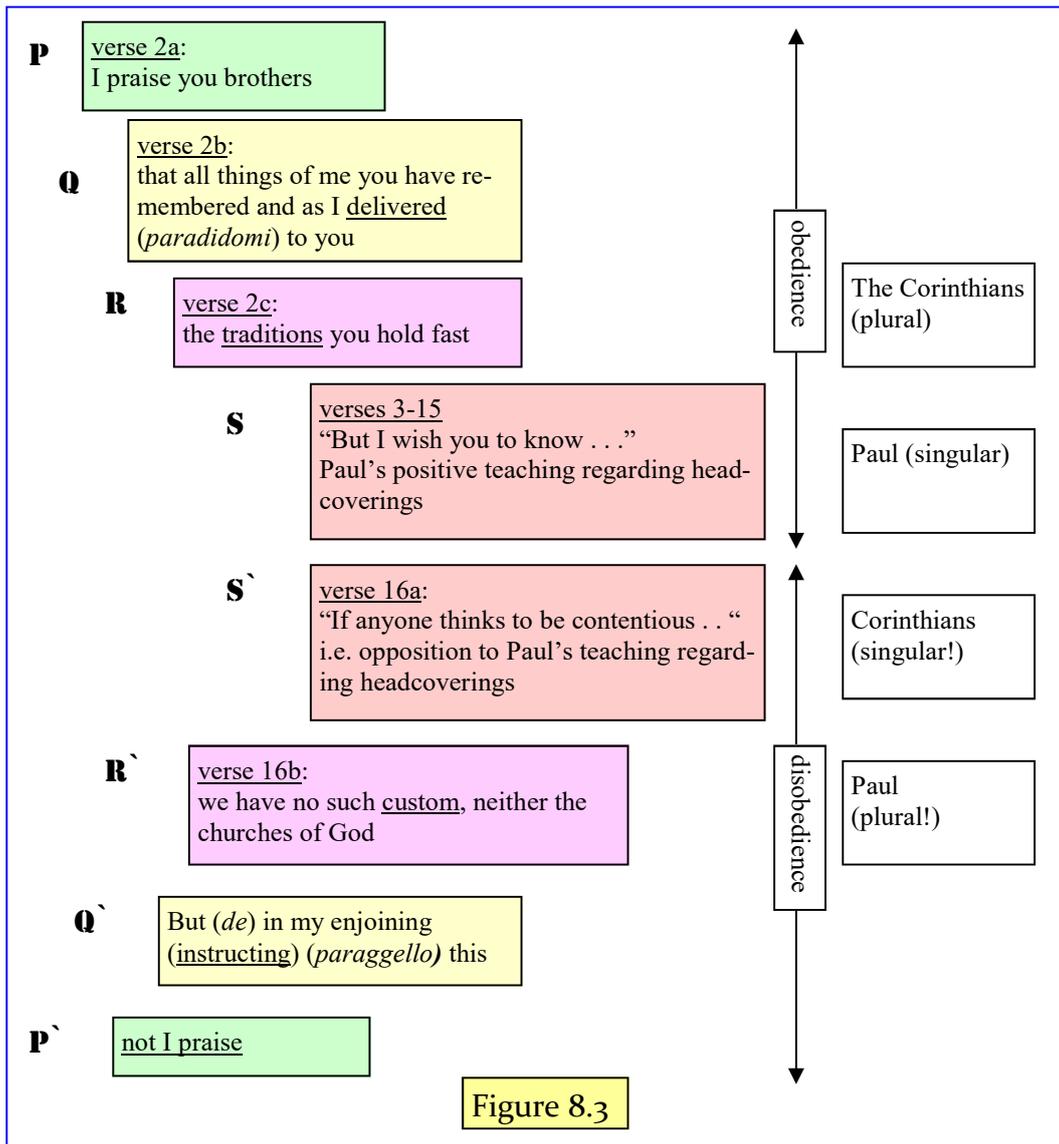
In conclusion I think that the view that the “referent” of the word “this” in v. 17a points backwards but the “I praise not” points forwards is a possible understanding, but that there are more straightforward, direct, understandings which also better reflect the underlying structures. Although John Gill does not address the possibility that v. 17a is a “Janus” or chain-linking section, he (gently and graciously) advocates against the view we are presently discussing - rather preferring that v. 17a has an exclusively “forwards” orientation . . .

“Now in this that I declare unto you, The Syriac version reads, “this is what I command”; which some refer to what he had been discoursing of, adding to his arguments, and the examples of the church, his own orders and command, that men should worship God publicly, uncovered, and women covered; though it seems rather to respect what follows, what the apostle was about to declare unto them; concerning which he says, I praise you not”.

Finally, I should, for completeness, just mention another view regarding the word “this” in v. 17a and that is that the “this” refers to a much wider body of teaching. Although C. K. Barrett does not support this view (again on linguistic grounds) he identifies this wider body of teaching as being chapters 7 to 14.

A Chiasmic Aspect of the “Backwards” Reference in v. 17a

In the following diagram, (Figure 8.3 on the next page), a possible chiasmic structure for the entire passage, but including a “backwards” reference in v. 17a, is given. This chiasmic arrangement, together with other chiasmic arrangements of our passage, will be discussed in much more detail later in the book. For now, I just note the interesting observation that references to “you” (i.e. the Corinthians) are found in P, Q, R and S, but absent in P’, Q’, R’, and S’. (Thus the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians is enhanced by obedience, but disrupted by disobedience: Paul is rhetorically



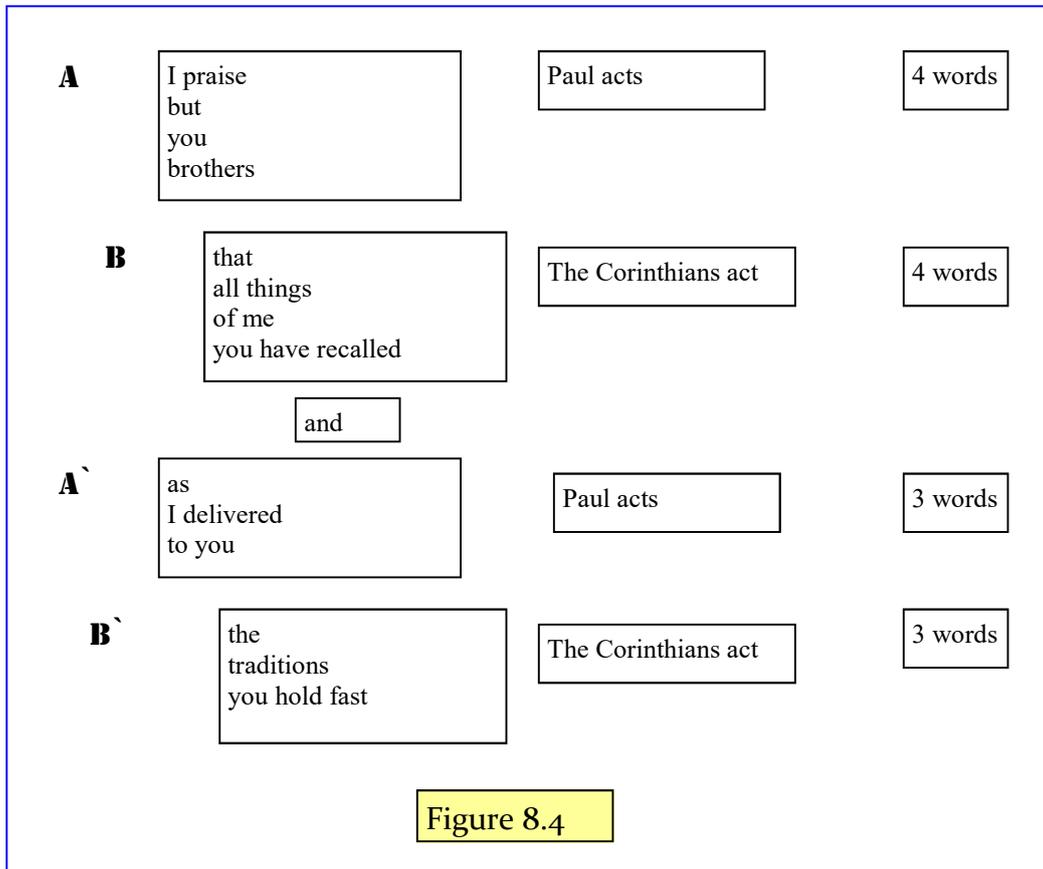
astute!!)

Let us now continue with the main topic of this chapter namely the chiasmic analyses of verses 2 and 16 (or 16-17a) both separately and together.

Chiasmic Analysis of Verse 2.

First Analysis of v. 2

Well, let's start our analysis proper by looking at verse 2. In Figure 8.4 on the next page, I present a first attempt at a structural analysis:



Notes:

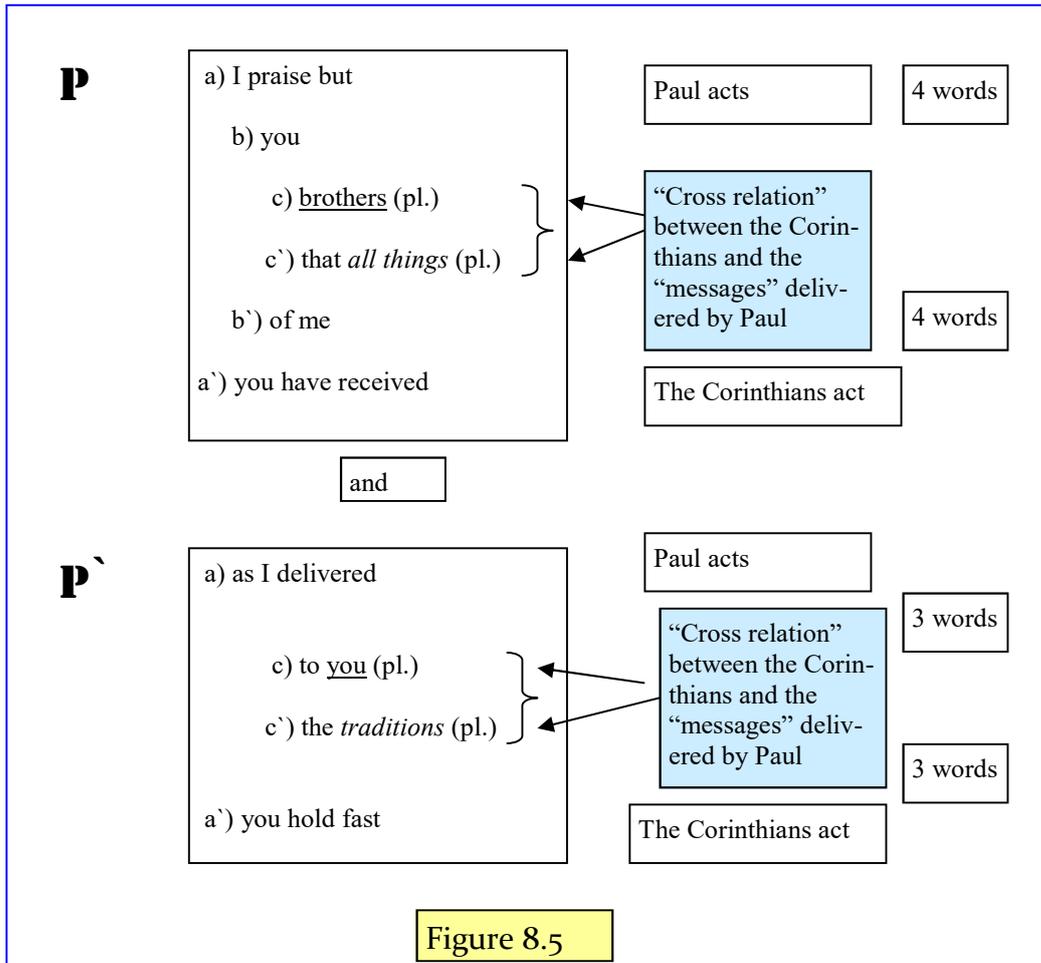
- 1) There are four verbs—one in each of A,B, A' and B'. In A and A' it is Paul who acts, and in B and B' it is the Corinthians who act.
- 2) In this analysis, the structure, then, consists of two parallel “panels” - A, B and A', B'.

Second Analysis of v. 2

However, the two panels of this first analysis each have their own chiasmic structure, and these two chiasmic structures are linked. This is shown in Figure 8.5 on the next page.

Notes:

- 1) I've used the letters P and P' for the two panels of v. 2
- 2) On a textual note, the NA27 does not have the word “brothers” in v. 2.



This word, in Pc), contributes to the balance of the structure since it corresponds to the word "to you" (pl.) in P'c). This suggests that the Received Text, which includes the word "brothers" is perhaps the better reading.

3) In Pc) and Pc') the Corinthians (i.e. the brothers) are first referred to followed by "all things". Thus the recipients of the messages are linked with the messages themselves. In P'c) and P'c') the same pattern recurs: "to you" refers to the Corinthians and this is followed by the messages—"the traditions".

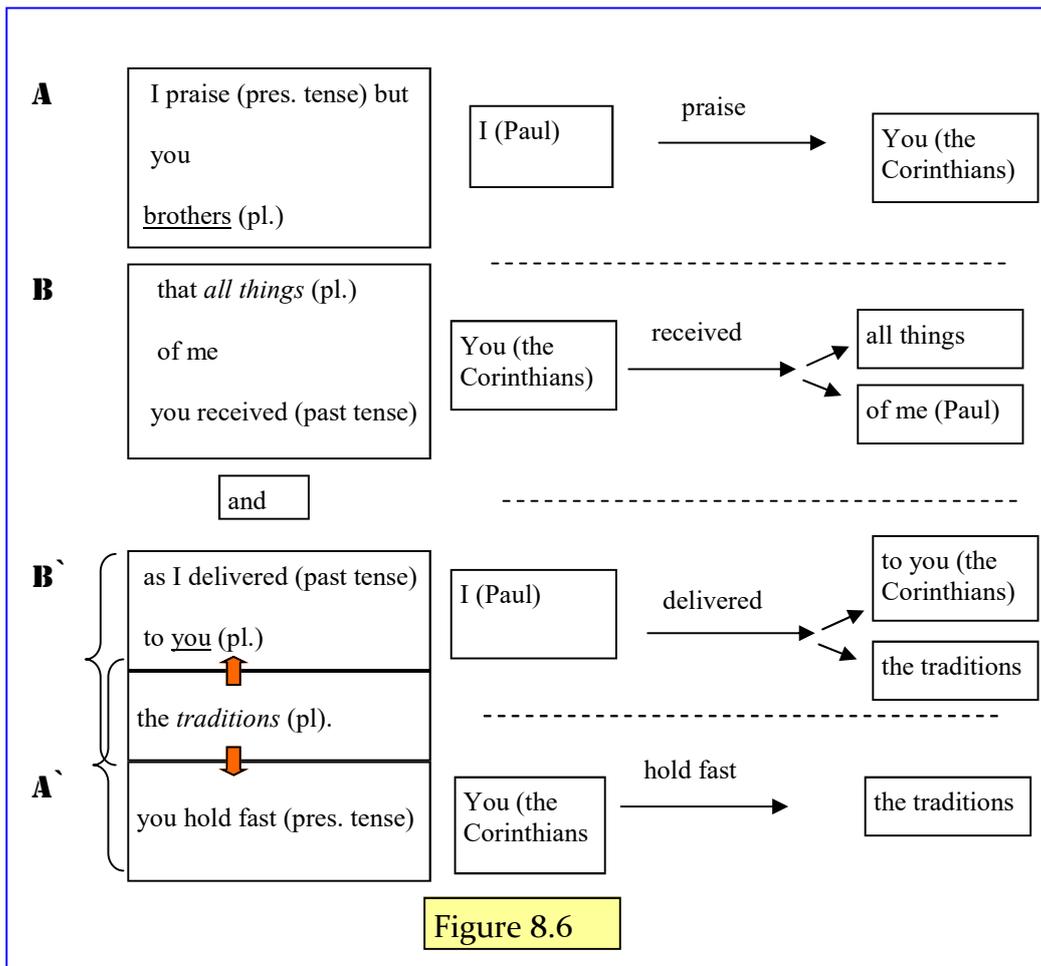
4) Pb) and Pb') are linked because they refer to "recipients" and "giver" respectively. They do not have corresponding words in P' however.

5) It seems to me that by cleverly working with direct and indirect objects of the verbs Paul has created a really quite complicated structural

pattern. This interplay between direct and indirect objects can be (tentatively) pursued further if we allow that the words “the traditions” in P`c`) might do “double duty” as it were. This possibility is explored below:

Third Analysis of v. 2

This analysis is shown in Figure 8.6 below:



Notes:

1) It may seem a bit of a “liberty” to treat the words “the traditions” to “belong” to both B` and A` simultaneously (as indicated by the little red arrows in Figure 8.6). However, these words really do belong to both for the verse to be able to be read grammatically and something to that effect is found in the translations. For example, the NKJV of v. 2 reads,

“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep

the traditions, just as I delivered *them* to you.”

We note the presence of the word “them” in italics indicating that the translators have supplied an additional reference to “the traditions”.

2) The analysis presents verse 2 as having a chiasmic structure—A, B, B', A'. However, this requires a little qualification since in A and A' we are suggesting that Paul praising the Corinthians corresponds with the Corinthians holding fast the traditions. Here Paul shows his pastor's heart: whilst B and B' describe the prior “delivery” of the traditions from Paul to the Corinthians (from both “points of view”), the subsequent end result, which is deserving of praise, is that the message was being obeyed. Thus the verbs in A and A' are present tense, those in B and B' are past tense. (We note that the praise in A applies to the prior welcoming of the message in B also). The structure of v. 2 suggests then that Paul's primary object in this verse is that the Corinthians are obedient to the message (as opposed to being obedient to him), and that their obedience to him is important insofar as it enables this primary objective to be obtained.

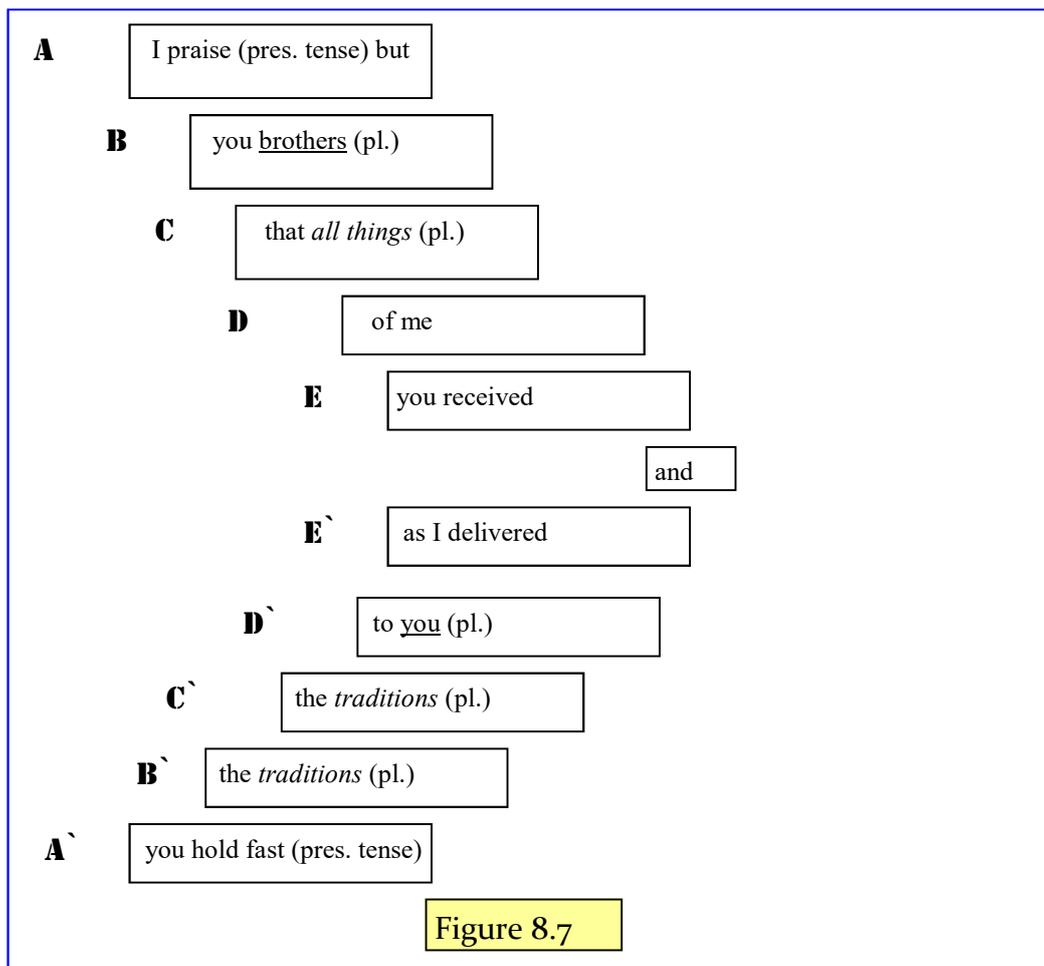
A Fourth Analysis of v. 2

Finally, Figure 8.7 (on the next page) presents a fourth analysis of v. 2 which again uses the notional “double” reference to “the traditions”, but which compresses the actual double reference to “you, brothers” to a single thematic component. This is curious and interesting since, in the previous analysis (and with the previous notation), the Corinthians (in A) corresponded with “the traditions” (in A'!).

A Brief Discussion of Verse 2

It is interesting that in the central part of verse 2, Paul presents what is essentially the same information from two different points of view, that of the Corinthians and that of himself. Hence, in the middle part of verse 2 he says, “that all things of me you received/welcomed”, and “as I delivered unto you the traditions”. Grammatically Paul has balanced these two statements—even to the extent of making them both dependent clauses, and placing the verb, indirect object and direct object of each chiastically in relation to each other. We are here basically seeing the “all things” as being equivalent to, but certainly including, the “traditions”.

However, Paul deliberately presents the Corinthians' involvement as a two-stage process. They have received/welcomed the all things /traditions (in the past) and they are also now holding them fast. I think that this



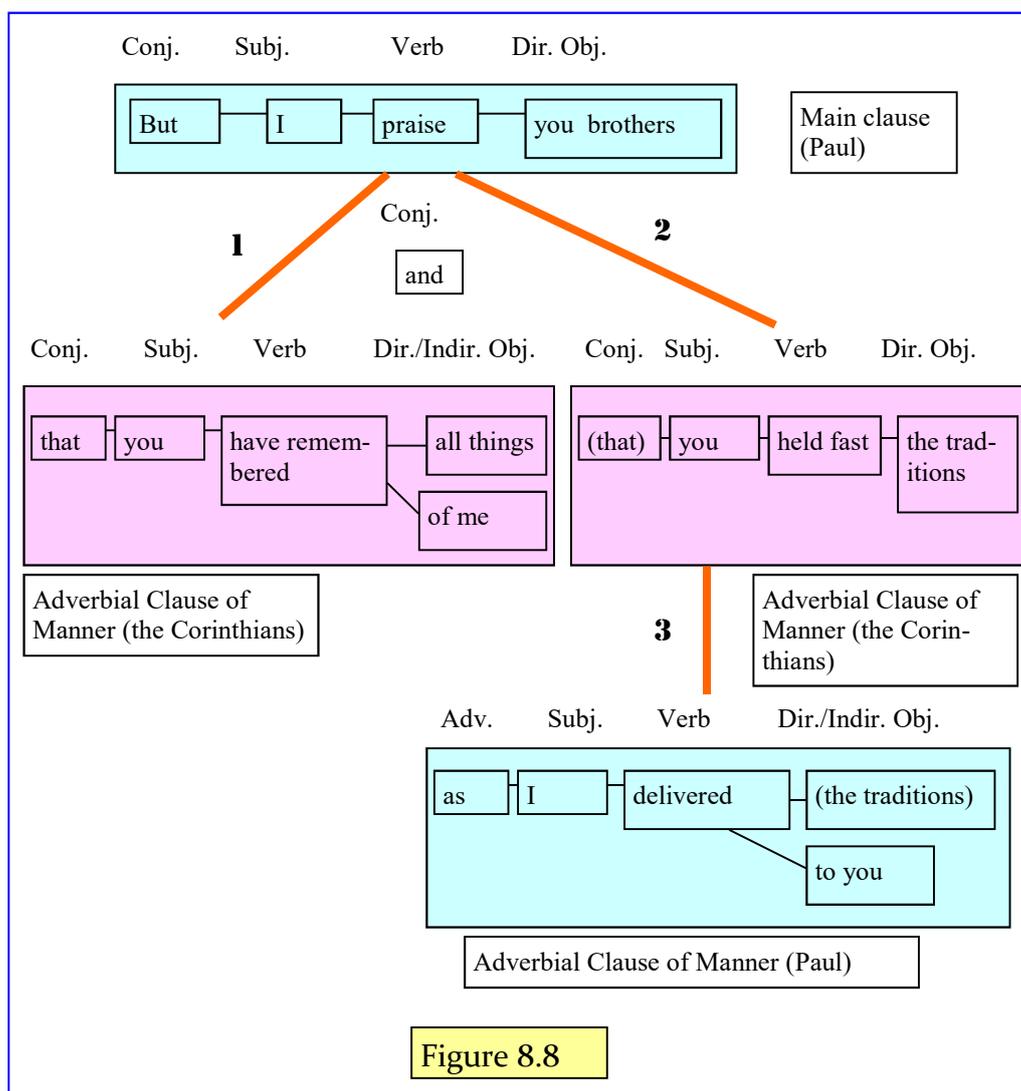
“doubling” of the actions of the Corinthians in Paul’s description is part of the very careful way in which he has structured verse 2! The “problem” is that Paul himself up till now has only done one thing—namely he has delivered the traditions to the Corinthians, and this is clearly “matched” as already noted with the “having welcomed all things of Paul” by the Corinthians. Thus, by introducing the present “holding fast the traditions” by the Corinthians, Paul has cleverly created a “slot” into which his present praise of the Corinthians can be matched!

Although grammatically there now *appears* to be complete symmetry regarding Paul and the Corinthians in verse 2, it might be argued that actually there is an “imbalance” in the following respect:

Paul’s praise applies to *both* of the actions of the Corinthians (receiving and holding fast) so Paul is getting a slight advantage (rhetorically!) over the Corinthians. (Thus, with reference to Figure 8.4, A applies to B and B’). So, from the Corinthians’ perspective, B links back to A, and B’ links back

to A'. Likewise, from Paul's perspective, A links forwards to B and A' links forwards to B'. Into this otherwise neat pattern, we have the additional factor of A linking forwards to B' (and therefore indirectly also to A' with which B' is connected)! In v. 2, Paul is basically the "giver" and the Corinthians the "receivers", and also Paul has the above "excess of action" compared with the Corinthians. Nevertheless, Paul has graciously gone some way to disguising this inequality by his use of symmetrical "grammatical building blocks".

Figure 8.8 below shows a "clause analysis" of verse 2.



It can be readily seen that Paul has two clauses involving the Corinthians which are "dependent" (lines 1 and 2) but the Corinthians only have one clause involving Paul which is dependent (line 3).

A Further Analysis!

I have three misgivings which apply to all of the above analyses:

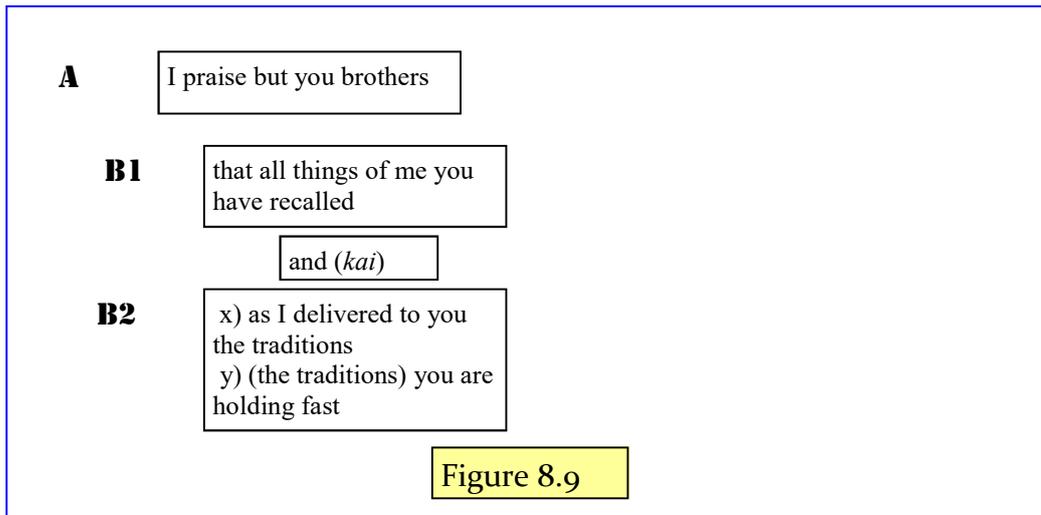
- 1) The fact, noted above, of the “imbalance” that results because Paul’s praise in A applies to both B and B’), whereas the other sub-sections, (i.e. B, A’ and B’), each only link to a single sub-section.
- 2) The fact that Paul’s praise is in a different “category” from the other three verbs since the direct object of Paul’s praise is the Corinthians, but the direct object of the other three verbs is the traditions/all things. Section A (in Figure 8.4) is thus the only one that does not *directly* involve or mention these traditions.
- 3) I have treated B and A’ as representing basically the same past action from two different points of view. However, B is in the perfect tense but A’ is aorist. This raises the possibility that they are not entirely equivalent. This is particularly so since the aorist famously represents “completed action” but the perfect tense represents a past action *with ongoing consequences in the present*.

These three considerations suggest that, notwithstanding the validity of the structural analyses presented in terms of symmetrical “grammatical building blocks”, it is nevertheless possible that, conceptually, a different type of analysis may also be carried out on v. 2.

Let us treat Paul’s praise (subsection A) as indeed in a different “category” from the rest of the verse. Furthermore, let us take seriously the possibility that subsection B really has both past and (ongoing) present aspects. This raises the intriguing possibility that subsection B may actually be a broader description of what is described more narrowly in A’ and B’. This gives rise to the “conceptual” analysis presented in Figure 8.9 on the next page (please note slight change of notation).

Notes:

- 1) An interesting point to note is that the Greek word for “and”, *kai*, which connects B₁ and B₂ has a wide range of meanings—actually wider I think than for the word “and” in English. Here, in v. 2, I suggest that it may mean something like “namely” or “in particular”. Lest this seem too radical, there is actually an equivalent use of “and” in English. Here is an example:



“John was very obliging and he delivered the rest of the leaflets”.

Here, we naturally that these two clauses are essentially saying the same thing, rather than two separate things: John was obliging, namely by delivering the rest of the leaflets. We are not saying that John is an obliging sort of chap, oh and also, as it happens, and quite separately, he delivered these leaflets!

We might also be saying that John was obliging and in particular he showed this by delivering the leaflets (i.e. “and” serves to intensify or “sharpen up” the more general statement with a more particular one.)

Now if something like this is going on, then the word “and” basically means “namely”, and v. 2 is saying that the Corinthians’ recalling or remembering all of Paul’s “things” was done, namely or in particular by continuing to hold fast (present tense) to the traditions that Paul delivered to them (aorist or “completed past”). The use of aorist and present tenses in B2 thus sort of corresponds to the use of the perfect (i.e. action in the past with ongoing results in the present) in B1. (Technically, I think B2 might thus be an example of a *merism*.)

We could perhaps see the use of the word “and” here then as a sort of *hendiadys* (I think!)

These two meanings for *kai* are found in BDAG p. 495. The meaning “namely” is given in section 1c) and the “intensifying” meaning in section 2b).

With regard to the “intensifying” meaning,

We should also perhaps talk a little about the interesting word translated as “recalled” or “remembered” in v. 2. It is the Greek verb *mimneskomai*. It can mean to remember, but it can also have an additional meaning of “to give careful consideration to something” - to actively keep something in mind. In Scripture it appears that both meanings are found, and sometimes the discussion of meaning is framed around whether the Classical Greek or Old Testament use is to be understood. The Old Testament meaning really does have this “giving careful attention to something” idea—as for example “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”: here, something more than simply “recalling information from memory” is clearly to be understood!

In verse 2, section B₁ (in Figure 8.9), I suggest that Paul may be praising the Corinthians because they have been actively keeping in mind “all the things of Paul” - which covers the time period from their initial receiving of “the traditions” through to the present time when Paul is writing. The “actively keeping in mind” then corresponds to the “holding fast” of B₂. The word “as” (*kathos*) at the beginning of B₂ indicates the “accuracy” with which the traditions are adhered to by the Corinthians—so altogether this is high praise!

Finally, I would like to suggest that in 1 Cor. 11: 2-15 we perhaps have a progression or a “narrowing down” process. First, in v. 2a, we read about “all things of Paul”. Then in v. 2b this is narrowed down to “the traditions” which Paul has delivered to the Corinthians, and then in verses 3-15, we have Paul’s particular teaching regarding one of these traditions—namely “appropriate headcovering”.

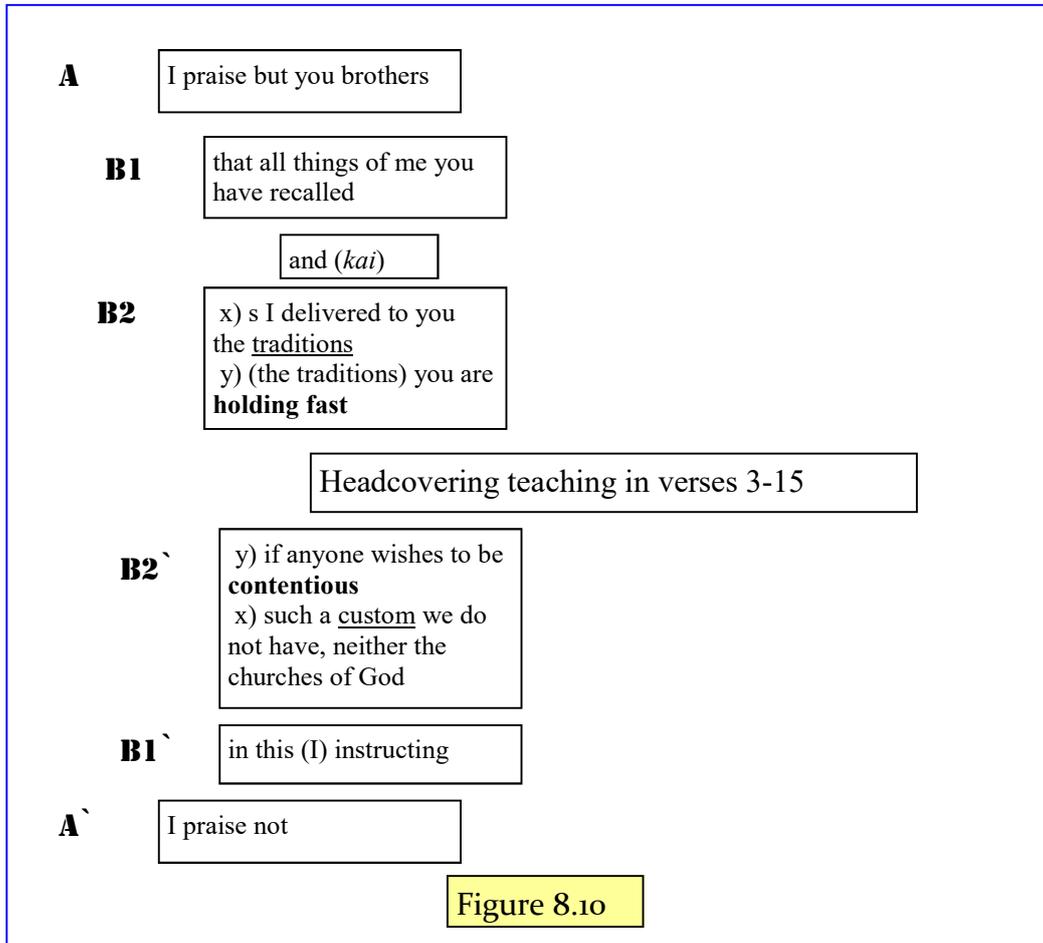
Well, we have spent quite some time looking at v. 2. If there is a structural link with vs. 16-17a, we will hopefully be in a good position to recognise it!

Analysis of verse 16 (or vs. 16-17a)

In the present chapter, I am trying to find possible links between verse 2 and verse 16, or between verse 2 and verses 16-17a. In terms of strict word count, it would “fit the pattern” better if we just compared verses 2 and 16 (these verses have 15 words and 16 words respectively). On the other hand however, v. 2 starts off with “I praise” and v. 17a ends with “not I praise” - which suggests that it may be fruitful to look for further connections when v. 17a is included in the structure.

Here is an analysis of verses 2 and 16-17a considered together (please see

Figure 8.10 below which is based on the analysis of v.2 presented in Figure 8.9.



Notes:

- 1) Clearly, A and A` correspond (and also contrast.)
- 2) B₁ and B_{1`} present Paul’s teaching from the Corinthians’ point of view and Paul’s point of view respectively. There is a contrast between the “all things” (plural) in B₁ and the “this” (singular) of B_{1`}. Likewise there is a contrast between the recipients of Paul’s teaching—it is “you” (plural) i.e. the Corinthians in B₁, but it is the singular “anyone” (in B_{2`}) who is the recipient of Paul’s instruction in B_{1`}.
- 3) In B₂ and B_{2`}, the traditions (plural) in B₂ contrast with “not having such a custom” (singular) in B_{2`}. Similarly, “you (pl.) are holding fast” (good) contrasts with “anyone (sing.) wishing to be contentious” (bad) in B_{2`}.

4) The “this” and the “custom” in the lower half of the chiasm refer to Paul’s teaching about the wrong and contentious view regarding headcovering. However, in the chiasm they are linked with “all things” and “traditions” respectively in the upper half of the chiasm. These two terms, as already argued, thus include the correct headcovering practice.

5) Interestingly, Paul avoids referring to the individual as far as possible in the lower half of the chiasm. Paul says, “I praise not” (as opposed to “I praise *him* not”) and “in this instructing” as opposed to “in instructing *him* thus”. This contrasts with Paul’s repeated references to “you”, i.e. the Corinthians, in the upper half of the chiasm.

Having thus presented a plausible structural analysis of verses 16-17a, I would like to complete this chapter by a brief discussion of the word “instructing” (*paraggello*) in v. 17a.

A Note on the Meaning of *paraggello* in v. 17a

The word for instruction in v. 17a is “*paraggello*” and (in the Received Text) is a masculine singular participle - hence v. 17a might be translated, “But in (my) instructing this, I have no praise . .”.

The word *paraggello*, according to G. Abbott-Smith’s Greek Lexicon means both “to transmit a message” and “to order, command” - the first meaning being apparently the original meaning and the second meaning being a commonly understood “acquired” meaning.

I think that both meanings are appropriate—in both the forwards and backwards directions!

Regarding the “transmitting a message” meaning: in the “backwards” direction, Paul speaks of “traditions” in v. 2 and we have argued that this likely includes correct headcovering practices of the sort described in vs. 3-15 (even if the fuller explanation for them is only now being given), as well as to the “custom” (or rather the *lack* of a custom!!) on the part of Paul and all the churches of God) in v. 16; in the “forwards” direction, Paul *hands over* the *tradition* which he has received of the Lord to the Corinthians (v. 23) regarding the Last Supper.

Regarding the “acquired” meanings of “ordering, commanding” (or instructing/enjoining), there is clearly sufficient instruction by Paul for “this” in v. 17a to “work” equally well as a forwards reference to verses 17-34 or as

a backwards reference to topics in verses 2-16.

